

Additional Learning Needs and Inclusive Practice

Part one

According to the 'Additional Learning Need and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018', additional learning needs can be defined as an individual with a learning difficulty or disability which requires additional support (National Assembly for Wales, 2018). Furthermore, an additional learning need can be defined as an individual that has significant difficulty learning compared to the majority of other of the same age, and has a disability that hinders them from making use of facilities for education provided for others of the same age in schools or institutions within further education (National Assembly for Wales, 2018).

This paper will continue to summarise and demonstrate understanding of regulatory and legal requirements regarding accommodating additional requirements and inclusive practice within the post-compulsory classroom, drawing upon relevant policies and legislation.

The legal framework document promotes the Equality Act of 2010 and states that it protects individuals from unlawful discrimination based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). The source continues to state that higher education institutions (HEIs) have a duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share protected characteristics. To do this, practitioners are advised to remove and minimise disadvantages suffered by protected groups, meet their needs, and encourage them to participate in public life to eliminate discrimination (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). Practitioners should tackle prejudice and promote understanding to foster good relations, it is also advised to follow the human rights act of 1998 where freedom of thought, expression and of peaceful assembly is of major significance (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013).

As higher education practitioners, they have a responsibility to deliver teaching and learning within the legal framework by paying close attention to the needs of students from diverse groups (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). In addition, opportunities to teach students to work collaboratively in diverse groups should be identified and teachers should devise creative ways of using students' diverse experiences to add value to the learning experience and teaching methods (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013).

A further source from the Equality Challenge Unit surrounding inclusive practice lays out responsibilities and guidance. The document states HEIs have a responsibility to deliver quality teaching and learning to all students as the student population reflects the increasing diversity of UK society (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). Furthermore, diversity of students helps frame the learning experience, and inclusive practice maximises the value and experience for all. Additionally, the document states that a proactive approach to inclusivity is likely to reduce the time practitioners would otherwise dedicate to working on a one-to-one basis with student who are experiencing problems with learning. The Equality Challenge Unit states that students have a legal right to teaching that does not discriminate against them based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender reassignment, pregnancy, religion, sex and

sexual orientation; and reasonable adjustment should be made to ensure disabled students can access education is a legal right (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013).

The document provides a checklist to aid practitioners in how to incorporate key elements into their teaching practice. For instance, the list advises reflecting upon teaching practice, encouraging interaction, revising course content, use more flexible teaching and assessment methods, meet disabled students access requirements, and finally accommodate other's needs (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013).

A final source from the Equality Challenge Unit focuses on pastoral care and why diversity is the best practice and crucial in pastoral care. The document cites that students benefit from an approach that recognises individual circumstances and one which can meet their individual needs (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). It states that many students face hurdles regarding political, cultural, social, sexual and spiritual identities while completing higher education and factors such as caring responsibilities, disability, gender reassignment and family relationships have a potential to significantly impact on a student's academic achievement, attainment and general wellbeing (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). The document highlights that a practitioner's reaction to these difficulties and the ability to understand and empathise with their experience is crucial to enable students to work through problems effectively; it is also a legal responsibility to ensure students are protected from discrimination and harassment. Therefore, reasonable adjustments must be made to allow disabled students equality of access in all aspects of education (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013).

This source also provides a checklist for guidance to teachers in the higher education sector, pointing out aspects like developing active listening skills to help students feel more understood in their needs (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). Moreover, it states improving understanding of diversity and being aware of stereotypes helps practitioners connect with students as well as provide more appropriate support. Being aware of student support services is another key element and helps signpost students, providing them with a range of specialised support in the right direction (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). The checklist also highlights how important it is to avoid becoming too involved with students' personal issues and to practice emotional detachment to maintain a professional manner. Another vital element is to act like a role model for students as the presence of people from minority groups or with additional learning needs that have succeeded in academia can help encourage students who are feeling incapable (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013).

