



Disabled Student Commitment: Year One report

The
Disabled Student
Commitment



Contents

1	Foreword	4
2	Introduction	5
2.1	Theory of Change	6
3	HEP sign-ups	8
3.1	Signatories to date	8
3.2	Sign-up process	9
4	Sector progress	10
4.1	Keeping disabled students' outcomes under review	16
5	Mapping the Commitment	17
6	Work in the home nations	18
7	Next steps for the Commitment	19
8	Annex A: Group Membership	20
8.1	Advisory Group	20
8.2	Partnership Group	21
8.3	Student Advisory Group	22
8.4	Special Interest Sub-Groups	22

1 Foreword

The Disabled Student Commitment (the Commitment) may have launched just over a year ago, but its foundations are deeper and its history longer. It reflects a long-standing call for partnership and accountability in the higher education (HE) sector, months of consultation with HE students and staff and years of gathering and assessing evidence about practice.

At a time when funding is a major concern to many higher education providers (HEPs), signing up to the Commitment ensures that resources are organised in a way that meets the needs of each provider. The Commitment encourages shared goal setting, transparency of its actions and is adaptable to individual HEP contexts, including their starting point and available resourcing. It provides a means of facing sector challenges head on, whereby listening to and being inclusive of all students in higher education is more important than ever.

Within the sector, there has been a broad engagement with work on student wellbeing and the University Mental Health Charter. These have strong intersections with the Commitment, but only by responding to all 43 principles in the Commitment can the sector truly provide disabled students with the transformative environment they are entitled to. Engaging with the Commitment will assist HEPs in meeting both their legal duties and the expectations of their disabled students.

The Commitment is a voluntary, non-regulatory scheme that allows HEPs to show the progress they are making supporting disabled students. In its first year, it has been great to see sign up to the Commitment from a broad range of HEPs, in terms of mission, size and location. This shows the relevance of the Commitment to all providers in the sector. As these trail-blazers progress, we will share more of their experience and their learning.

The support of key sector bodies has also been important. Our Advisory Group contains representatives of: Advance HE; National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP), Office for Students (OfS), University & College Admissions Service (UCAS), Student Loans Company (SLC), Business Disability Forum (BDF), Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), and Department of Education (DfE). In this report, we note the actions taken by these to improve the way the sector works as a whole.

This work would not have been possible without the support of the Commitment constituent groups: the Advisory Group, the Partnership Group and the Student Advisory Group. We would like to thank all those individuals who have contributed their time, energy and knowledge. And of course, this would not have been possible without the support of Advance HE, NADP, London South Bank University (LSBU) and The Open University (OU).

Professor Deborah Johnston, Alice Speller, Hannah Borkin, Professor Ian Pickup, Elliott Spaeth

Disabled Student Commitment Core Planning Group

2 Introduction

The Disabled Student Commitment, referred to as the 'Commitment', was launched by the Disabled Students' Commission in April 2023, an independent group with a remit to inform, influence and challenge the nature of support provided for disabled students in HE. The Disabled Students' Commission was announced by the Minister of State for Universities in 2019 and funded for a period of three years.

The Commitment is a voluntary, non-regulatory scheme, which follows the lifecycle of the student across the following touchpoints:

- + Requests to share information
- + Choosing a course of study
- + Transition into the higher education community
- + On-course experience
- + Moving forward

It clearly indicates that the transition from school or college into HE needs to become more seamless, that students entering a HEP should only have to share information regarding their disability once and that there should be clarity around the support offered.

The Commitment encourages HEPs to self-audit, with their students, any gaps in delivery, to action these and make progress in a way that shares expectations with their disabled students. It is adaptable to individual contexts, including their starting point and available resourcing.

The Commitment also calls upon sector bodies, regulators and Government to show the progress they are making with regards to improving support for disabled students.

It contains a total of 43 principles (of which 26 are for HEPs) and is achieved by producing an annual plan of action that responds to each principle and the needs identified in a particular HEP or sector body.

