

Learner Support Policy

Lead Officer (Post):	Head of Student Experience
Responsible Office/Department:	Senior Management Team (SMT)
Responsible Committee:	Operations and Estates, Senior Management Group (SMG)
Review Officer (Post):	Vice Principal Operations
Date policy approved:	19/06/2026
Date policy last reviewed and updated:	N/A
Date policy due for review:	05/06/2029
Date of Equality Impact Assessment:	Assessed
Date of Privacy Impact Assessment:	N/A

Accessible versions of this policy are available upon request.

Policy Summary

Overview	This policy sets out a regional approach to learner support for the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and all academic partners.
Purpose	The policy will provide a framework for a consistent and coherent methodology for the support of learners.
Scope	This policy applies to all academic partners and students, including online and hybrid learners.
Consultation	This policy was developed in consultation with practitioners from across the UHI network. The policy is owned and approved by

	Inclusive Practice Leads. Approval has been noted by the Student Support Group.
Implementation and Monitoring	Academic partners will be responsible for implementation and monitoring. This will be reported to Inclusive Practice Leads and the Student Support Group. Implementation will consider digital accessibility, ensuring online learning platforms and materials are accessible to all students.
Risk Implications	The policy reduces risk for UHI and its academic partners by reinforcing the existing community of practice for staff and creating a streamlined process. Students will also benefit from a consistent approach across all partners. UHI has a legislative duty to ensure the needs of students who disclose additional needs are catered for, as appropriate, via reasonable adjustments. Failure to do so may impact negatively on our students and put the institution at risk and lead to reputational damage. The reasonable adjustments duty is anticipatory.
Link with Strategy	This policy supports our commitment to equity of the student experience and ensures compliance with our legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. It links to UHI's Strategic Plan and to relevant external quality frameworks, including the Scottish Funding Council's Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model
Impact Assessment	Equality Impact Assessment: Assessed – No further action to be taken.
	Privacy Impact Assessment: N/A

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 UHI Shetland is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment in which every student can make the most of learning and development opportunities available throughout their student journey. All students have different learning needs, regardless of level of study.
- 1.2 UHI Shetland will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and fair treatment for those with protected characteristics, including for neurodiverse students and those requiring trauma-informed practices.
- 1.3 Students will have opportunities to demonstrate their full potential through appropriate reasonable adjustments and anticipatory service provision by UHI Shetland, including accessible learning materials and alternative assessment methods.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 **Personal Learning Support Plan:** A Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP) is a functional and confidential document which details the nature of a student's additional support need(s) and any support measures that have been agreed. PLSPs are drawn up in close consultation with students and are organic documents subject to change as appropriate.
- 2.2 **Reasonable adjustment duty:** As set out in the Equality Act 2010, the reasonable adjustment duty is the legal obligation to remove as far as possible by reasonable means the 'substantial disadvantage' which a disabled student experiences because of their disability. This duty is anticipatory. Further information from the Equality and Human Rights Commission is available [here](#).
- 2.3 **Disabled Students' Allowance:** DSA is the government-identified funding mechanism to support Higher Education students. The process of applying for DSA is practitioner/adviser led. Therefore, eligible HE students will be

supported by student support staff at UHI Shetland to make an application as appropriate.

3. Purpose

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to create a supportive environment for learners in UHI Shetland. This policy is intended to promote access and inclusion and wherever possible to provide parity of experience for learners at each stage of their student journey.
- 3.2 Disclosures can be made at any time from pre-application. All students and prospective students are encouraged to disclose any specific requirements at the earliest opportunity, in order that appropriate support can be identified as soon as is practicable. Academic staff may also refer students to Student Support.
- 3.3 As appropriate disclosures will be followed up by Student Support at UHI Shetland. The professional judgement of staff from Student Support will be used at all stages of needs assessment in order to ascertain the appropriateness of support and adjustments for students.
- 3.4 **PLSPs:** The UHI partnership recognises the value of the PLSP as a functional and confidential document that details the support and adjustments, including those related to academic assessment, that have been approved in light of a student's specific needs. PLSPs should be used where appropriate, where it supports the learner and the situation warrants and/or necessitates the use of this tool.
- 3.5 **Alternative Assessment Arrangements:** Where alternative assessment arrangements are required the need for these must be evidenced in the student's PLSP. There is often a requirement to generate such evidence, which can take a variety of forms and will take cognisance of accreditation body stipulations as required.

- 3.6 Planning for reasonable adjustments is collaborative: involving students, support and academic staff. The student remains central and is regularly updated on progress.
- 3.7 **Awarding Bodies:** When reviewing additional support requests validated by another awarding body, the awarding body website and/or policies must be referred to.
- 3.8 **Use of Personal Data:** Personal data collected through the UHI Shetland Learner Support process will be handled in accordance with UHI's tertiary student document retention policy and the [relevant privacy notice](#). Personal data will be anonymised and used for statistical purposes to monitor applications by age, disability, gender and gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity status, ethnicity, religion and/or belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or care experience.