A source from an institutional perspective, the University of Wales Trinity Saint David provides a 'Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024'. This action plan revolves around ensuring an inclusive learning and working environment is being provided where learners, students and staff can flourish in a healthy and inclusive learning community where they are free from prejudice and discrimination (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2020). To promote this, the institution ensures practitioners provide an inclusive learning and working environment where learners and staff can flourish in a healthy and inclusive learning community, free from discrimination (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2020). Providing this type of environment, the university suggests consultation with students helps to ensure barriers are fully understood to allow effective action to take place and understand the needs of learning communities (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2020).

Practitioners are expected to implement resources that enhance inclusive practices and wellbeing to all students, identifying support needs and effective intervention strategies. Improving communication is required for staff to remove the barrier to understand needs of diverse communities. A review of staff training and safeguarding procedures is essential to promoting an inclusive learning environment (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2020).

Part two

This section of the paper will be based around the University of Wales Trinity Saint David institution, within the subject area of sociology in the post compulsory education sector.

Megan

Upon reviewing the information Megan has provided, there are a number of steps that I would suggest to Megan to support her while she studies the Sociology programme next year. Firstly, addressing the declaration of mental health which outlines struggles with anxiety, I would begin by hosting a private student-teacher meeting outside of class to discuss any concerns to fully understand Megan's triggers and ways I can support her during her time in class. By doing this, I will be able to build rapport with Megan and create an open dialogue, gaining better insight of what support I can offer as her teacher (Eulberg, no date). In doing this, Megan will benefit from support that recognises her individual circumstance and I will aim to meet her individual and specific needs. To continue, the Equality Challenge Unit 'pastoral care' document states that my reaction to the issues students present and my ability to understand their experience is crucial to helping them work through their problems effectively and adequately (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). In this meeting I would ask if participation would be possible as to encourage engagement and stretching learning, following professional standards (Welsh Government, 2017). However, due to her worries surrounding speaking up in class, I would ask what her boundaries are and whether she would prefer volunteering on her own accord or if she would prefer to be called on to encourage her out of her comfort zone. Establishing these boundaries before lessons may help her feel more in control putting her anxiety at ease.

Furthermore, I would refer Megan to student services at the University Of Wales Trinity Saint David. The university states it aims to provide a safe and secure learning environment to all of its students and already have a number of arrangements in place to support those suffering from mental health (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2020). I would direct her to the university wellbeing support page where they offer counselling, wellbeing advice, specialist mental health mentoring and support to access external services. I would explain to her it would be beneficial to look into which of these services best suits her needs in managing her anxiety (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2023). I would also ask whether more frequent break would help her manage her anxiety while she's in my lessons and allow her to leave whenever she needs to recollect herself, perhaps recommending some mindfulness strategies which might help ground her as she experiences negative thoughts (Eulberg, no date).

Regarding Megan's traits of dyslexia, I would recommend she go to the 'Services for Disabled Students' page on the UWTSD website and investigate how she can proceed with getting a dyslexia assessment and focus on the importance of

identifying her needs and putting effective interventions in place as quickly as possible, following the Welsh Government ALN programme (Welsh Government, 2018). I would pass on the disability email 'disability@UWTSD.ac.uk' and recommend she explain to them what her previous tutors said so she can proceed with an assessment as quickly as possible to gain the support she needs during her studies (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2023). I would further explain she would be able to gain extra time when completing her assignments and will be offered additional support once she gets an official assessment. I would also ask Megan whether she requests any reasonable adjustments to my classes or resources that might help her during lessons, such as using a computer as it might help during writing tasks. When it comes to reading, I would suggest she try audiobooks and reading aloud software as they have been shown to be a helpful tool for those with dyslexia (Martinelli, 2022).

