TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN
COLÁISTE NA TRÍONÓIDE, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF DUBLIN

Guide for Students with Disabilities on Professional Placement

SECTION 1 • INTRODUCTION

1.1	Why was this guide produced?
1.2	Planning ahead
1.3	Steps along the journey
1.4	Knowing your rights and responsibilities

1.1 Why was this guide produced?

The development of this placement guide is part of an overall strategy within the Disability Service to support students with disabilities on their journey into professional courses, through placement and on to employment. There are increasing numbers of students with disabilities on a wide range of professional courses in Trinity College and recent feedback from students and staff has highlighted a shortage of guidance and information in relation to supporting students with disabilities while on placement.

The development of this guide also coincided with the 2nd annual Disability Service Symposium entitled, 'Models of Support for Students with disabilities on Professional Placements.' Held in June 2013 this event brought together stakeholders from Trinity College and other HEIs to present and discuss recent research and support models on how best to support students with disabilities on placement. Recommendations and feedback from this event have been included in the completion of this guide.

In the academic year 2011/12 there were 7,957 students with disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland. This makes up 4% of the national student population *(Ahead, 2012a)*

During 2012/13 there were 1,100 students with a disability registered with the Disability Service in Trinity College Dublin. This makes up 6.4% of the College student population

Students on professional courses in Trinity College Dublin have increased from 98 in 2009 to 259 in 2013

The purpose of this guide is to support a process of communication and information sharing between students, the Disability Service and the staff on the course and on placement. More specifically, this guide aims to ensure that students and staff are confident and enabled to:

• Participate in an effective disclosure process

• Identify student's needs

• Provide reasonable accommodations

• Maintain academic and professional standards

• Ensure the safety of students, staff and members of the public

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for you if you have a disability and are a student on a course, or considering applying for a course, with a practice element or a clinical placement in a public setting. A disability could be a specific learning difficulty, a mental health difficulty, a physical or medical condition or a sensory impairment. This guide is intended as a starting point for students with disabilities on courses where placement or professional training is a core component. As most of the information included here is a summary or an overview of more in depth information from a variety of other sources, links to those sources are provided in a resource section at the end. As a general rule any course that requires Garda Vetting as an entry requirement has been included. These courses are listed in the table below:

iacp	Clinical & Counselling Psychology Doctorate
IASLT	Clinical Speech and Language Studies
	Deaf Studies
Dental Council An Comhairle Fiaclóireachta	Dental Science, Dental Hygiene & Dental Nursing
The Teaching Council	Education, Music Education & Post Graduate Diploma
www.indi.ie	Human Nutrition & Dietetics

	Medicine
	Nursing & Midwifery
	Occupational Therapy
	Pharmacy
	Physiotherapy
	Radiation Therapy
	Social Studies (Social Work) & MA in Social Work

This guide is also a resource for academic and support service staff in College and professional staff in placement settings where students complete the essential practical elements of their course. The range of legal requirements and obligations to the public, to students with disabilities, to College standards and to professional regulations is varied and complex. The information provided here consolidates much of this variety and complexity into a single and clear resource. Where appropriate, links to further information are provided in a resource section at the end. This guide may be of benefit to the following professionals:

Disability Officers	**Academic Tutors**	**Academic Liaison Officers**
Clinical Placement Co-ordinators	**Allocation Officers**	**Managers & Supervisors**
Preceptors	**Course Co-ordinators**	**Practice Educators**

How to use this guide

A key objective of higher education is the development of independent thinking and self-awareness. In support of this outcome, this guide encourages the growth of self-advocacy, self-determination and greater independence as you progress in your professional development.

Depending on where you are in your student journey, different sections may be more relevant at different times. First and second year students may be more interested in finding about what it means to disclose and register with the Disability Service, while 3rd or 4th year students may be wondering about how to better prepare for their next placement.

The focus of this guide is your success as a student on a professional course. How successful you are, depends on you. Information and support are of little value unless you apply them to your needs and what it is you want to achieve as a student!

Initially, the Disability Service, course staff and placement providers will provide you with information and supports to get you on your way. However, it is up to you to communicate and provide feedback if there is a problem. A support or accommodation that is lacking or not functioning as it should, cannot be changed unless someone in a position to do something about it is informed. This guide is intended to provide you with the information and confidence to speak up in the knowledge that your requests will be heard and taken seriously.

The student journey approach

The Disability Service has developed a Strategic Plan based on the student journey into, through and out of higher education. A key feature of the student journey is the concept of transition, which is seen more as a continuous process encompassing academic, social and personal development and not simply a single event or brief period marking the first few weeks of College life.

The Disability Service aims to develop clear and effective support systems at all stages in the student journey from college entrance to graduation to employment. The Disability Service works with students at the three stages of their Higher Education journey:

| Pre-entry, admission and the first year experience | Building and maintaining a college career | Progressing through College to employment |

In each phase of the student journey activities are based on feedback from students who have made the transition onto a professional course, negotiated the procedures and successfully completed the course. The overall aim is to develop clear and effective support systems at all stages in the student journey from college entrance to graduation to employment. This guide for students with disabilities on professional courses, is written in full acknowledgement that practice based education and placement are very much part of the student journey and that common themes and principles of transition planning apply throughout.

A pathway to success

In recent years, Trinity College Dublin has been creating accessible pathways for students with disabilities. These pathways not only exist in the physical environment of the College, enabling greater access through the front square, but also through the information and organizational systems so that the journey to your success can be anticipated in advance and planned for. This section is about thinking and planning ahead. There are common steps or procedures that should be followed to make your progress as straightforward as possible. It is also important to be fully informed about your rights and responsibilities as you progress. This guide will encourage you to engage with the procedures outlined here.

	2010 - At first glance, Trinity College may look the same as before...
	2011 - But change is everywhere and the 'road to success' is always under construction
	2012 - Additional pathways have been created with your success in mind - Are you ready for the journey?

1.2 Planning ahead

Whether you are entering your first year of a professional course or at the end of your final placement, there are standards in place by which you will be assessed against. Do you know what these standards are and how you are going to meet them? If you don't know or are unsure then it is a good idea to put a plan in place that will work for you. This guide outlines the planning process and the support structures that are in place to help you along.

"Knowing there is a support system in place is reassuring. It gives me the confidence to plan my future"

Pharmacy student

1.3 Steps along the journey

The first steps are about informing yourself of your rights and the decision to disclose your disability. If you have already started your course and are unsure about disclosing you may wish to discuss this with someone who is well informed in the area. As well as being unsure about disclosing initially, some students do not disclose until after their course has begun because they do not acquire or become aware of a disability until later. In these cases, the person you feel most comfortable disclosing to might be a placement supervisor, your tutor, or an academic staff member. If this occurs then it is recommended that the Disability Service is contacted as the next step. This is vital to ensure that you are fully informed of your rights and responsibilities and that you can fully access the relevant supports that you may need. The steps and procedures to availing of supports are illustrated here:

Accessing supports involves providing evidence of your disability, registering with the Disability Service and having an assessment of academic and placement needs carried out. This process will lead to the provision of reasonable accommodations. The final step in the planning process involves a short report called a LENS (Learning Education Needs Summary) which is sent to your school or department and your placement. A basic LENS template is illustrated below:

LENS & Placement planning template	
Personal details	Placement information

⬇

Indicate the level of disclosure required for placements	
Agree what will be disclosed	To who, when and how

⬇

Impact of disability on placement	
Provided details of limitations, restrictions or difficulties	Consideration of placement requirements

⬇

Reasonable accommodation while on placement
Details of recommended supports and accommodations to be provided while on placement

⬇

Provide relevant contact details and a timeline for a LENS review

Depending on the professional course you are on, placements can begin in 1st, 2nd or 3rd year. Therefore it is usual that a LENS report will start out with only an academic needs assessment initially. The placement planning process should begin in the term prior to when placement is scheduled. By that time you should have a better understanding of your course and what the requirements of your first placement will be. You can prepare for this by finding out more about your course and placement requirements in your course handbook, course website and by talking to staff and other students. You can also think about the following questions:

When does my placement begin?