4. Scope

- 4.1 This policy applies to students undertaking courses at UHI Shetland, regardless of mode, level or format of delivery.
- 4.2 Support and/or adjustments are recommended on the basis of professional judgement by Student Support. The needs assessor's professional judgement will be shaped by various factors, including their knowledge and awareness of the student's needs at the time and other forms of evidence and considerations relevant to the needs assessment process.
- 4.3 The implementation of reasonable adjustments does not always rely on the availability of formal diagnostic evidence, and in extremis (especially in relation to mental health) a student's actions and behaviours can be taken as evidence. The anticipatory nature of the reasonable adjustments duty requires these to be identified and implemented prior to a PLSP being constructed, where appropriate.

4.4 Whether it is reasonable for an education provider to make any particular adjustment will depend on a number of factors, including:

- The effectiveness of making the adjustment.
- Whether it is practical to make the adjustment.
- The cost of the adjustment, and the resources and size of the institution.
- The availability of grants, loans and other assistance to disabled students, such as Disabled Students' Allowance, or charitable trusts.
- The extent to which aids and services will be provided to disabled students from other sources.
- Health and Safety requirements: this means if the adjustment increased the risks to the health and safety of another person.
- The relevant interests of other people: this means where the adjustment results in significant disadvantage for other people.

'Reasonable' means in all the circumstances of the case and can take into account the education provider's actual level of knowledge.

4.5 The goal of a reasonable adjustment is to directly address the 'significant disadvantage' faced by a disabled student, without compromising the integrity, including the core professional or competency-based requirements, of a qualification. There is an emphasis on proportionality and relevance: adjustments must be necessary and effective, not duplicating ordinary support available to all, or provision that the student is required or expected to access regardless of disability.

4.6 The duty to make reasonable adjustments for individuals usually starts at the point at which the individual first discloses to the organisation. The institution, as a whole, is then deemed to know. In addition to making reasonable adjustments for individuals, the legal duty to make reasonable adjustments requires the university to anticipate the requirements of disabled people and take reasonable steps in advance to reduce or remove barriers.

4.7 UHI has a duty to offer reasonable adjustments to anyone who requires them. It is not always necessary for students to formally disclose a disability to access support – reasonable adjustments must be made by staff even where the student has not engaged with enrolling student services, when

- a) there is an urgent, immediate or short-term need for reasonable adjustments, prior to a full assessment of need by enrolling student services
- b) the circumstances demand it.
- c) Adjustments can be easily made as inclusive practice, without specialist input from enrolling student services. This aligns with the anticipatory nature of the reasonable adjustments duty.

4.8 Where there is an immediate or urgent need, staff are not expected to put in place a full range of adjustments or permanent adjustments. In these situations, staff involved should seek prior advice from enrolling student services where possible and must apprise them of the situation once the immediate need has been addressed. The student's learning support adviser will advise on next steps and initiate/review/update the student's agreed PLSP as required.

5. Exceptions

Student personal health care is out with the scope of this policy.

6. Notification

- 6.1 All staff are responsible for supporting learners through their student journey and should be aware of the policy.
- 6.2 Staff members responsible for providing specialist learner support will be briefed and trained on the policy and procedures.

- 6.3 The policy will be publicly available on UHI Shetland's website, along with other current policies.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

- 7.1 UHI Shetland's Head of Student Experience has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

- 7.2 All staff have a responsibility to provide support for the learner through their student journey.

- 7.3 UHI Shetland's Student Support staff will provide services including, but not limited to:

- Contact with students and assessment of need
- Discussion with academic staff as to appropriateness of reasonable adjustments, where required.
- Creation of PLSPs
- Signposting and coordinating support
- Liaising between student and academic staff
- Implementation of support
- Passing Summary of Support to PAT

- 7.4 UHI Shetland's Academic Staff will provide services including, but not limited to:

- Reading the Summary of Support and appropriate cascading to relevant members of staff on a need-to-know basis
- Compliance with Summary of Support
- Implementing learning and teaching adjustments
- Review and liaison with Student Support on impact of learning and teaching adjustments
- Liaising with Student Support where a student has not made a disclosure but may require support
- Adhering to confidentiality protocols

8. Legislative Framework

- Adult with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007
- British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015
- British Sign Language (BSL): National Plan 2023 to 2029
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004
- Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Mental Health Act 2007
- Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003
- Online Safety Act 2023
- Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007
- Scottish Care Leavers Covenant (2015)
- Scottish Strategy for Autism 2011
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act (2023)
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

9. Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines, and Other Resources

- [Advance HE: Competence Standards and Reasonable Adjustments](#)
- AP Access to Assessment Policy
- AP Admissions Policy
- AP Corporate Parenting Plan
- AP Further Education Guidance Policy

- AP Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy
- EHRC Advice note on the Abrahart case
- UHI Academic Standards and Quality Regulations
- UHI British Sign Language Plan 2024-30
- UHI DSA guidance – referrals, support and internal guidance for DSA advisers
- UHI Equality and Diversity Reporting
- UHI guidance on the provision of interim reasonable adjustments
- UHI Learning Support Privacy Notice
- UHI PLSP staff guidance
- UHI Recording of Taught Sessions Policy
- UHI student support communications site (SharePoint)
- UHI Support for Study Procedure

10. Version Control and Change History

Version	Date	Approved by	Amendment(s)	Author
0	19/06/26	Operations and Estates	Adopted UHI single policy	Vice Principal Operations