

Disclosure of a Condition

Before we discuss the process of disclosure of a condition, it is important to note that the University of Glasgow advocates the [Social Model of Disability](#). This model sees environments and circumstances as disabling and it being everyone's responsibility to proactively address and limit this impact, rather than a conditions, neurodivergence or impairments causing disability and the onus being on the individual experiencing it to mitigate. It therefore takes the view that creating everything as accessible in the first instance will avoid singling anyone out. For further information, please read [Equality & Diversity Policy- Disability](#).

Due to NHS waiting lists and the length of time the process can take to receive a formal diagnosis, it is important to create workplace conditions that are as accessible as possible in the absence of a formal diagnosis. Thus, **if someone requires reasonable adjustments, this should be taken at face value and implemented** for that person to undertake their work effectively and efficiently. For further information surrounding this, please view the [Disability in Science Careers talk on implementing reasonable adjustments here](#).

In addition, there is stigmatisation of neurodivergent conditions, many people feel uncomfortable with disclosure. Even if someone is comfortable disclosing that they are neurodivergent, sometimes it can be overwhelming to know to whom, where, or what to disclose. Therefore, this section hopes to 1) alleviate that stress by explaining the processes and provide guidance on the process and 2) how to respond to someone's disclosure.

Please note that if you feel uncomfortable with having to state your condition for reasonable adjustments to be made, the Neurodiversity in the Workplace Conference chaired by Dr Nancy Doyle and Do-IT Profiler suggest saying "I am confident I can do this job well providing that the following reasonable adjustments are put in place...".

Staff process

It is a choice as to whether you would like to disclose your disability and/or condition.

However, if you are to seek support provided by the University, below are the steps to take. The below steps are taken from Internal Communications email that was sent to all staff.

- Access support from the [Support for Disabled and Neurodivergent Colleagues portal](#). The portal provides a support framework which allows colleagues and managers to discuss, explore and implement reasonable adjustments to remove or overcome barriers to work.
- Further, a new automated workflow process means when a colleague updates their People XD record (previously known as Core HR) either at the point of joining the University, or during their existing employment, they will be prompted to confirm whether they would appreciate a workplace discussion about reasonable adjustments. If confirmed, this will then send an automated message to their line manager to prompt them to set up a discussion.
- Within the Support for Disabled and Neurodivergent Colleagues webpage, a Reasonable Adjustment Passport has been developed. This optional and complementary form acts as a live record of adjustments discussed and agreed between colleagues and their managers.

- The portal and the process improvements have been designed to ensure constructive and supportive conversations between colleagues and their line managers.
- Staff can [update their People XD diversity details](#) by logging into their personal Employee Dashboard.

Note: Dr Elliott Spaeth and Leigh Abbott, amongst many other colleagues, were involved in the revisions of the Support for Disabled and Neurodivergent Colleagues portal.

PGR Student process

It is a choice as to whether you would like to disclose your disability and/or condition.

However, if you are to seek support provided by the University, here are the steps to take. These steps are taken from the Disability Service webpage of the University.

- Students can self-refer to the [Disability Service](#) (i.e., you do not need to speak/disclose to your supervisor first).
- If you are currently diagnosed with a disability condition, **you will need to email the Disability Service with medical evidence** from a medical or psychological professional of your disability condition on headed stationary (this is usually in document format). You will have an individual needs assessment with Disability Adviser to discuss what support you may need*.
- **However**, if you do not have a currently diagnosed disability condition but would like support, email the Disability Service with your enquiry so that you are able to speak with a Disability Adviser.
They will discuss any evidence requirements in the appointment and support you to get any evidence that may be required.
If you have any documents you feel may work as evidence but are not sure, send these to the Disability Service so that they can advise you further.
- Having your evidence helps the Disability Service to arrange support for you quickly, but not having evidence does not mean that you can't meet with the Disability Service to discuss study support.
- *At your appointment an individual needs assessment will be carried out to determine the disability-related support you will need on your course. This involves identifying any barriers or areas of concern on your course in relation to your condition and identifying appropriate provisions. If you are a Student Award Agency for Scotland (SAAS) funded student and eligible for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) funding to support your studies, then a DSA claim can be made to SAAS. However, if you are UKRI-funded (funded by one of the UK's research councils), your DSA will be funded via your grant.

However, if you also wish to talk to your supervisor about your condition and how to seek support you can...

- Talk to your supervisor about what it is you require for an optimum working environment (i.e., reasonable adjustments). If these adjustments are minor adjustments at local level and can be agreed and put in place between you and your supervisor, then this will be completed.

- However, if you require specific reasonable adjustments that can't be met on a local level, your supervisor should direct you to the Disability Services where you will be assessed on what reasonable adjustments you need. Please see above.

Dos and Don'ts when someone discloses their condition to you

Do NOT

- Make a valued judgement about the person's disclosed disability/condition. This means not seeing their condition as good **or** bad, it is just a fact about that person.
- Make assumptions based on the disability/condition the person has disclosed to you or assume that you know more about it than they do. For example, telling the person what they should be doing/how they should be feeling. **The person is the expert of their own condition.**
- Be dismissive of the person's disclosure. For example, using phrases such as "you could be worse off", "are you sure you have X?", or "at least you don't have X condition, that would be bad". These phrases can invalidate/negate/deny the person's lived experience and/or can express disbelief in what the person has said/shared.
- Compare the person to being "normal" by using phrases such as "you don't seem like you have X", "you seem so normal", "you don't look like you have X", "I would never have thought that you have X!". These can be very damaging to the person who has made the disclosure as these phrases suggest that it is a negative thing to have X.
- Invalidate the disabled/neurodivergent lived experience by saying that everyone has the same lived experience(s). For example, using phrases such as "everyone is like that", "we're all a little bit autistic/on the spectrum", "everyone has something they're OCD about", "I'm clumsy, so I must have dyspraxia too", "we all pretty much have ADHD". This undermines the neurodivergent experience and makes the person think you are not taking them seriously.
- Deny/ignore labels of a disability/condition by using phrases such as "I don't believe in labels, we're all unique" and/or "everyone wants a label these days". Although we are all unique, many disabled/neurodivergent people want/need a label to better explain their lived experience and understand themselves, and to be granted reasonable adjustments. Thus, using phrases such as the above rejects the person's lived experience and barriers/difficulties that person has had and continues to face in life.

DO

- Ensure safety for the person disclosing. This means keeping the disclosure of a condition private and confidential and offering a space which is accepting of differences and disabilities.
Undertaking [equality and diversity courses provided by the University](#) and going on external training will provide you with the tools on how to create a safe environment for someone to disclose. Also using phrases such as "this is a safe space to talk", "everything here will be kept confidential, and if you require reasonable adjustments, HR / Occupational Health / Disability Service will keep your information confidential too", can help with creating this kind of environment.
- Acknowledge the truth of the disability/condition and take it as a matter of fact about that person, just as much as anything else about them (e.g., that they have green

eyes, that they are a technician/professor/HR personnel etc.). This is important as it will enable you to look at the situation objectively.

- Respond to someone's disclosure in a measured and understanding way. Try and think of how it might be difficult for that person to disclose and how you can best support the person.
- Actively listen to the person disclosing. This is vitally important. If you need to take notes to make sure that you understand what the person has said, ask the person before you write things down and explain your reasons for taking notes.
- Provide reasonable adjustments if you are the person's line manager. If you are a colleague/peer, be open to making changes based on what the other person needs. **It takes courage for that person to specify their needs**, therefore giving the person their reasonable adjustments will ease their worries and optimise their working environment.