Where is it located?

What will I be expected to do?

What can I do in advance to be prepared?

What supports are available?
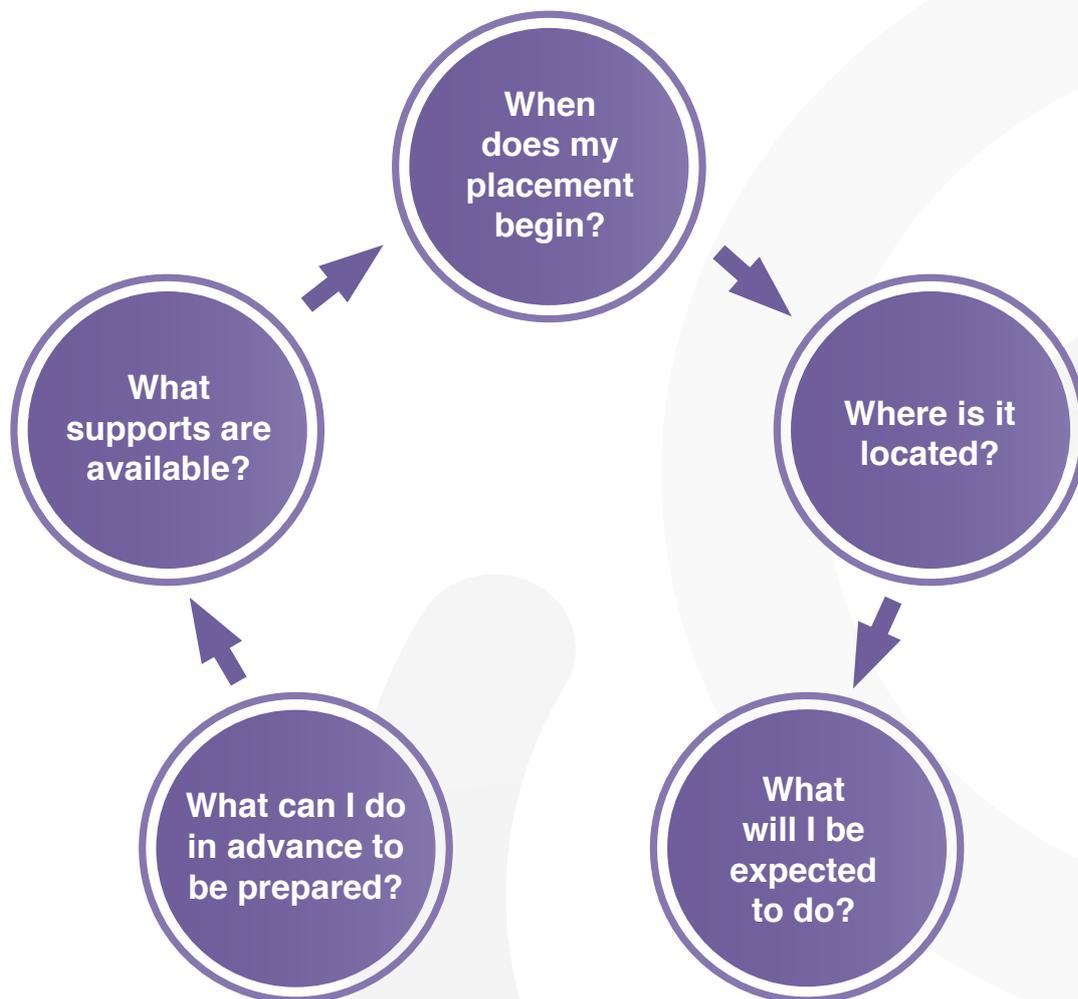
1.4 Knowing your rights and responsibilities

In the table below the issue of disclosure and the nature of confidential information is considered with regard to your rights and your responsibilities as a student with a disability on a professional course. Disclosure and legal obligations are discussed in more detail in Sections 4 and 5. There are a lot of things to consider so the table below is just a starting point to get you thinking:

	You are entitled to keep your personal details private. However, you should consider carefully what the consequences are to not disclosing, particularly if you require supports on a professional course where the safety of the clients and members of the public is of primary concern.
	The first consequence to not disclosing is that you cannot receive any reasonable accommodations. This means that no one will be aware of any difficulty you have and will not be able to allow for it.
	Also, by not disclosing, you have the added pressure of competing with other students on an uneven playing field. This can be both stressful and exhausting and can result in failing exams or placements.
	One reason why students don't disclose their disability is the fear of discrimination. This can be based either on personal previous experience or a fear often nurtured by the 'well intended' advice of others such as family or peers.
	However, the risk of discrimination is small and is significantly outweighed by risks of not disclosing and the benefits of doing so. Discrimination is also illegal. In Ireland both the Equal Status Act and the Disability Act prohibit discrimination on grounds of disability.

What you do disclose is kept confidential. Under the Data Protection Act anyone who receives personal data must protect it, use it only for agreed purposes and not communicate it to anyone else without your consent.

Remember, disclosing to a small number of people (whose job it is to support you and legally cannot discriminate against you) is not about broadcasting all your personal details to the world. Instead, think of it as a necessary communication that is in the best interests of succeeding on your course, the good of your profession and the people who depend on it.

If you are hesitant about disclosing details of your disability or you would like to discuss your concerns, contact the Disability Service. You can meet and have your questions answered. The decision to disclose or not will remain yours.

| 2.1 | First steps for students in placement planning |
2.2	Before, during and after placement
2.3	Advice from students with experience
2.4	Case studies

2.1 First steps for students in placement planning

The steps summarised below take you through the process of preparing for and engaging with your placement, as a student who is entering the first year of your course and has not yet registered with the Disability Service.

It proposes an approach based upon self-reflection and self-advocacy but also connecting to supports available within the placement setting and in college as required. The steps act as a reminder of the previous content of this guide and demonstrate how it works in practice.

Trinity Biomedical Sciences Institute, Pearse Street.

