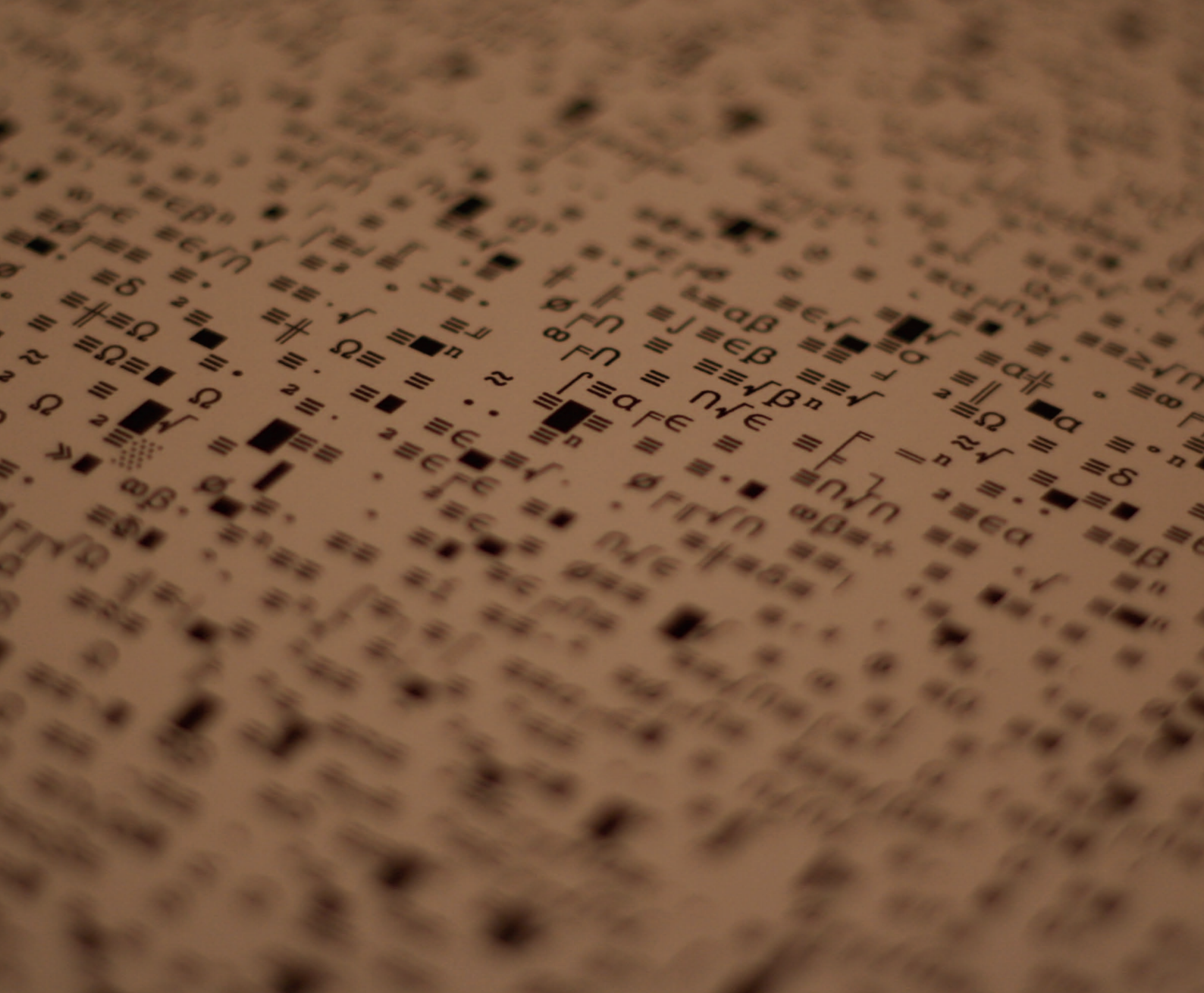




UCL



Supporting disabled people in the workplace:
guidance for UCL managers

Why do UCL managers require specialist guidance?

UCL is committed to fostering an environment where disabled people can flourish.

