



# Adjustments $\neq$ Inclusion: from adapting for disability to accessibility as default

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**UNIVERSITY  
OF WARWICK**



# This session



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**Setting the scene**

02

**Disabled student  
experience at  
Warwick**

03

**Adjustments ≠  
inclusion**

04

**'Baseline inclusive  
standards'**

# Take it back to practice

## THE CORE IDEA

*We can take steps to make teaching and learning (more) accessible by default (not as an adjustment).*

*Having ‘baseline inclusive standards’ might be one mechanism to help achieve this.*

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## A FIRST STEP TO TRY

*UDL your next teaching session!*

*Look at your departments’ teaching & learning policies or typical practices – to what extent are inclusive/accessible approaches foregrounded and expected?*

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## ADAPT IT FOR YOUR CONTEXT

*What makes for inclusive and accessible teaching and learning in your own discipline?*

*Explore other university’s ‘baseline inclusive standards’*

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# Key context



**Doubling of disability disclosures on UCAS in last decade**

**SEBD and MH conditions up by ~250% and ~450% respectively since 2012**

**Nationally, 18% of Home fees students reported a disability in 23/24**

**Disabled students are least satisfied, and have lower degree results and employment rates after graduation**

**37% increase in disclosures at Warwick in last 5 years**

**Complex and co-occurring conditions up 164% in 5 years**

**22% of Home fees students (16% overall)**

# Socio-political context

Marketisation and managerialism in HE sector means:

- Adjustments framed within cost-efficiency frameworks
- Austerity measures in HE often marginalise disability support - recasting accommodations as visible cost burdens
- Underfunding and bureaucratic processes become financial and administrative barriers for disabled students (HE as a personal investment; students as 'customers')

Koutsouris et al (2026) [The absent presence of disability in British higher education](#)



# Student perspectives



- Support is different across different departments depending on pedagogical practices, departmental decisions and staff attitudes.
- RAs can often be seen as an inconvenience or a form of ‘special treatment’, which ignores how inclusion helps all students.
- Students often feel unable or unqualified to ask for support when they are not diagnosed – diagnosis is often a social and economic privilege.
- Departmental autonomy means RAs often get ignored or dismissed.
- Nationwide, assistive technology and support is facing possible cuts for disabled students, making overall inclusion more important than ever.

# Student quotes from the ESRA project

What are some of the barriers that disabled students face at Warwick?

Quotes from ESRA project, summer 2024



# Adjustments ≠ inclusion



- The RA process relies on the medical model of disability
- ‘Diagnosis-based’ support means we miss those without evidence
  - Relies on students to initiate and advocate for their RAs
  - Presupposes binary categories of dis/abled
- The ‘menu’ of RAs available is static and often does not address the complex, intersecting needs of students
- Sustains pedagogies and assessment approaches that are not fit for contemporary purpose

# Universal Design for Learning

- Multiple **means of engagement** – activate learners’ interests, motivations, preferences  
=> *purpose and meaningful choice*
- Multiple **means of representation** – value different ways of making meaning, processing information, prior knowledge  
=> *access and multiple perspectives*
- Multiple **means of action & expression** – encourage students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in various ways  
=> *scaffolding and varied learning products*



# Universal Design for Learning

Why has UDL not been adopted in a more widespread way?

- ***Intentionality*** is key to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment:
- “...it is not enough to embrace a set of technocratic measures that promise a more inclusive classroom; rather, educators must strive to continually interrogate our own assumptions based on power, identity, and privilege, as well as understand that the context in which we teach is never neutral”

Dolan (2026) [Universal design for learning as emancipatory education?: politics, disagreement, discomfort](#)