Before placement	**During placement**
After placement	**Next placement**
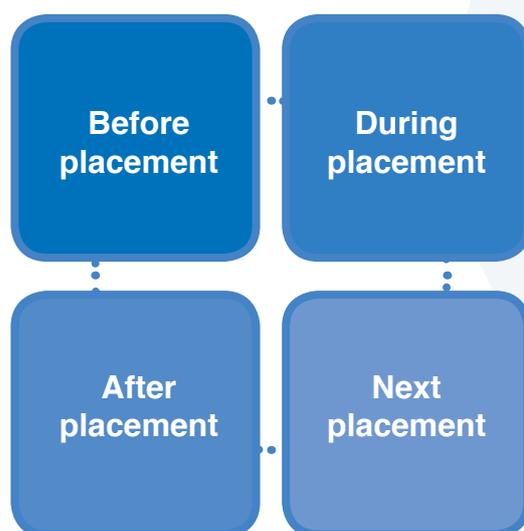
2.2 Before, during and after your placement

Take some time well in advance of your placement starting to consider what your roles and responsibilities will be on your placement. This is an opportunity for you to do some research and plan for your placement. In particular:

Know your rights:

- If you are a student with a disability as defined under the Equal Status Act you should consider registering with the Disability Service so that any specific needs you may have can be reasonably accommodated.

- You are entitled to keep your personal details private. However, you should consider carefully what the consequences are of not disclosing, particularly if you might require supports on a professional course where the safety of the clients and members of the public is of primary concern.

- In order to progress on your course and be deemed 'fit to practice' you must attain the standards in the core competencies of your course.

- If you do not disclose and you fail an exam or a placement you cannot claim that you were not reasonably accommodated because you have a disability.

Gather your information together:

- Read your course handbook and your placement handbook regarding the competencies you will be assessed on for your placement.

- Research the placement setting – online, talk to classmates, talk to students the year ahead. If possible, visit the placement setting in advance. Talk to the allocations officer or placement co-ordinator in your department or school.

- Read the Disability Service Code of Practice and the section for Current Students on the Disability Service website.

- If you are unclear about how the information you find might relate to you it is useful to discuss it with someone who is more familiar with it and who will have had experience of dealing with previous students in similar positions. Talk to your tutor, a lecturer you are comfortable talking to or contact a disability officer in the Disability Service.

- You may find it useful to arrange your information in a single format under a number of key questions. The table below is an example:

How many hours/weeks professional placement is there?
Where will I be located?
What is expected of me on this placement?
Who will assess me?
What do I need to be aware of on this placement?
Actions I need to take?

Register with the Disability Service:

•   Follow the steps regarding how to register with the Disability Service and arrange an appointment with a disability officer. You are registered once you have provided acceptable evidence of a disability, signed the code of practice and met with a disability officer to discuss your needs.

•   In planning for your placement, the steps that follow your registration will depend on when the placement is due to start, what level of support you may need and the level of disclosure you are comfortable with.

•   Your disability officer may provide you with supports for the academic part of your course prior to your placement starting. These might include assistive technology, an academic assistant or Unilink.

•   You may also wish to disclose to the academic teaching staff on your course through a LENS report. This is a short report that provides details about the reasonable accommodations that are recommended for you on your course. See section 1.3 above.

The Disability Service is located in Room 2054 of the Arts Building.

Placement Planning:

- You may already have some idea about what reasonable accommodations would be needed and appropriate for you on placement. The formal planning process involves discussing these at the initial needs assessment when you register with the Disability Service. At that stage - or later - you can make a decision to proceed to the next stage which is meeting with academic and placement staff.

- A formal placement planning meeting will be arranged when you and your disability officer have decided that specific reasonable accommodations may be necessary for you on your placement. During this planning meeting you can discuss your specific needs with your course allocations officer, your placement supervisor and your disability officer. You will also have the opportunity to discuss the core competencies for your course, safety issues and any confidentiality concerns that may exist.

- Following the meeting your LENS report is updated with an additional section for reasonable accommodations on placement. With your consent and agreement this LENS is then sent to your department or school and then forwarded by them to the placement staff concerned.

- The final part of the placement planning process occurs just before or on the first day of your placement. You should meet with the key placement staff member who has received your LENS report. Confirm your reasonable accommodations and talk through how they will fit in with your schedule for the first few days. It is also vital at this stage to establish a specific communication link with the key placement staff member in case anything goes wrong or needs to be adjusted.

During your placement:

- Establish early on with your placement supervisor how things are going. Remember, in reaching the core competencies - whether things are going well for you or not - it is important to know if the reasonable accommodations planned for are in place and working effectively.

- Evaluate how you are meeting the demands of your placement, through self-reflection and formal and informal supervision agreed within your placement. If necessary re-evaluate the reasonable accommodations after your initial orientation and throughout placement. It may be that now the placement has started, things are easier, harder or just different than what was planned for.

- After the first few days or week of your placement is complete it is useful to schedule dates for a follow up meeting and a final meeting to review how the reasonable accommodations are working and if there is any difficulty in competencies being demonstrated. It is also useful to keep the following questions in mind:

  - Have I agreed with my placement supervisor the ways I can demonstrate my expected levels of competency?

  - Am I progressing satisfactorily towards reaching competency at final assessment?

  - What do I need to do to attain competency during the rest of my placement? Do I need additional supports/accommodations to enable me to attain these competencies?

  - Do I need additional support from my placement, my department/school or from my disability officer regarding reasonable accommodations?

After your placement:

- If things have gone well consider to what extent the reasonable accommodations played a role. Were the supports and accommodations needed and used often? Or was it the case that they were not needed much but it was reassuring to know they were in place should the need arise?

- Consider how your next placement might be different, particularly in terms of duration, demands and the level of core competencies that will be expected of you. Will you need to ensure the same reasonable accommodations are in place or will you need to engage with the placement planning process again?

- If your placement has not gone well, consider carefully what you should do next. Was it the case that you have really struggled to pass and it has taken a lot out of you, or have you failed your placement? Without engaging with supports at this point there is a risk that you could start a repeat placement without a review of your supports and accommodations.

- After your placement you should reflect on how well the reasonable accommodations worked and discuss any concerns you have with your disability officer or the most relevant academic or placement staff member. It may be necessary to review your needs and reasonable accommodations in preparation for your next placement.

2.3 Advice from students with experience

In preparing and producing this guide for students with disabilities on placement, the Disability Service consulted with students on a wide range of professional courses. We asked them to reflect on their experience and offer advice to other students who might face similar challenges to them. Here is a selection of what they said:

"I think disclosing is an important thing to do for yourself. I disclosed and my supervisor was grand with it"

OT student

"The main thing I found is that preparation is key"

Nursing student

"Each placement site received a copy of my LENS report before I arrived but most then sat down with me on the first day to discuss any accommodations I would need"

Physiotherapy student

"Be honest about what your disability is and how it will affect you on a placement"

Social Work student

2.4 Case Studies

Case Study 1

A first year student with a mobility difficulty on a health science course, was due to start his first placement in the second term. He had registered with the Disability Service the previous September. He had a needs assessment carried out initially and a LENS report was produced. On receiving the LENS the allocation officer was able to choose a placement location based on the information from the LENS report. A few weeks later a placement planning meeting was arranged with the student, the allocations officer from his course, the disability officer and the supervisor for his first placement. During this meeting, a detailed discussion took place about the practicalities of the mobility impairment and what restrictions this might present. The placement supervisor was able to arrange a schedule that minimised walking distances. The placement location was chosen because it was close to a suitable public transport route. Finally, the Disability Service was able to offer reimbursement for occasional taxi trips that might arise due to poor weather or service interruptions. The LENS was then updated with the relevant details included in an additional section for placement supports. Overall the placement went well and the student reported that the planned supports and accommodations were provided.