Disability and the accompanying legal issues can be a complex subject, especially for managers who have no personal experience of disability. This guidance is intended to equip managers with the understanding and expertise they need to meet the needs of disabled staff. During the development of UCL disability policy, focus groups of disabled staff have consistently identified managers to be the single most important group with whom to raise awareness.

What is a disability?

A disability is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as ‘a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on someone’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’. ‘Long-term’ means likely to last for twelve months or more. ‘Day-to-day activities’ are defined as involving any of the following:

- mobility
- doing something with your hands
- physical coordination
- continence (controlling your bladder and bowels)
- ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects
- speech, hearing or eyesight
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand or
- perception of the risk of physical danger

UCL is committed to supporting all staff with a disability, impairment or long-term condition. If managers are uncertain whether a staff member would meet the threshold of a disability, advice should be sought from the Occupational Health Team and/or the Equalities and Diversity Team. Progressive conditions such as HIV/AIDS, Cancer and Multiple Sclerosis are covered by the Equality Act 2010 from the point of diagnosis, regardless of the symptoms. Two of the most common disabilities impacting on the modern workplace are mental health issues and chronic pain resulting from musculoskeletal conditions.

What am I expected to do as a UCL manager?

Employers are required to make 'reasonable adjustments'. These can be to physical features of premises and/or arrangements for employing disabled people. Factors to be weighed up in determining 'reasonableness' are:

- the disabled person's views on what they need
- how effective the adjustment would be in overcoming the disadvantage
- how practicable it is to make the adjustment
- the extent of any disruption to activities
- effects on other staff
- sustainability
- the financial and other costs incurred by the employer

It is not necessary for UCL managers to be 'experts' in disability issues.

UCL's Equalities and Diversity team considers that there are three attitudinal elements that effective managers of disabled staff demonstrate:

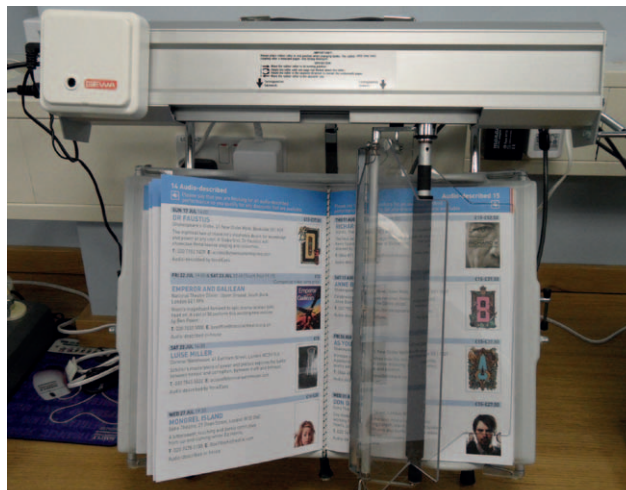
- an open-minded problem solving approach to making adjustments
- a positive and accepting attitude
- open communication between the manager and disabled member of staff
- willingness to seek advice
e.g. from Equalities and Diversity team or the Occupational Health team



What kinds of adjustments have been made at UCL?

Examples of reasonable adjustments have included:

- **Making adjustments to premises**
this could include structural or physical changes such as widening a doorway, building a ramp or fitting power-assisted doors
- **Acquiring or modifying equipment**
for example, providing a specially adapted keyboard for a visually impaired person or someone with arthritis
- **Providing a support worker**
such as a hearing assistant
- **Allowing the disabled person to be absent during working hours for assessment or treatment**
for example, to attend physiotherapy, therapy or hospital appointments
- **Reallocating some of the disabled person's duties to another person**
for example, if a job occasionally involves taking files to another floor, this task could be transferred to someone who does not have mobility restrictions
- **Altering the disabled person's working hours**
for example, allowing the disabled person to work flexible hours to enable additional breaks to overcome fatigue
- **Assigning the disabled person to a different place of work**
for example, moving the person to other premises or working from home.



Who is responsible for paying for reasonable adjustments?