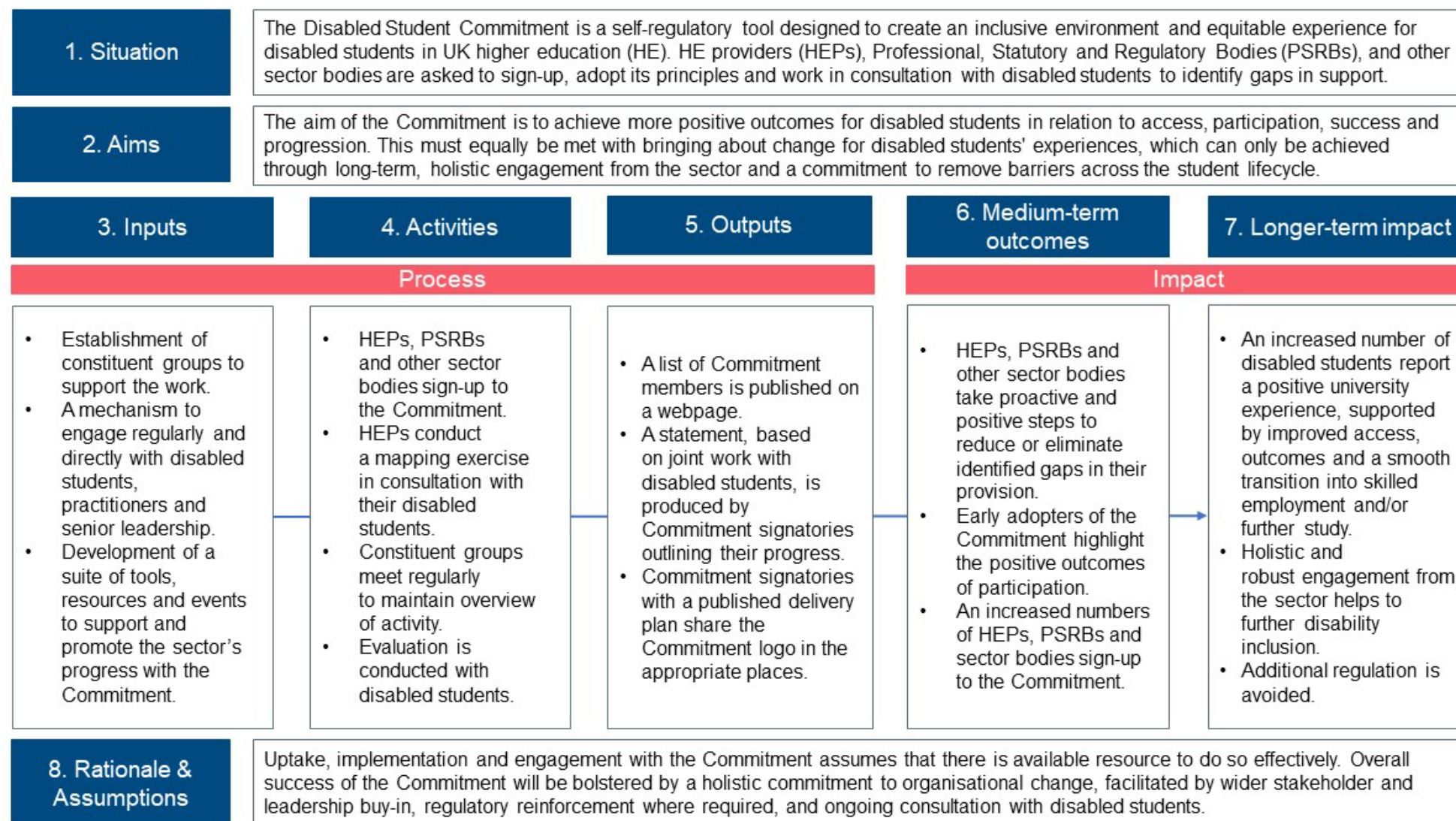
There continue to be significant barriers faced by disabled students in HE. One year on from the launch of the Commitment, this report celebrates the HEPs that have signed up to the scheme since registration opened, as well as the progress made by named sector bodies. It also announces the constituent groups that have been established to take this work forward. Further information on group membership can be found in Annex A.

To read the Disabled Student Commitment in full, please visit the webpage [here](#).

2.1 Theory of Change

The Commitment's Theory of Change (Figure 1) is outlined below. A Theory of Change workshop was delivered during the first Advisory Group and Partnership Group meetings, with feedback received from members to provide further information around practice and impact for sector bodies. The Student Advisory Group also fed back during their first meeting in May 2024. Work is also ongoing to coordinate an approach for other relevant organisations such as funders and professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies to support their approaches to fulfilling the Commitment.