Case Study 2

A student with a mental health difficulty was due to start a placement in a school where she was previously a student at secondary level. She was uncomfortable with the idea of disclosing to any of the staff who would be involved with her on placement but also realised that she had some support needs that needed to be addressed. During the initial discussion with her disability officer it was suggested that she could request a different school for her placement

and then disclose to the staff in the new location. After considering this the student decided that she did want to attend the original placement but that she would only disclose her support needs to one staff member. Following this decision, a placement planning meeting was held and details of reasonable accommodations were discussed. The students only concern for placement was about what would happen in the event of her becoming unwell while teaching and could not continue. What would she say at such a time? Who would she say it to? And how would this be reported and perceived afterwards? Through discussing this concern in the placement planning meeting, it was suggested and agreed that the student should report that she was unwell to the most senior staff member at the time with the request that no other staff members be informed.

Case Study 3

A student with epilepsy registered with the Disability Service and during the needs assessment she reported that she often felt tired due to the effects of medication. A placement planning meeting was recommended as she had her second placement starting shortly and it was 9 weeks in duration compared to her first placement which was only 2 weeks. During the discussion held at the placement planning meeting the student explained how a build-up of long days and heavy workload would increase the chances that she would have a seizure. She also said that she was worried about getting through the placement and that this also added to her difficulties because poor sleep and stress could also trigger seizures. As a result of receiving this information it was agreed that the placement hours required on a weekly basis could be re-scheduled to minimise a build-up of fatigue. This was achieved by distributing the total hours required over 4 days instead of 3 and ensuring that the rest day occurred on a Wednesday so that the maximum succession of days worked was 2 instead of 3. This plan was added to the LENS report and the student was able to complete the placement without any problems.

SECTION 3 • COMMON THEMES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

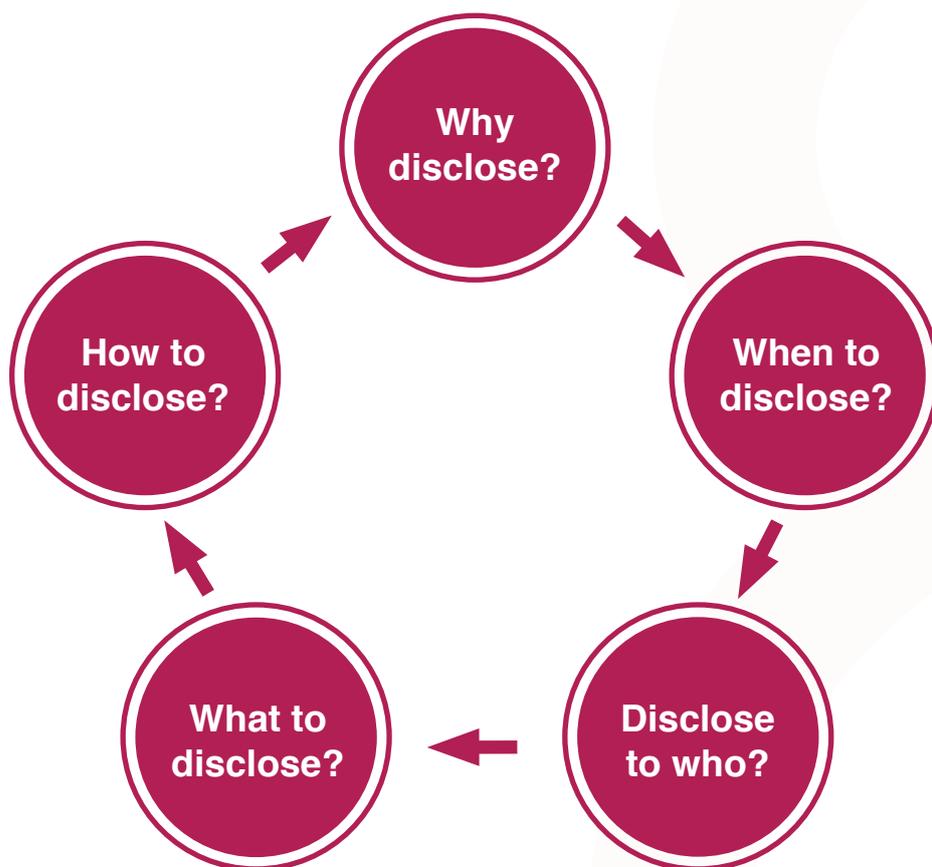| 3.1	Disclosure
3.2	What is a needs assessment?
3.3	What are reasonable accommodations?
3.4	Steps for assessing reasonable accommodations for placement
3.5	What are core competencies?
3.6	What does fitness to practice mean?

3.1 Disclosure

The decision to disclose is a personal one. You have a right not to disclose if you wish. However, your decision may have important consequences later on, so in making your decision, it is best to be as informed as possible about what those consequences might be. The common themes and guiding principles in this section should help you to consider the following questions:

Guide for students with disabilities on professional placement

Disclosing a disability through the CAO or DARE and registering with the College Disability Service does not mean that the process of disclosure is complete. Data Protection legislation in Ireland requires that an individual provides their informed consent before their personal data, such as the nature of a disability, is disclosed to a 3rd party. That means that information about your disability will not be passed on from one area to another, either in College, or externally to placements locations, without your permission.

By informing yourself of your rights and responsibilities and by discussing your concerns with a staff member, you can begin to weigh up the pros and cons of disclosing or not. One reason why students don't disclose their disability is the fear of discrimination. This can be based either on personal previous experience or a fear often nurtured by the 'well intended' advice of others such as family or peers.

However, discrimination is also illegal. In Ireland both the Equal Status Act and the Disability Act prohibit discrimination on grounds of disability. Based on our experience in the Disability Service, we believe that the risk of discrimination is small and is significantly outweighed by the risks of not disclosing and the benefits of doing so:

Reasons not to disclose   **Reasons to disclose**

Fear/risk of discrimination

I don't need to

Support

Legal protection

Public safety

One of the purposes of this guide is to help you make your choice about when to disclose, what to disclose, to who and how. If you choose to disclose, it should be at the level that suits you. The Disability Service encourages students to disclose but we also realise that it is a decision that is best made voluntarily and often after a full discussion has taken place and any fears and concerns have been addressed. You can chose to disclose at different levels depending on what supports you need and what benefits may follow. Also, it may be necessary to disclose at different times during your course, either as your needs change, or as you become more confident in advocating for yourself.
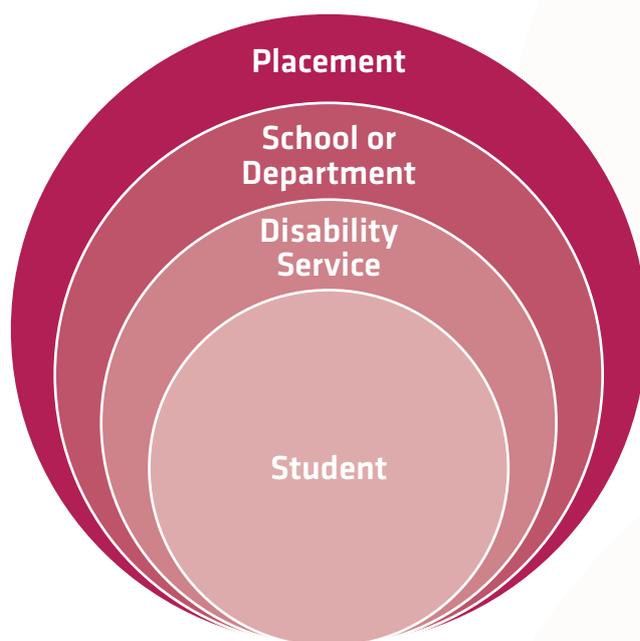
It is important to realise that disclosure may be necessary on courses where there is a legal obligation to disclose any risk factor (which might include a disability or medical condition) if it has the potential to cause harm. Also, students on courses with clinical or other professional placements may be required to undergo Garda vetting procedures prior to commencing placements – see section 5.1 below for further information about Garda vetting.