Not all adjustments will have a cost, for instance if a change is made to someone's working hours but they do the same number of hours overall. However when there is a cost to a department/division there are a number of sources of funding. Given the expectation that all departments have a range of funding streams available to them, and taking into account the overall size of UCL, it would be very unusual for cost alone to be a justifiable reason for failing to make an adjustment.

a) Access to Work

Access to Work is a government fund run by the Department of Work and Pensions and provides support to disabled people to help them overcome work-related obstacles resulting from their disability.

An application to the Access to Work Programme should be made by the disabled person themselves within six weeks of starting work for UCL (or when they accept a position), in order for Access to Work to pay up to 100% of the costs of adjustments. Access to Work applies to any paid job – part-time or full-time, permanent or temporary. Unemployed or employed disabled people needing help with a communicator at a job interview can also get help from Access to Work.

Existing staff members who are or who become disabled are eligible to apply for a grant from Access to Work irrespective of the length of time at UCL, though in these cases the Access to Work Scheme may not meet 100% of the costs. If an application is made after the initial six week period, UCL would be expected to pay the first £1000 and then 20% towards costs up to £10,000. Access to Work would pay the other 80%. Access to Work will however pay up to 100% of the approved cost of equipment, or adaptations over £10,000. In all applications an additional voluntary contribution from the employer will be requested.

Access to Work has a number of exclusions to what it will pay for

www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/equalities/disability/what_is_covered.doc

Full details of the process are detailed in UCL's Access to Work policy

www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/equalities/disability/access_to_work.php

While the disabled staff member is responsible for making the Access to Work application, the manager should make them aware of this funding stream and the UCL guidance on the process when the disabled person discloses their disability.

b) UCL's central fund for reasonable adjustments

In order to bridge any shortfall between Access to Work funding and departmental budgets UCL has created a central budget for reasonable adjustments. Only adjustments costing £100 or more are normally eligible for this fund. To make an application email Sarah Guise, Head of Equalities and Diversity s.guise@ucl.ac.uk outlining:

- the nature of the disability
- the amount of funding requested and details of how other sources of funding have been exhausted
- how the adjustment will help the individual to fulfil their role

c) Estates and Facilities maintenance budget

Alterations to the UCL estate, such as the building of a ramp, should be requested through the usual maintenance process www.ucl.ac.uk/efd/maintenance/.

Disability-related alterations will be given priority over routine maintenance works, so it should be made clear that this is a disability-related request.

d) Departmental/divisional budgets

Adjustments costing less than £100 should normally be paid for using departmental budgets.

Who can I go to for advice at UCL?

Advice on adjustments can be sought from

- The disabled staff member, who may wish to replicate an arrangement in their previous job
- UCL's Occupational Health Service (OHS)
www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/occ_health/
- UCL's Equalities and Diversity team
www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/equalities/contacts/index.php
- Human Resources Consultancy staff
www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/staff/hr_staff_contacts_cons.php
- The UCL SENIT suite www.ucl.ac.uk/disability/services/senit
for advice on disability-related software
- External organisations with specialist expertise e.g. Mind, RNID, Diabetes UK.

It is for the manager to decide, in consultation with the relevant member of the HR Consultancy Team if appropriate, whether the potential adjustments identified by the OHS are reasonable to implement within that particular workplace and if not, whether there is an alternative role for the individual within the department or UCL.

A note about mental health

Long-term mental health conditions, such as chronic depression and bipolar disorder, meet the threshold of a disability. UCL is mindful of the fact that there remains a stigma in our society around mental health conditions. This prejudice can be especially pronounced in the workplace, where people with mental health conditions may be fearful that their capability to do the job or ability to cope in stressful situation may be under closer scrutiny.

Staff who disclose that they suffer from a mental health condition to their managers should be reassured that UCL will take all reasonable steps to ensure a supportive working environment and that information about their condition will be treated in confidence.

Disabled students at UCL

For advice on supporting disabled student at UCL contact Student Disability Services
www.ucl.ac.uk/disability/

Further reading

UCL's Disability Equality Scheme

www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/equalities/disability/ucl_initiative.php

Disability in employment policy

www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/disability_policy.php



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