Figure 1 - Disabled Student Commitment Theory of Change



3 HEP sign-ups

There are two stages to achieving the Commitment: initial sign-up; and achievement. Sign-up to the Commitment is a first step towards a tailored approach to improving support for disabled students at each HEP. HEP sign-up to the Commitment officially opened in [October 2023](#).

3.1 Signatories to date

In the first year since its launch, we would like to congratulate the following 15 signatories to the Commitment. A complete list is outlined below:

HEP	Named key contact
Birmingham City University	Kate Waugh
Brunel University London	Henrietta Spalding
Edinburgh Napier University	Jonathan Staal
London South Bank University	Dr. Iliyan Stefanov
New College Durham	Suzy Taylor
Nottingham Trent University	Gary McGladdery
Solent University	Tania Struetzel
The Open University	Ciaragh Hubert
University of Central Lancashire	Craig Austin
University of Greenwich	Pauline McFarlane
University of Hertfordshire	Emma Diston
University of Law	Brian Lutcmiah
University of Liverpool	Paula Harrison
University College Birmingham	Helen Poole
University of Exeter	Beau Bell

Prominent themes have emerged among the above HEPs regarding their approach. Namely, several HEPs have initiated or already have in operation a Disabled Students' Steering Group; a ready-made and tailored forum to consult with their disabled students and receive feedback on the Commitment's implementation. Secondly, where disability is considered a central strand of an institutional strategy, HEPs have utilised this to facilitate a partnership approach with their senior leadership teams.

With resourcing and funding a concern in many HEPs, signing up to the Commitment ensures resources are used effectively and that activities reflect sector best practice. As the Commitment progresses into its second year, we are eager to expand its membership by introducing additional avenues of support. To this end, further information about a mapping template that has been designed to support HEPs formulate a coordinated and holistic action plan is outlined in 'Mapping the Commitment'.

Work is also ongoing to promote awareness of the Commitment across the four nations of the United Kingdom (UK). A summary this work to date is outlined in 'Work in the home nations'.

3.2 Sign-up process

To sign-up, HEPs can send an email to dsc@advance-he.ac.uk, attaching a signed letter from the Vice-Chancellor or equivalent member of staff, outlining the following:

- + The name of your HEP
- + A named contact for your work around the Commitment moving forward
- + A brief statement outlining the ways you are intending to work towards the principles in the Commitment.

Achievement of the Commitment occurs when a HEP publishes a delivery plan in consultation with its disabled students. This is published annually and displayed in the appropriate places, with disabled applicants and students in HE encouraged to look for this.

4 Sector progress

While there is an official sign-up process for HEPs to action the 26 relevant principles within the Commitment, sector agencies, regulators and Government have all been called on in the Commitment to make progress for disabled students. For transparency, included below is an outline of the work that has been completed over the past year by each named organisation to meet their own recommendations.

The Department for Work and Pensions		
Principle no.	Section	The Commitment calls upon...
5	Requests to share information	DWP and DfE to support and promote the roll-out and expansion of the disability passport scheme across the sector, building on the evaluation of the pilot programmes, as soon as practically possible.
38	Moving forward	DWP to work with HEPs and employers to support the planned roll-out of the disability passport scheme into employment.
39	Moving forward	DWP to promote better understanding among students and higher education careers advisers of the available funding for reasonable adjustments in employment and promote Access to Work for disabled students.

To date, DWP have had a productive meeting with a group of Manchester Universities and Canterbury Christ Church University who have taken a keen interest in the planner. In addition, they have raised awareness of the Adjustments Planner with Jobcentre Plus, stakeholders and disability groups and Disability Confident employers. To further support students and employers, the Business Disability Forum have developed [guidance](#) on how to use the planner.

DWP are continuing to expand the Passport/Planner strategy, and an Adjustment Planner for British Sign Language Users will be launched in June, but this is likely to be delayed by the election. They are also currently evaluating the Educational Vocation Adjustments Planner pilot which came to an end in February 2024 to inform next steps. Finally, to build on the Student's Planner and respond to the evaluation feedback, DWP are working with the DfE to deliver a pilot in schools in September, but this is likely to also be delayed by the election.

Student Loans Company		
Principle no.	Section	The Commitment calls upon...
7	Requests to share information	DfE and the SLC to explore how a student's existing support assessment from a school or college can be used for the purposes of a needs assessment for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) thus avoiding delays and supporting a seamless transition for the learner.