Ahead (Association for Higher Education Access & Disability) have recently published a useful booklet on the issue of disclosure:


DISCLOSURE is frequently cited as one of the most challenging aspects of having a disability, especially in relation to employment. It is complex and influenced by a number of factors such as self- identity, personality, type of disability, context and previous experience. It presents a major concern within the recruitment process for both employers and graduates with disabilities, and in the education system, especially for service providers.

The decision to disclose or not seems to be made on the basis of weighing up the benefits of reasonable accommodation, workplace considerations and awareness against the cost of labelling and potential discrimination/ differential treatment in recruitment and employment. The same can be said for education. In an intensely competitive environment – whether to disclose is proving to be a difficult decision to make.

Source: Ahead 2013: A Guide to Disclosure

3.2 What is a needs assessment?

A needs assessment is a meeting with you and your disability officer where you discuss the impact of your disability, your individual characteristics (strengths, weaknesses and preferences) and the requirements of your course. With the guidance of the disability officer you can identify the areas where you have support needs. This is the first step to determining what supports and reasonable accommodations will be required.

Impact of disability

Individual characteristics

Course Requirements

Identification of needs
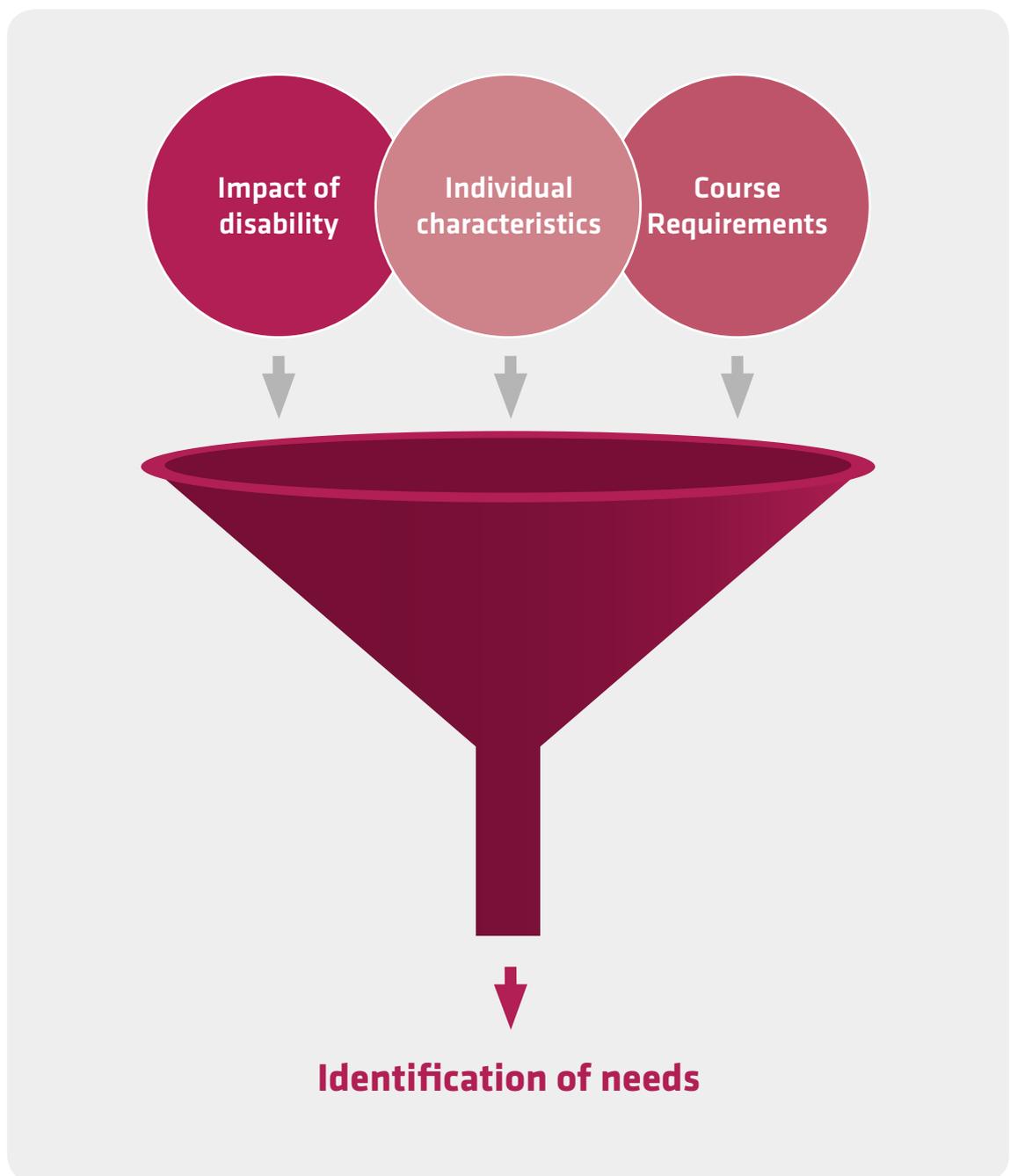
3.3 What are reasonable accommodations?

A reasonable accommodation is any arrangement, change or modification that seeks to reduce the impact of an impairment, disability or specific learning difficulty without creating an advantage over other students in assessment, or creating undue risk for anyone during practical work.

The images and text below are intended to demonstrate that reasonable accommodations are specific to an individual's need and the context of their environment or the task they are engaged in. Their particular disability type may not be the primary factor in question.

	A willingness to understand an individual's need and the time that this takes are the most common factors in identifying and providing a reasonable accommodation.
	In most cases a reasonable accommodation is a matter of allowing for an individual's comfort or preference.
	Adaptations are not always determined by particular disability types. Sometimes a single barrier can be overcome in different ways.
	Adjustments should be as minimal as is necessary to allow students to meet their course requirements.
	Alternative methods can be used but only if simpler adaptations are unsuitable and standards, safety or professionalism are not compromised.

3.3.1 Understanding assistive technology

 Assistive technology is already standard practice in most professions.

 Assistive Technology is any tool or device that allows for an alternative way to achieve the same results.

 A laptop or voice recorder is just another device or tool to get the job done.

