

## Accessing Disability and Wellbeing Support: Guidance for PGCE School Direct (Distance) trainees

### How do I declare a disability, specific learning difficulty or mental health difficulty?

If you declared a disability, specific learning difficulty or mental health difficulty on your UCAS application form, the University's AccessAbility team will have contacted you before the start of your course. If you didn't declare any disability, specific learning difficulty or mental health difficulty on your application form but feel that you might benefit from support from the AccessAbility team or Wellbeing Services during your studies, you can contact them at any time during the year. Their contact details are as follows:

Disability Support	Wellbeing Services
AccessAbility aims to support students with disabilities by providing advice and guidance  Tel: 0300 555 0444 Email: <a href="mailto:AccessAbility@exeter.ac.uk">AccessAbility@exeter.ac.uk</a> Website: <a href="http://www.exeter.ac.uk/accessability/">www.exeter.ac.uk/accessability/</a>	Wellbeing Services include mental health advice and support, DSA mentoring and counselling.  Tel: 01392 724381 Email: <a href="mailto:wellbeing@exeter.ac.uk">wellbeing@exeter.ac.uk</a> Website: <a href="http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/">www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/</a>  <i>(also see the Welfare and Wellbeing Support: Distance Learners info sheet provided in your IDP)</i>
<b>(appointments can be booked via the SID online system - <a href="https://sid.exeter.ac.uk/">https://sid.exeter.ac.uk/</a>)</b>	

Once you have made initial contact with AccessAbility/Wellbeing Services, they will, where appropriate, ask you to book an appointment for a meeting with them to draw up an Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

### What is an Individual Learning Plan (ILP)?

An ILP is an important document as it:

- will inform the appropriate staff in the Graduate School of Education of any particular adjustments we need to make for you (for example, if you have dyslexia and need to be able to record lectures or receive lecture notes in advance or if you have a physical disability and require assistive equipment or software)
- can be used as supporting evidence for extension requests (please note: requests for extensions due to an ongoing disability/specific learning difficulty/mental health difficulties are unlikely to be granted if an ILP is not in place)
- is the process by which tutors marking summative assignments from dyslexic trainees know to apply the University's dyslexia marking guidelines to a piece of work (the University follows an anonymous marking policy for all summative work so telling your tutor that you are dyslexic is not enough to ensure that your dyslexia will be taken into account)

**It is therefore important to get an ILP set up as early in the year as possible if you want your disability/specific learning difficulty/mental health difficulty to be taken into consideration during the University-based taught elements of the PGCE programme.**

**It is also important for you to be proactive in seeking the support you need. The AccessAbility and Wellbeing Services teams can get very busy during the autumn term so please do prioritise contacting them during your first few weeks if you think you would benefit from their services.**

## **I completed a medical questionnaire as part of the admissions process – how is this different from contacting AccessAbility/Wellbeing?**

Alongside the support provided by AccessAbility/Wellbeing Services for students during their University taught course, the University's Occupational Health Assessment Provider also assesses every PGCE trainee on entry to the programme to ensure they are fit to teach in a school setting. In certain circumstances, adjustments can be applied to school placements for PGCE trainees where the Occupational Health Assessment Provider confirms that the trainee is only fit to teach if this adjustment (which has been deemed to be reasonable within a school context) is made.

The Partnership Office manages the reasonable adjustment process and ensures that schools provide any such required adjustments.

## **What if I am at high risk from Covid-19?**

All PGCE trainees have been asked to use a Covid Personal Risk Assessment Calculator to calculate their risk from Covid-19 and those in the high or very high risk categories have been asked to contact the Partnership Office team ([exeterpartner@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:exeterpartner@exeter.ac.uk)) with their Covid score. The Partnership Office team will then work with you and your relevant placement schools to help ensure that any adjustments needed are put in place, as long as they are reasonable within a school context.

## **How is information provided to my placement schools?**

The Partnership Office will also seek confirmation from any PGCE trainees who have declared a disability/specific learning difficulty/mental health difficulty on application (or during the year) that they have their permission to disclose their declaration to relevant University staff. Therefore please do respond promptly to the Partnership Office's requests for information and permission to share your details.

In addition, as a School Direct trainee, please ensure that your school is aware of any support needs that you will have whilst in school. If you need help with having this conversation then please get in touch with the Partnership Office to discuss the issue and find an appropriate way forward.