Students are being asked to share any previous disability support assessment (i.e. EHCP/SEN) with their Needs Assessment supplier when they are booking an appointment. This allows the Needs Assessor to reflect on the type of support the student has received previously and whether that should carry through to their HE course. What support a student may need to overcome barriers in the context of their HE environment may differ from previous strategies in school or college. So, a needs assessment to consider everything holistically is felt necessary to ensure that the student has the right support in place to access their HE course. SLC will set up a working group to discuss this matter further and to examine to what extent a previous support assessment could be leveraged further to avoid delays for students.

UCAS		
Principle no.	Section	The Commitment calls upon...
8	Choosing a course of study	UCAS to commit to improving and extending their existing information, advice and guidance (IAG) on higher education for disabled applicants and enhancing personalisation through the Hub to support informed decision-making.

UCAS has identified several ways to enhance its IAG for disabled students. In partnership with Diversity and Ability and with support from SLC and LEAD Scotland, it has developed new [comprehensive resources](#) to raise awareness of the DSA. This includes information about eligibility and application guidance around the UK, as well as an explanation of the needs assessment with a mock assessment video to demystify the process. UCAS have also published [advice for disabled apprentices](#) with support from Disability Rights UK as they build their apprenticeships service.

With help from several expert organisations, UCAS has undertaken a complete review of the content and format of their [disabled student pages](#), including [guidance on speaking to the disability adviser](#) and advice on [how to prepare for open days](#) (with new content awaiting publication at the point of writing). Further information and advice is planned for publication over the next 12 months, including support for different disabilities and conditions, videos featuring disabled students and disability advisers talking about HE support, and content to

support disabled students in their broader career planning (in collaboration with AGCAS and Leonard Cheshire).

They have also updated the [adviser toolkit for supporting disabled applicants](#), and plan to develop a step-by-step guide for non-specialist advisers by the end of 2024. Mindful of the intersectionality of disability with other characteristics and the additional considerations and challenges that may bring, UCAS is ensuring all content for under-represented students (and their advisers) cross-references guidance about disability and mental health.

To aid earlier engagement, UCAS has a longer-term plan to develop the UCAS Hub to personalise content based on circumstance and is currently exploring how to make UCAS Discovery events more inclusive and supportive of early conversations about support, with 'mission cards' due to be introduced spring 2025 to aid students' early information seeking. They are continuing to gather feedback on the reworded disability and mental health question in the application, and making changes and adjustments as needed (e.g. the inclusion of stammering as an example for 2025).

Disabled Students' UK		
Principle no.	Section	The Commitment calls upon...
24	Transition into the higher education community	HEPs to pursue opportunities that provide insight into the experience of their disabled students, such as the membership of Disabled Students' UK's Access Insights Project.

The largest survey into HEP accessibility to date, DSUK's Annual Disabled Student Survey 2023 received over 1300 respondents from over 100 institutions, generating wide-ranging evidence on the experiences of disabled students in HE.

Six pioneering HEPs have so far signed up for membership to the [Access Insights Project](#). Members receive institution specific reports with their survey results, allowing them to understand their strengths and growth points relative to the UK average. Reports include tailored recommendations, including a map supporting ways they can fulfil the Disabled Student Commitment. The Annual Disabled Students' UK Survey for 2024 is [currently open](#).

QAA		
Principle no.	Section	The Commitment calls upon...
32	On-course experience	QAA to support Subject Benchmark Statement (SBS) Advisory Groups in exploring how key competences can be identified in all the Statements, and similarly to support both SBS Advisory Groups and PSRBs to consider appropriate flexibility in teaching, learning and assessment.

QAA updated their guidance for SBS Advisory Group members to take account of the Commitment, in particular highlighting the way SBSs have responded to the needs of disabled students since 2021. The updated guidance focuses on promoting a proactive approach, seeking to anticipate the needs of disabled students within the specific subject discipline. Certain subjects that are closely aligned to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies will link to competency standards to support the articulation of the graduate benchmark standards.

The SBSs provide a framework, agreed by the subject community, that forms the basis on which those responsible for curriculum design can reflect upon a course and its component modules. This allows for flexibility and innovation while providing a broadly accepted external reference point for that discipline. The QAA will continue to require all SBSs to include explicit consideration of disabled students' requirements.

Furthermore, QAA's work with PSRBs has included discussions around flexibility and alternative forms of assessment and they will continue to raise awareness of good practice, the needs of disabled students and how the requirements of PSRBs can continue to be met.

