



Disabled Graduate Employment 2021

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Students' Commission.

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Executive summary

The Disabled Students Commission (DSC) is seeking to provide strategies and advice to improve the experience of disabled students. A key aspect of that experience is the ability to access the workforce and to transition into employment. There has been evidence over the years that there is a gap in the progress into employment for disabled graduates in comparison to other graduates.

While all graduates will likely experience challenges relating to employment, it is vital that disabled students receive additional support. From a recently published poll by the Trade Union Congress (TUC), it was found that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the [employment gap between disabled and non-disabled workers was 28 per cent](#). This gap is noted in the annual [AGCAS 'What Happens Next?'](#) reports, where disabled graduates at all qualification levels were found to be less likely to be in employment than non-disabled graduates.

Specific concerns related to the impact of Covid-19 in TUC's poll were echoed in the DSC's recent survey exploring the impact of Covid-19 on disabled students, where concerns around employment were prominent. Out of 473 disabled students that took part in the survey, it was found that half of respondents felt 'quite concerned' or 'very concerned' about their employment prospects. Additionally, students felt worried about the economy and fewer available work opportunities, re-entering populated workplace environments, as well as a deterioration of their mental health over the past year.

Out of those considering employment, only 7.9% of disabled students reported receiving disability-specific careers advice or support from their university or college, suggesting very low awareness that such a service exists (results from AGCAS' HE Careers Service Survey 2019 showed that 77.2% of careers services offer initiatives to engage students with a disability or physical/mental health condition). Within the DSC survey, students also requested support such as 'more workshop events on disability disclosure during interviews' as well as 'support with adjusting back to normal life and work' after Covid-19.

The DSC calls upon:

1. Universities and colleges to reflect on the nature and level of support that they provide to disabled students and graduates for moving into employment.
2. Employers to reflect on the impact of the pandemic for their recruitment strategies and ensure that they are fully inclusive of disabled graduates.

The DSC would also like to share good practice in this area and recognises that there is a considerable amount of good work in this area. The DSC invites organisations to send us further information so that we can share practice.

Recommendations for Universities and Colleges

1. Provide specific employability, career and enterprise guidance to disabled graduates and make clear if these have been updated to reflect the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on working practice and culture.
2. Support disabled graduates in thinking through the reasonable adjustments they may need to work remotely as well as in a workplace environment, and making sure they are aware of the adjustments available during the recruitment process. Such adjustments might be physical changes or changes to how forms, tests or interview questions are communicated.
3. Provide an introduction to the support disabled graduates can expect in work including the support provided by Access to Work to graduates in employment, self-employment, apprenticeships, work experience and internships. See: www.gov.uk/access-to-work.
4. Explore how to increase engagement of disabled students and graduates with their careers services and work in co-creation with them to plan the support. Related to this, ensure disabled graduates can maintain links with the careers service by extending the time period they can use the service post-graduation, with a focus on transition into employment.
5. Explore disabled graduates' expectations of employment. Increased access to work placement opportunities will help graduates to identify skills, strengths and motivations developed from having, or managing, a disability.
6. Ensure that further study options, such as research, are clear and the implications of further study are understood by disabled graduates

Recommendations for Chambers of Commerce, CBI, Institute of Directors

1. Promote the advantages of having an inclusive workforce which includes disabled graduates.
2. Encourage their members to liaise specifically with university and college Careers Services on the potential recruitment of disabled graduates.
3. Ensure that their members are aware of the requirement under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for disabled graduates and that this applies in both the remote working and workplace environments.

Recommendations for Employers:

1. Ensure work experience and internship programmes are attractive to and inclusive of disabled graduates.
2. Promote a welcoming and inclusive approach to graduate applicants and consider the using the positive action provisions within the Equality Act 2010, including during the recruitment and selection process. For further information see:
www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/employers-using-positive-action-address-workplace-disadvantage.
3. Where remote working is required or optional, ensure appropriate reasonable adjustments in the home as well as the workplace environment.
4. Provide information to all applicants on the support that they provide to disabled employees and where applicable, their commitments under initiatives including Disability Confident and the Business Disability Forum's, Disability Smart Audit.

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