 What matters is that the student can consistently demonstrate competency not that a device or tool is unusual or not commonly used.

3.3.2 Reasonably accommodating access difficulties

 Making the unreachable accessible is very often a matter of one small step... or two.

 A lift in a building benefits a range of users, going up or down!

 When required, a retro fitting can provide access without the need to change protected structures.

3.3.3 Reasonably accommodating sensory impairments

Common place visual aids such as glasses are examples of mainstream assistive technology.

Specialised auditory aids such as stethoscopes are considered essential tools in medicine and nursing.

Hearing aids are also pieces of assistive technology, but are just used by fewer people.

3.3.4 Reasonably accommodating mental health difficulties

Mental health difficulites are complex psycho-social problems that affect 1 in 4 people in their lifetime.

A consultation with a GP, counsellor or psychiatrist is often the first step to recovering - medication is not always necessary.

Practical supports such as Unilink offer self management tools to suit individual needs and meet coursework demands.

It may be possible to start your placement later in the day or spread the hours requirement over a longer duration.

Use technology to help organise your case load or use an App or software to enable you to write notes.

3.3.5 Reasonably accommodating difficulties with fatigue and stamina

With prolonged and excessive tiredness or chronic fatigue, day time tiredness can occur even after a full nights sleep.

A coffee break may help in the short term, but...

Scheduled rests and a pacing routine may work better in the long run to maximse energy levels.

3.3.6 Reasonably accommodating mobility difficulties

Depending on the needs and environmental demands, a preferred support is one that suits best.

A good fit often combines practical support, comfort and usability.

A useful mobility aid is one that helps you get from A to B.

3.3.7 Reasonably accommodating transport problems

How people get about and around is often a matter of convenience.

Using transport of all kinds is reasonable provided saftey is not compromised.

For employment, legal and practical purposes, a wheelchair is just another form of transport.

3.3.8 Reasonably accommodating pain and strain

The furniture in your place of work can impact on the quality of your work.

Ergonomic designs are recognised to prevent strain and injury.

Sometimes an alternative solution is required to meet particular needs.

SECTION 3 • COMMON THEMES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.4 Steps for assessing reasonable accommodations for placement

If you are undertaking a professional course and you have a disability you can be assessed for, and provided with accommodations to enable you to participate in all aspects of your course in so far as is reasonably possible.

When first considering how a disability will impact on their placement, most students will either greatly over or greatly underestimate it. They will either assume they need a very high level of support or none at all.

However, in most cases, the nature of a disability will most likely impact in one or two areas and some level of support will be required even if it is only a plan put in place so that you know who to talk to if a problem emerges. The text and images below demonstrate how a student with back pain can be accommodated in a lab environment with a height adjustable desk:

Identify the impact of disability.

Consider the environment and the 'normal' ways of working.

Provide a reasonable accommodation without compromising public safety, course requirements or professional standards.


Identifying a reasonable accommodation requires flexibility but it does not mean breaking the rules.

A reasonable accommodation may be any action that helps alleviate a substantial disadvantage. The purpose of a reasonable accommodation is to enable a student with a disability to participate fully in all aspects of the course, and to have the opportunity to demonstrate core competences in terms of knowledge, skill and attitudes.

3.5 What are core competencies?

Core competencies are the essential standards of your course that you must reach in order to progress through your course and complete your professional degree. The core competencies that make up a professional programme are a set of course requirements that form the basis of academic and practical assessments. They are the standards you will be expected to reach in order to qualify. Typically, core competencies are made up of a number of sub-headings:

Knowledge

Ability

Skills

Core competencies

Behaviour

Attitudes
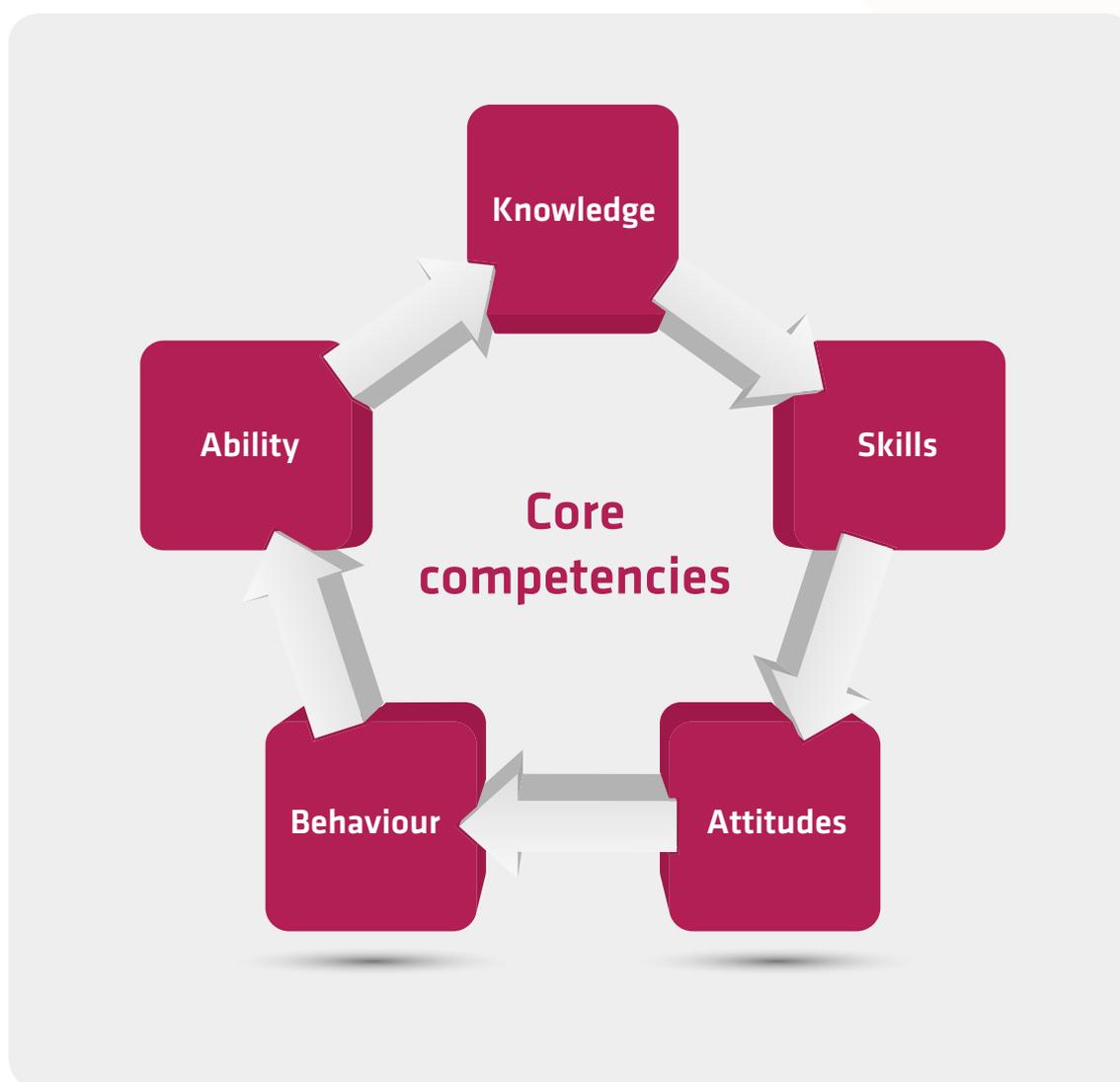
Every professional course will be associated with a particular professional body such as the Irish Medical Council or Psychological Society of Ireland. It is useful to find out about the professional body that is associated with your course. As an example, an introduction to CORU (an umbrella organisation for Health and Social Care professionals) is provided here:

CORU is Ireland's first multi professional health regulator.