In addition to their work with SBSs and PSRBs, the QAA have produced a range of resources in areas that are helpful for disabled students:

- + Supporting positive student transitions, creating a sense of belonging and unpacking the hidden curriculum
- + Collaborative Enhancement Projects that have produced resources in a wide range of areas including compassionate assessment, optionality in assessment, and exploring the links between academic integrity and inclusion.
- + Several episodes in a podcast series that have addressed the needs of disabled students, eg understanding the needs of disabled students and towards neuro-inclusivity.

Accessibility and inclusion continue to be a significant theme across the QAA's activities for 2024-25. A large resource to be published in May 2024 is focused on addressing the factors that lead to awarding gaps for students with particular characteristics, including disabled students.

Advance HE

Principle no.	Section	The Commitment calls upon...
33	On-course experience	Advance HE to ensure that supporting disabled student learning is embedded in the guidance for the award of a Fellowship.

The Professional Standards Framework underwent a significant refresh in 2023, resulting in new guidance. Discussion in the application for fellowship must demonstrate an understanding of your learners, particularly in the context of disability. The new guidance therefore includes specific reference to supporting disabled students, designing and implementing reasonable adjustments, mental health and wellbeing, assistive technology, specific learning requirements, and accessibility.

Disability Access Ambassadors

Principle no.	Section	The Commitment calls upon...
40	Moving forward	Sector-focused Disability Access Ambassadors (DAAs) are asked to encourage their sector to provide frameworks/routes to employment for disabled graduates.

A presentation was made to the summer meeting of the DAAs on the Commitment, and consideration followed as to the extent it could be incorporated into the forthcoming National Disability Action Plan. Further discussions have taken place with individual sector based DAAs, particularly those that have high levels of graduate recruitment.

It was also highlighted at a Parliamentary launch of the Recruitment sector inclusivity scheme. Briefing has taken place with the Cabinet Office Disability Unit that supports the DAAs and the Minister for Disabled People. The work to date has focussed on awareness raising within the group and further individual sector work will now be addressed according to sector responsiveness to develop good practice.

Institute of Directors		
Principle no.	Section	The Commitment calls upon...
41	Moving forward	Employer organisations to commit to producing accessible information focused on the nature of the role and the support for disabled employees so that disabled applicants and students can make informed choices about future employment.
42	Moving forward	Employer organisations are asked to promote the benefits of providing placements for disabled students, apprentices and employing disabled graduates.

In 2022, the Institute of Directors (IoD) launched a commission, *The future of business: harnessing diverse talent for success*, which examined the key barriers to the recruitment, retention, and progression of individuals from underrepresented groups, with specific reference to disability, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. The Commission published two papers: one with policy recommendations for government and one with [practical guidance for businesses](#) as to how they can harness diverse talent.

In the business guidance paper, the IoD recommended that businesses take steps to proactively engage with the widest possible talent pool when recruiting. These steps included expanding the pool of educational institutions with which they engage and participating in placement programmes for disabled young people, such as DFN Project SEARCH and Supported Internships for learners with an education, health, and care plan.

The IoD also included guidance on how businesses can make job advertisements accessible, including ensuring that advertisements and website are digitally accessible, stating within advertisements what the recruitment process will entail to enable disabled applicants to consider whether they may require a reasonable adjustment, and including anonymised case studies of the reasonable adjustments in place for existing staff.

Business Disability Forum		
Principle no.	Section	The Commitment calls upon...
43	Moving forward	For the BDF to share the emerging findings and outputs with the Office for Students (OfS) on the next iteration of The Great Big Workplace Adjustments Survey.

The BDF have made the findings of The Great Big Workplace Adjustments Survey publicly available and have shared them with the higher education sector and with Government. They have also presented the findings during the Public Services Committee's inquiry on transitions from education to employment, and in the APPG on Eye Health and Vision Impairment's inquiry on the employment of blind and partially sighted people.

They have continued to work with the Government on the very varied, often poor experience of disabled students moving from education and employment. As a result, they have made their [guidance](#) on using the Government's Adjustment Planner publicly available for any HEP, employer, or disabled student to use. They are now working with HEPs on how to develop final year support for disabled students looking for their first job and choosing a career which suits them.

4.1 Keeping disabled students' outcomes under review

The Commitment also calls upon the OfS and the DfE to reflect on and communicate how they intend to keep under review support for disabled students in higher education and disabled student outcomes.