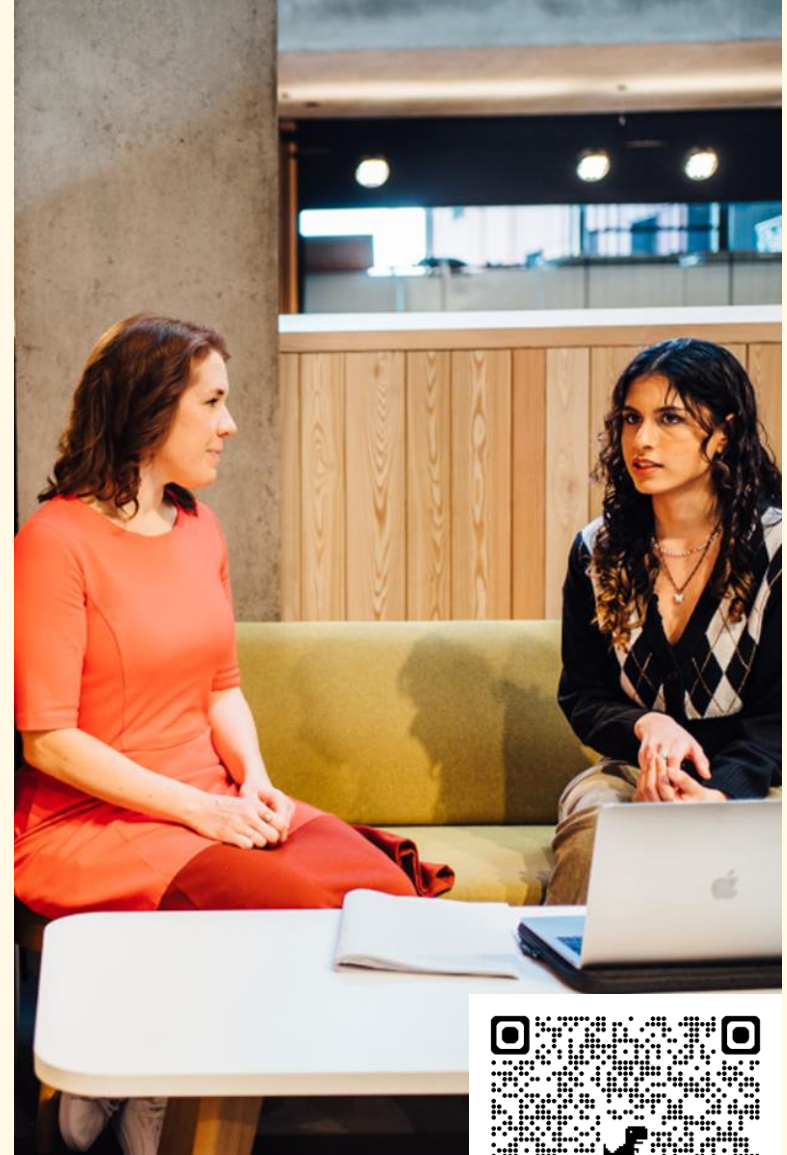
# Baseline Inclusive Standards



# OfS expected standards

*At the most fundamental level, the Equality Act is clear that universities and colleges must not discriminate against disabled students in the provision of education or wider support. **The anticipatory duty in the Equality Act means that institutions cannot take a narrow approach to supporting disability that only includes students who have a diagnosis or who have specifically declared that they have a disability.***

For all students: **consistency and accessibility of information - whether assessment briefs or marking criteria, lecture notes, captured sessions, navigability of resources across different departments, systems, joint degrees - are repeatedly raised as issues.**

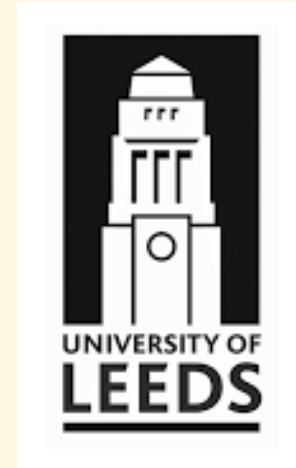


[OfS  
announcement](#)



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# Some of the Universities with 'baseline standards'