Dafydd

Upon reviewing the information Dafydd provided surrounding his situation, there are several procedures I would discuss with Dafydd to support him while on the Sociology programme. Beginning the academic year, I would request a classroom on the ground floor in preparation to make reasonable adjustments to Dafydd's situation. As stated in the Equality and diversity 'inclusive practice' document, disabled students have a legal right to reasonable adjustments to ensure their needs in accessing education are met (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013) and since Dafydd gets tired using his crutches I would prefer a downstairs room to prevent him getting too tired, assisting his needs as best I can. I would also ensure Dafydd knows where the accessibility lifts are so he can get around campus to the best of his ability. I would also talk to Dafydd about his disability to best understand what he requires from me as a teacher, beforehand. I would aim to conduct my own research into cerebral palsy as my knowledge is limited. By broadening my familiarity on this subject and how it impacts my student, I will gain insight, hopefully making Dafydd feel more open with talking to me about his needs as I will have more of an ability to understand his situation, which meets the 'pastoral care' checklist from the Equality Challenge Unit (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). Though Dafydd is keen to maintain his independence, upon his request for advice on his options I would point him in the direction of student support services via the 'Services for Disabled Students' page on the UWTSD website and encourage him to send an email to 'disability@UWTSD.ac.uk' to discuss his options about the support he is entitled to from the university. This would ensure he gets assistance for his individual circumstances and specialised services that meet his additional needs (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013).

Meanwhile, I would be open to discussing the options he has and what sort of further requests he would like to put in place. For instance, regarding Dafydd's eyesight I would explain how I completely empathise with his situation as I too am partial sighted. I would ask what size font he prefers, whether it helps to have resources printed off and what his laptop settings are as I can aid him in adjusting his laptop settings to meet his sight needs and making text bigger on screen. Moreover, I would enquire whether he prefers high contrast text-colour adjustments and if any other requirements are necessary. Considering his typing speed, I would suggest bringing recording software (phone, plug in mic) to record lectures so he can scroll back through this in his own time, without having to worry about typing everything down.

Furthermore, I would suggest accessibility software such as dictate on Microsoft Word and read aloud programmes as they are useful and avoid the need for typing altogether (Microsoft, 2023).

In terms of Dafydd's home situation, I would recommend he look into gaining some insight through UWTSD's website at the 'student life' page for some information regarding finance, accommodation, student services, student experiences, employability and careers (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2023). Here he can gain some good advice surrounding the campus, services and it will help address any concerns he might have on personal issues. Overall, I would encourage Dafydd to contact me if he has any further questions and express how I would like to keep up an open dialogue as he progresses with his studies to ensure his needs are being met.

Alys

Upon reviewing the information Alys has provided surrounding her pregnancy, there are a few factors I would like to discuss with her in order to support her second year on the Sociology programme. Firstly, host a private meeting with myself and Alys surrounding how best to support her. As HEIs have a responsibility in delivering quality teaching and learning to all students (Equality Challenge Uni, 2013), I would aim to seek a more in depth understanding of Alys' situation, recognising her individual circumstance and therefore meet her individual needs effectively (Equality Challenge Uni, 2013). I would aim to build rapport and trust with Alys, being aware of the stages of her pregnancy and when her due date is to ensure nothing unexpected occurs and be able to recognise if an emergency was taking place. Keeping an open dialogue between myself and Alys would hopefully improve her study and pregnancy experience as she gain my support throughout the process.

Further, I would make sure that Alys knows where to go to access the student support and wellbeing services in case at any point she feels she needs further support with her pregnancy journey and when she becomes a new mother. Being aware of my student support services such as disability support team, faith advisers, student finance and welfare advisers and the full range of other support available and how to access it allows me to point students in the right direction and improve their study experience and building them a stable support network they can rely on (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013).

I would also request a downstairs room for Alys while she is pregnant to ensure she has no troubles physically accessing the room and this is a reasonable adjustment being made to ensure she can access her education (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). Furthermore, offering more breaks would be another must as offering more flexibility during lesson plans and adaptability to suit my students needs is priority. For instance, Alys may request alternative arrangements for when the baby arrives such as being allowed to breastfeed in a lecture. As her teacher, I will ensure all her needs are being met, with close attention to 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs', particularly esteem as it focuses on a sense of freedom as well as physiological needs as she takes on her duty of being a mother while gaining her education (McLeod, 2022). Meeting Alys' needs will ensure my responsibility of delivering quality teaching and learning to all students and reflect the flexibility of my teaching style (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013).

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