This year the OfS have updated the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) which sets out 12 sector-wide risks that may affect a student's opportunity to access and succeed in HE. The EORR includes key datasets relating to disabled students, including the proportion of students achieving grade 4 in English and Maths reported by disability type and highlights key risks relating to access and pre-entry that may affect disabled students. Providers are expected to use the risk register when they are developing their access and participation plans.

The OfS have also funded Student Minds to extend their University Mental Health Charter in order to support the sector, in line with the government's support for universities to sign up to the Charter programme. One strand of the charter relates to transitions into university, supporting universities to review and develop admissions and transitions practices.

2024 saw the launch of the OfS's [Disabled Students in Higher Education Advisory Panel](#) which brings together students, disability policy experts and practitioners to advise the OfS on priorities. The panel will provide expert advice on enhancing disabled students' experiences in higher education by considering and reviewing how universities and colleges currently support disabled students, as well as, drawing on evidence, research and analysis from the sector to make recommendations on how to support their educational experience.

With regards to the DfE, they want to ensure people with learning difficulties and disabilities can undertake educational activities that offer excellent skills and development opportunities.

In 2023, the DfE published the [SEND Improvement Plan](#) which sets out how an effective single national system based on the new National Standards will be delivered locally, through new local partnerships. This will ensure that the experience of seeking support at every stage is less bureaucratic and less adversarial for families and providers alike.

In the coming months, the DfE will continue to deliver these plans to improve opportunities for young people with SEND, including those in HE.

5 Mapping the Commitment

To further support HEP sign-up, a mapping exercise was undertaken and shared across the sector. The template and associated guidance were created in collaboration across several HEPs sharing insight into their challenges during the sign-up process, and best practice. The guidance supports practitioners to engage with the Commitment and provides a pathway to create a holistic journey approach with student voice at the forefront, identifying key stakeholders and methods for escalation. The map provided is an easy to adopt approach that takes a positive stance ensuring HEPs have space to recognise areas in need of intervention, as well as their strengths.

In recognising that there are synergies with schemes designed to improve the mental health and wellbeing of students, an additional template aligning to Student Mind's University Mental Health Charter has also been created to identify areas of crossover with the Commitment. This will enable HEPs to pool resource effectively and build on current initiatives rather than necessarily duplicate or introduce new activity.

A copy of the mapping template can be found [here](#). The guidance to be read alongside the map template can be found [here](#).

6 Work in the home nations

Whilst the work of the Disabled Students' Commission was announced from Westminster by the then Minister of State for Universities in 2019, the Commitment aims to enhance the experience of disabled students in HEPs across the UK. Although there are differences in relation to governance, funding models and stakeholder organisations in the four nations, the best practice identified in the Commitment is thought to be applicable to each context. We believe that applying a 'four nations' lens to this work strengthens the potential impact for all disabled students studying in UK HE, including those who may study at different HEPs, sometimes crossing national boundaries to do so, throughout their learning journeys.

An initial mapping exercise has identified several organisations that are key stakeholders alongside similar groups in England. These include sector bodies, devolved Government departments, quality and regulatory bodies, funders, student unions and guilds, employers, business groups and professional bodies.

Whilst some of these organisations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have indicated support for the principles within the Commitment, others are less aware of the Commitment; members of the Commitment Advisory Group and Partnership Group recognise the importance of proactive engagement with stakeholders across the home nations, and a programme of awareness raising activity is being planned for 2024-2025. This will include workshops for colleagues in each nation to learn more about the Commitment, enable further mapping of the principles taking account of national policy and funding differences, and attendance of advisory group members at relevant sector body meetings. Our aim is to encourage more HEPs across the UK sign up to the Commitment.

We were particularly pleased to welcome Edinburgh Napier as a signatory to the Commitment in February 2024. In becoming the first non-English HEP to commit, Edinburgh Napier has signalled the relevance and importance of the Commitment to the Scotland context. Mark Wilkinson, Head of Wellbeing & Inclusion at the university, explains how the DSC has provided impetus for work to review disabled student support holistically across not just the Disability Inclusion Service but the provider as a whole. Using the Commitment informally in-house is valuable, but taking the next step of formally signing up brings the added benefit of bringing us into a community of practice with other HEPs using the Commitment to deepen and strengthen their practice.

7 Next steps for the Commitment

We are eager to maintain momentum behind the Commitment as it progresses into its second year. Of course, funding and resource constraints will make this more of a challenge, which is why we are looking for ways to ensure that there is a mechanism in place to share improved practice around technical aspects of the Commitment, by collating existing resources and guidance. It is intended that this work will be carried out by Special Interest Groups (SIGs), as well as piloting a Community of Practice for signatories to the Commitment to share common approaches.