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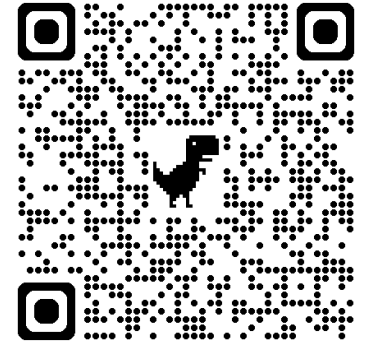
# Overview



All include:	Some include:	Not many include:
Advance release of teaching materials.	Accessibility of Reading Lists.	Designated accessibility/inclusion leads.
Accessibility of teaching and learning materials.	Appropriate notification of changes (e.g. timetabling/cancellations etc)	Advance provision of key words/technical terminology.
Accessible & flexible assessment methods.	Allowance for audio recordings to be made of teaching sessions.	
	Use of hearing loop technology/microphones by teaching staff.	

# Leeds

## *Inclusive Baseline Standards*

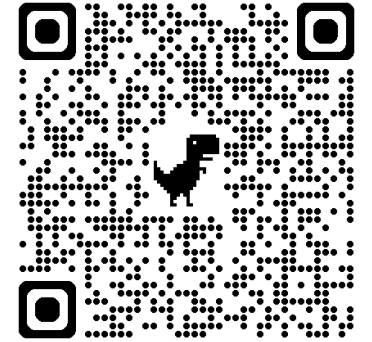


- **Baseline standard 1:** We will ensure that all learning and teaching practices, activities, and supporting materials, can be used by all students (Reasonable Adjustments may still be required in some circumstances.)
- **Baseline standard 2:** We will release materials in advance so that students have sufficient time to engage with them prior to scheduled sessions.
- **Baseline standard 3:** We will ensure that there is an appropriate range of assessment methods at a programme level, and that the language used in assessment tasks is clear.
- **Baseline standard 4:** We will ensure that colleagues are up to date with the institutional assessment strategy.
- **Baseline standard 5:** The University will support staff to achieve these baseline standards.
- **Baseline standard 6:** Schools will identify academic inclusivity leads to help embed guidance in local contexts.

# Edinburgh

## *Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy: Baseline Standards*

1. **Course outlines and reading lists** shall be made available at least four weeks before the start of the course.
2. **Reading lists** shall indicate priority and/or relevance.
3. **Lecture outlines or presentation slides** for lectures and seminars shall be made available to students at least 24 hours in advance of the class for all students to access as required.
4. **Key technical words**, terms or formulae used in a class shall be provided to students at least 24 hours in advance of the class that they are being used in.
5. Students shall be notified by email announcement of **changes to any teaching arrangements**, for example changes to courses, room changes or class cancellations.
6. A student shall be permitted to make **audio recording** of their lectures, tutorials and supervision sessions using their own equipment for the sole purpose of their own personal learning.
7. All teaching staff shall ensure that **microphones** are worn and used in all lectures regardless of the perceived need to wear them.
8. Teaching staff and examiners shall ensure their materials such as slides, lecture outlines, examinations and other electronic documents are **accessible**.



# Baseline inclusive standards – the ‘gallery walk’

Enablers

Barriers

Ideas

1. Information about teaching format, participation expectations, and assessment is available before module teaching begins.
2. Lecture outlines/presentation slides for taught sessions are available to students in an accessible electronic format at least 48 hours before a taught session.
3. An appropriate range of assessment methods are offered at programme level and deadlines are appropriately spaced.
4. Standard VLE course templates and naming conventions are used to support students’ navigation of their module learning
5. Students can make audio recording of their lectures, tutorials and supervision sessions if they are not lecture captured.
6. The language used in assessment tasks is clear, and key technical words, terms or formulae are provided to students at least 48 hours in advance of a taught session.
7. Module evaluations will encourage students to feedback on accessibility.

# Baseline inclusive standards – the ‘priority marketplace’

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