Its role is to protect the public by promoting high standards of professional conduct, education, training and competence through statutory registration of health and social care professionals.

CORU was set up under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005

It is an umbrella body, made up of the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and 12 registration boards, one for each profession named in our Act.

The professions to be regulated are:

- Clinical biochemists
- Dietitians
- Medical Scientists
- Occupational Therapists
- Orthoptists
- Physiotherapists
- Podiatrists
- Psychologists
- Radiographers
- Social Care Workers
- Social Workers
- Speech and Language Therapists

Source: CORU 2013

By reaching the required standards for your course you will be demonstrating competence in core areas that are essential for your work as a professional. In the transition from course completion to employment, most graduates will register with a professional body where they will have their qualifications and training officially recognised. By registering with a professional body, graduates sign up to code of conduct and are licensed for insurance reasons. They are then able to work professionally and are deemed 'fit to practice.'

3.6 What does fitness to practice mean?

As a student on a professional course your aim is to become 'fit to practice.' This not only means passing exams and skills tests, it also means that your behaviour should be consistent with the trust that the public put in the health care, psychology, teaching and social work professions. You should know that it is your responsibility to 'do no harm' by acting under the following principles:

	Know what the core competencies are for your profession and follow the guidelines for professional conduct
	Anticipate risks: • Avoid, reduce or manage risk appropriately • Don't put yourself, colleagues or the public at risk
	Being professional means: • Being respectful, trustworthy and responsible • Knowing your limits and when to ask for help

Professional courses demand that certain core competencies are met by students in order to graduate and practice professionally after qualification. Trinity College has a particular responsibility to ensure that all students graduating from professional courses will be eligible for registration with the relevant professional body.

The Fitness to Practice Policy clarifies the key areas of concern for professional courses in respect to how standards are set and assessed, how the public are protected from harm and how the rights of students with disabilities can be upheld and their needs reasonably accommodated.

In formulating the fitness to practice policy, section 2 states:

- Schools or disciplines formulating fitness to practice requirements should address the following four questions:

  - What competencies are being assessed in the specific course/placement?
  - Is the competency requirement justifiable in relation to each specific course/placement?
  - How is the competency assessed?
  - In the case of a student with a disability has the School or discipline actively engaged with the Disability Service, in accordance with the guidelines set out in Part 4 below, to determine how the student's needs might be reasonably accommodated?

Section 4 of the College Fitness to Practice Policy refers to the need to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. A student with a disability should be provided with reasonable accommodations that enable him or her to participate fully in his or her programme. If there are still concerns about the student's ability to practise elements of his or her course the case shall be dealt with under section 3 of the College policy, in the same way as any other student on the course.

4.1	The concept of disability
4.2	What is defined as disability?
4.3	Relevant College policies
4.4	Understanding legal requirements

4.1 The concept of disability

At one level, disability is an everyday term that is commonly understood to mean an inability or significant difficulty in carrying out what is considered a normal task. Traditionally, people with disabilities were often dependent on care, charity and medical intervention. However, this 'common sense' view of disability has been rigorously challenged by an alternative view, which sees disability as socially constructed by physical and attitudinal barriers which take no account of the needs of people with impairments. The separation of disability from impairment is what has become known as the 'social model of disability' and is a challenge to the traditional or medical view of disability. The social model has been influential in the significant changes to attitudes, public policy and legislation that have taken place in Ireland and the UK since the 1990s. That differing perspectives of disability coexist reflects the reality that disability is a complex term which can mean many different things to different people at different times and in different ways. Here is what two writers in the field of Disability Studies have to say:

For us, disability is the quintessential post-modern concept, because it is so complex, so variable, so contingent, so situated. It sits at the intersection of biology and society and of agency and structure. Disability cannot be reduced to a singular identity: it is a multiplicity, a plurality. (Shakespeare & Watson 2002)

What does disability mean to you?
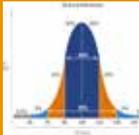
 In the traditional or medical model of disability people are disabled by their inherent deficits, illnesses or physical impairments.

 In the social model of disability it is the culture and environment that disables people by not taking their needs into account.

 The neurodiverse or universal design approach to environments, services and devices is that they should be designed to meet the needs of as wide a user group as possible.

4.2 What is defined as a disability?

The definition of disability most relevant to the Trinity College policies and procedures referred to in this guide is that used in the Equal Status Act 2000, which states that disability is:

the total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body, the presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness, the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body, a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or a condition, disease or illness which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or which results in disturbed behaviour. (Equal Status Act, 2000)

4.3 Relevant College Policies

With regard to students with disabilities, there are a number of College policies that have been developed in order to comply with legal requirements under the Employment Equality Act 1998-2010, Equal Status Act 2000-2011, Disability Act 2005, and Universities Act 1997. These polices are listed below and a summary and links to each policy are provided in section 5 of this guide.

- Accessible Information Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Dignity and Respect Policy
- Disability Service Code of Practice
- Equality Policy
- Fitness to Practice Policy
- Mental Health Policy

4.4 Understanding legal requirements

While students have certain rights and responsibilities, so too do staff members and the College in general. The Disability Service Code of Practice outlines what the obligations are for staff in relation to students who disclose a disability, see Section 5 below for further details. In a recent UK report by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman on complaints about disability issues:

…they all involved poor service to people with disabilities; and in each case that poor service included a failure by those public bodies to recognise and respond to those people's rights and their individual needs, leading to poor service and unfair treatment (Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, 2011, page 7).

There are significant risks for staff and the College if a student discloses a disability and there is a failure to respond appropriately.

If an issue or dispute arises that may be leading to a disciplinary case and disability may be a factor, section 4 of the Fitness to Practice policy should be followed.

Concerned students or staff can contact the Disability Service for advice about any of the issues raised in this guide.

5.1	Garda Vetting
5.2	Relevant College Policies
5.3	References

5.1 Garda Vetting

Students on courses with clinical or other professional placements may be required to undergo Garda vetting procedures prior to commencing placements. If, as a result of the outcome of the Garda vetting procedures, a student is deemed unsuitable to attend clinical or other professional placement, he/she may be required to withdraw from his/her course. Students who have resided outside Ireland for a consecutive period of 6 months or more will be required to provide police clearance documentation from the country in which they resided at the time of registration.

Garda vetting forms will be distributed (as part of the student orientation information) to students who have been offered a place in Trinity. The completed forms must be returned to the Admissions Office prior to registration.

In March 2013, the National Vetting Bureau Act came into place fully. Under the Act, organisations cannot permit any person to undertake what is termed "relevant work or activities" relating to children or vulnerable adults unless it receives a vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau in respect of that person.