Following on from the Equality and Human Rights Commission's published [Advice Note](#) in response to the University of Bristol vs Abrahart case, we are also working on a sector approach to help ensure the Commitment is a useful tool that enables HEPs to respond effectively.

In its first year, we have established several special interest groups (SIG) including Transitions to Employment. The membership of this group is published in Annex A. In future, other possible areas of focussed work could include (but not limited to) the following:

- + Transition to HE
- + Sharing information
- + Competence standards and the anticipatory duty
- + Student and staff disability frameworks in HE
- + Student advocacy and knowledge of rights
- + Technology in education
- + Inclusive practice, including alternative assessment methods and Universal Design for Learning

If there is an area of activity outlined above that you think your organisation or HEP may be able to support with, please do get in touch via dsc@advance-he.ac.uk.

8 Annex A: Group Membership

A partnership approach between Professor Deborah Johnston, (London South Bank University), Hannah Borkin and Elliott Spaeth (Advance HE), Alice Speller (NADP) and Professor Ian Pickup (The Open University) has been established to coordinate core activities. This is known as the core planning group.

The following constituent groups have also been set up, drawing on the vast expertise of colleagues from the sector as well as ensuring the disabled student voice is central to ongoing work.

8.1 Advisory Group

The Advisory Group contains colleagues from sector agencies that are directly named in the Commitment, or who work on behalf of a relevant representative body. It meets quarterly and has to date met three times, on 20 September 2023, 20 November 2023 and 20 February 2024. A full list of the members is included below:

Core Planning Group members:

- Professor Deborah Johnston (Chair), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Framework), London South Bank University
- Hannah Borkin, Associate, Advance HE
- Elliott Spaeth, Senior Adviser, Advance HE
- Alice Speller, CEO, NADP
- Professor Ian Pickup, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students), The Open University

Organisations named in the Commitment:

- David Bass, Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Advance HE
- Diane Lightfoot, CEO, Business Disability Forum
- Suzanne Carrie, Head of Equality of Opportunity, Office for Students
- Ian Milton, Policy Advisor, Department for Work and Pensions
- Adam Treslove, Head of Corporate Affairs, Student Loans Company
- Anthony Hill, Service Owner, Student Loans Company
- Ian Turley, Senior Policy Adviser, Department for Education
- Caroline Turnbull, Quality Enhancement and Engagement Manager, QAA
- Nicola Turner, Senior Fair Access Adviser, UCAS
- Professor Geoff Layer, Vice Chancellor's Special Envoy, University of Coventry and University Sector Disability Access Ambassador, Disability Unit

HEPs and other HEP representative bodies/members:

- Rowan Fisher, Head of Student Experience and Skills Policy, Universities UK
- David Holloway, Senior Policy Manager (SEND), Association of Colleges
- Carmel Jewell-Newby, Director of Higher Education, London South East Colleges
- Dr Arti Saraswat, Senior Policy Manager (HE), Association of Colleges
- Keren Coney, Research and Knowledge Director, AGCAS
- Professor Amanda Coffey, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of the West of England Bristol

- Piers Wilkinson, Senior Policy and Campaigns Lead, Diversity and Ability

8.2 Partnership Group

The Partnership Group contains a wider pool of colleagues from sector agencies and HEPs that carry out relevant work to support disabled students in higher education. It meets three times a year and has to date met two times, on the 18 November 2023 and 11 March 2024. A list of members is included below:

Core Planning Group members:

- Professor Deborah Johnston (Chair), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Framework), London South Bank University
- Hannah Borkin, Associate, Advance HE
- Elliott Spaeth, Senior Adviser, Advance HE
- David Bass, Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Advance HE
- Alice Speller, CEO, NADP
- Professor Ian Pickup, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students), The Open University

Sector organisations and HEP representative bodies:

- Shamima Akhtar, Policy and Research Manager (Assistive and Accessible Technology), Policy Connect
- Mette Anwar-Westander, CEO, Disabled Students UK
- Dr Helen Lawson, Research Programmes Manager, TASO
- Kellie Mote, Subject Specialist (Accessibility) Jisc
- Jo Nuckley, Head of Outreach and Insight, OIA
- Jenny Smith, Policy Manager, Student Minds
- Sarah Sweeney, Executive Committee Member, AMOSSHE
- Dr Kate Wicklow, Policy Director, GuildHE

Additional advisers:

- Harriet Cannon, Disability Advisory Team Manager, The University of Leeds
- Professor Sarah Greer, Vice-Chancellor, The University of Winchester
- John Harding, Head of the Disability Resource Centre, The University of Cambridge
- Hamied Haroon, Chair, National Association of Disabled Staff Networks
- Patrick Johnson, Pro Vice-Chancellor Diversity, Inclusion & Students, The University of Law
- Hugh Mannerings, Business Development Manager, UK Advising and Tutoring
- Amy Norton, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, London School of Economics
- Dr Iliyan Stefanov, Director of Student Services, London South Bank University
- Jenny Shaw, Higher Education External Engagement Manager, Unite
- Carol Thomas, EDI Lead, College and University Business Officers

Charities and third sector:

- Kamran Mallick, CEO, Disability Rights UK
 - Lucy Merritt, Education Policy Manager, Thomas Pocklington Trust
 - Helen Saelensminde, Chief Executive, Snowdon Trust
-

8.3 Student Advisory Group

Student voice is central to the Commitment, particularly as HEPs are asked to agree a yearly statement based on joint work with their disabled students, outlining how much progress has been made with the implementation of the Commitment.

As such, a Student Advisory Group has been set up, designed to contain a group of disabled students that can reasonably represent the diverse and intersectional HE community. Their principal remit will be to advise, challenge, and shape discussion taken forward by the Advisory Group.

A total of 15 current HE students will engage in eight meetings throughout the academic year. A nominated representative will be present at each Advisory Group meeting. The first meeting took place on 28 May 2024.

A list of members is included below:

- Connar Mawer, University College London
- Derek Naysmith, Open University
- Emily Cocker, University of Manchester
- Fahim Kahn, University of Law
- James Eames, University of Derby
- Kate Killick, UCA Canterbury
- Libby Harden, Aston University
- Michelle Stannard, UCA Canterbury
- Molly Reade, University of St Andrews
- Nicola Wilson-Torch, University of Stirling
- Olivia Pountney, University College London
- Ollie Conibere, University of Bath
- Ramya Basutker, University of Bolton
- Simone Tett, University of Derby
- Thomas White, Birmingham City University

8.4 Special Interest Sub-Groups

Transition into employment

To date, the sub-group has met twice and has begun addressing the principles relating to the transition into employment outlined in the Commitment. A list of members is included below:

- Keren Coney, AGCAS, Chair
- Alyson Hwang, Policy Connect
- Shamima Ahktar, Policy Connect
- Sam Buckley, BDF
- Meghan Reed, Evenbreak
- Hannah Larsen, British Chambers of Commerce
- Louisa Henderson, AGCAS
- Alice Speller, NADP

Contact us

Email: dsc@advance-he.ac.uk **Website:** www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion/disabled-student-commitment

General Advance HE enquiries: communications@advance-he.ac.uk

Advance HE helps HE institutions be the best they can be, by unlocking the potential of their people.

We are a member-led, sector-owned charity that works with institutions and higher education across the world to improve higher education for staff, students and society. We are experts in higher education with a particular focus on enhancing teaching and learning, effective governance, leadership development and tackling inequalities through our equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work.

Our strategic goals to enhance confidence and trust in HE, address inequalities, promote inclusion and advance education to meet the evolving needs of students and society, support the work of our members and the HE sector.

We deliver our support through professional development programmes and events, Fellowships, awards, student surveys and research, providing strategic change and consultancy services and through membership (including accreditation of teaching and learning, equality charters, knowledge and resources).

Advance HE is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales no. 04931031. Company limited by guarantee registered in Ireland no. 703150. Registered as a charity in England and Wales no. 1101607. Registered as a charity in Scotland no. SC043946. Registered Office: Advance HE, Innovation Way, York Science Park, Heslington, York, YO10 5BR, United Kingdom.

© 2024 Advance HE. All rights reserved.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of Advance HE. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any storage and retrieval system without the written permission of the copyright owner. Such permission will normally be granted for non-commercial, educational purposes provided that due acknowledgement is given. The Advance HE logo should not be used without our permission.

To request copies of this report in large print or in a different format, please contact the Marketing and Communications Team at Advance HE: communications@advance-he.ac.uk

advance-he.ac.uk

in **X** **f** **@AdvanceHE**