Relevant work or activities includes any volunteering which consists of educational, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities to children or vulnerable persons unless the provision of these activities is incidental to the provision of same to persons who are (other) adults.

Vetting must also be undergone by those undertaking research activities in the university where a necessary and regular part of the research work or activity involves contact with or access to vulnerable persons and anyone undertaking an educational placement where a necessary part of the placement involves participation in relevant work or activities. The full list of relevant work or activities is available. Along with volunteer interviews, reference checks and training, Garda vetting will form part of the organisations policies to protect children and other client groups.

5.2 Relevant College policies

This section provides a summary of the College Policies most relevant to the information contained in this guide. A link to a full list of all College Policies is provided in section 5.3 below.

5.2.1 Accessible Information Policy

Trinity College Dublin is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in education, and to ensuring that students and staff have as complete and equitable access to all facets of College life as can reasonably be provided.

This document outlines the current Accessible Information Policy of Trinity College Dublin published in conformity with the requirements of the Disability Act 2005, Universities Act, 1997, the Employment Equality Act, 1998-2004 and Equal Status Acts, 2000-2004. Further details of the legislative context are referenced in appendix 1.

The Accessible Information Policy of the College sets out a formal commitment by the College that information should be available in an accessible format, without discrimination against those with print disabilities.

Accessible Information is far reaching and includes printed information, web pages, presentation materials such as PowerPoint and information technology. To this end, College has developed a clear information policy and guidelines that outline how College can ensure information is accessible to all.

5.2.2 Data Protection Policy

The University of Dublin, Trinity College needs to collect and use personal data (information) for a variety of purposes about its staff, students and other individuals who come in contact with the College. The purposes of processing data include the organisation and administration of courses, examinations, research activities, the recruitment and payment of staff, compliance with statutory obligations, etc. Data Protection legislation safeguards the privacy rights of individuals in relation to the processing of personal data. The Data Protection Act 1988 and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003 confer rights on individuals as well as responsibilities on those persons processing personal data. Personal data, both automated and manual, is data relating to a living individual who is or can be identified, either from the data or from the data in conjunction with other information.

5.2.3 Dignity and Respect

This policy outlines the College's commitment to an environment where every member is treated with dignity and respect.

The College strives to create an environment that is supportive and conducive to work and study. The College has a diverse student, research and staff body with multiple roles, both professional and personal and this policy encompasses all groups in the College. The College promotes, and is committed to supporting, a collegiate environment for its staff, students and other community members, which is free from discrimination (on any of the 9 grounds included in equality legislation), bullying, sexual harassment and other forms of harassment.

This policy aims to set out the College's and staff/student member's commitment and duty to participate in creating a positive and tolerant environment. The policy also sets out a framework and the procedure for handling any issues that arise. This policy seeks to encompass the diverse nature of the staff and students on campus.

The concept of equality is central to the ethos of the College, where accordingly, equal respect to all members of its community is a central part of Trinity's academic mission to pursue scholarly excellence.

5.2.4 Disability Service Code of Practice

The Disability Service Code of Practice aims to provide a high standard of service to students with disabilities. The College will take reasonable steps to ensure that it does not place a student with a disability at a substantial disadvantage compared to a non-disabled student.

The Code of Practice has two main purposes; to outline for students with disabilities their rights and responsibilities in receiving reasonable accommodations while studying at Trinity; and to define Trinity's rights and responsibilities to students with disabilities and the College community.

5.2.5 Equality Policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline Trinity College Dublin's commitment to promoting equality in all aspects of the College's activity: employment, education and service provision; and to detail how this policy will be implemented.

The College aims to provide an inclusive environment, which promotes equality and values diversity – and is committed to maintaining an environment of dignity and respect where all staff and students can develop their full potential. The concept of equality is central to the College's ethos of academic and service excellence.

Trinity College Dublin is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to the continued development of employment policies, procedures and practices, which do not discriminate on grounds such as gender, civil status, family status, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or membership of the Travelling community.

5.2.6 Fitness to Practice Policy

Professional courses demand that certain core competencies are met by students in order to graduate and practice professionally after qualification. College has special responsibility to ensure that all students admitted to professional programmes will be eligible for registration by the relevant professional body upon graduation. It is important that students are able to fulfil the rigorous demands of professional courses and are fit to practice.

5.2.7 Mental Health Policy

Trinity College Dublin is committed to an inclusive education for all, which welcomes diversity and promotes equal opportunities for students to develop to their full potential. To this end, the TCD student mental health policy:

• enables College to fulfil its caring, educational and legal responsibilities to students;

• heightens awareness and increases understanding across the college community about mental health issues;

• promotes informed and constructive attitudes to mental health issues;

• encourages a partnership approach, with shared responsibility, between College, its staff, the student body and individual students with respect to dealing with mental health issues;

• follows international best practice guidelines in the area of student mental health, including the provision of appropriate and timely support services for students;

• provides guidance and, where appropriate, promotes training to ensure College staff are aware of the emergency procedures, the support services available and know how to make appropriate referrals and interventions for students they encounter with mental health difficulties;

• facilitates communication and cooperation as appropriate between the relevant College departments and services on matters relating to mental health;

• respects the rights of each individual student and of the student body as a whole;

• defines the right to confidentiality within specified guidelines

5.3 References and resources

Ahead (2013) A Guide to Disclosure http://www.ahead.ie/shop

Ahead (2012a) Survey on the Participation Rates of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education for the Academic Year 2011/2012 http://www.ahead.ie/shop

Ahead (2012b) Opening access to teacher education and practice for students with disabilities. Conference proceedings: Dublin Castle, 15th March 2012 http://www.ahead.ie/shop

Ahead (2012c) National Guidelines for Working with Nursing and Midwifery Students with a Disability or Specific Learning Difficulty in Clinical Practice http://www.ahead.ie/shop

Ahead (2011) The real risk is doing nothing. Conference proceedings: University College Dublin, 16th March 2011 http://www.ahead.ie/shop

CORU: http://www.coru.ie/

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (2004) Supporting Disabled Physiotherapy Students on Clinical Placement, CSP, London

Disability Service: http://www.tcd.ie/disability/index.php

Disability Service 2nd Annual Symposium - Models of Support for Students with Disabilities on Placement, 26th June 2013:
http://www.tcd.ie/disability/projects/Phase2/Placement-support/symp.php

Disability Service Code of Practice:
http://www.tcd.ie/disability/assets/doc/Word%20Docs/Code%20of%20 Practice%202013.doc

National Vetting Bureau Act 2012
http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2012/en/act/pub/0047/

Department of Education and Skills (2002) Providing Work Placements for Disabled Students, DfES Publications, Nottingham.

Report by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman on complaints about disability issues (2011) http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/__data/assets/ pdf_file/0020/11369/Report-on-complaints-about-disability-issues-FINAL-web-version.pdf

Shakespeare, T. & Watson, N. (2002) The social model of disability: an outdated ideology? In 'Research in Social Science and Disability' Volume 2, pp. 9-28

Trinity College Policies (2013) http://www.tcd.ie/about/policies/

University of Hull (2005) Best Practice Guide: disabled social work students and placements: http://www2.hull.ac.uk/fhsc/pdf/PEDDS%20best%20practice.pdf

All online references accurate as of September 9th 2013

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