

Access to Work

Guidance for Staff

The University was awarded the Disability Symbol in January 2004. This builds upon the commitment we have to our existing disabled staff, whilst encouraging and welcoming others to apply to join us.

In being awarded this symbol the University has made the following five commitments:

1. To interview all applicants with a disability who meet the essential criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities.
2. To ensure there is a mechanism in place to discuss, at any time, but at least once a year, with disabled employees what managers/supervisors can do to make sure they can develop and use their abilities.
3. To make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment.
4. To take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make these commitments work.
5. Each year, to review the five commitments and what has been achieved, to plan ways to improve on them and let employees and the Employment Service know about progress and future plans.

What is a Disability?

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a disabled person as:-

“someone with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

In this context, long-term means it has lasted, or is likely to last, for 12 months or more. Occupational Health can provide advice and guidance on this.

To support disabled people in the workplace the government has created the Access to Work scheme. The scheme is run by the Department of Work and Pensions. It is their role to provide advice and information to disabled people and employers and also to provide funding towards any extra employment costs resulting from a person's disability.

New employees and existing employees who become disabled whilst employed by MMU are covered by this support mechanism; although the funding granted is determined by your length of service, access to the support isn't. For example, if you are new to the University, and make a claim either prior to your commencement or in the first six weeks of your employment, the grant offered is 100% of costs. If you are an existing employee and have been with the University for longer than six weeks then the grant offered is 80% of any cost above the first £300.

How do you access this support?

Initially, support should be sought from your current or new line manager or via your Personnel Officer.

You will be advised that applications for assistance have to be made by you. The contact office for our area is currently:-

Jobcentre Plus Business Centre P.O Box 313 Bolton BL1 1FW	Tel: 01204 516 480 Textphone: 01204 516 492
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After initially contacting this team you will be assigned a Disability Employment Advisor who will remain your contact throughout the process. There will be some form filling required but help and support will be provided for this.

An assessment of your workplace will be arranged. A report will then be made documenting any advice you have been given and what equipment will need to be purchased. A copy of this report must be given to your line manager/Personnel Officer as it becomes the responsibility of the University to order any specified equipment or to arrange for work to take place.

For further information on the Access to Work Scheme visit

<http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/cms.asp?Page=/Home/Customers/HelpForDisabledPeople>

Q&A's – Potential/New Employees

I would like to apply for a job and can demonstrate that I meet the minimum criteria. I am deaf and if I am invited for an interview I will require a signer present. What should I do?

First of all you need to provide us with the information to grant you an interview. Thoroughly demonstrate in your application form that you meet the minimum criteria. You will be notified of a time and date for your interview. If it is the case that we don't have a signer within the University available to us, at this point we will advise you to contact the Access to Work number above and they will arrange for someone to be present to assist with communication.

I believe my condition is covered by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). When do I let you know this?

To allow us to meet our commitment to the "2 Ticks" Positive about Disabled People Scheme, you will need to let us know this at the point of application. There is a section on the application form and also on the equal opportunities monitoring form for this purpose. Provided that you meet the minimum requirements, you will be invited for interview and assessed on your merits along with other shortlisted candidates.

I am currently in a job and adaptations have been made through Access to Work. If I leave here, to work for you, will Access to Work allow another application from me?

Yes.

My current employer says that I can take my specially ordered chair and desk with me when I leave and bring it to MMU. What should I do?

Whilst this is not a condition of Access to Work funding, employers may kindly agree to you taking any purchased equipment with you to your new place of work. You will need to contact your Disability Advisor at Jobcentre Plus who will co-ordinate this exchange with your existing and new employers.

I am not sure if my condition is covered by the DDA. What should I do?

This could occur if your condition has been recently diagnosed, or if you have not considered the DDA before. You could discuss this with your GP/healthcare provider, the Access to Work Team or a member of MMU's Occupational Health Team who will advise you accordingly. Your Personnel Officer can arrange for you to see the Occupational Health Team.

If you offer me the job, what do I do to start the Access to Work Process?

You need to contact the Access to Work Team initially. They will send you the application forms and talk you through the process.

Q&A's – Existing Employees

I have just been diagnosed with a condition that is covered by the DDA. What should I do?

Initially, it may be best to have a discussion with your Manager or Personnel Officer about this. Risk assessments will need to be revisited in light of your condition and it may be highlighted at this point if there are aspects of your role with which you require additional support. It may also be prudent for you to attend an appointment with the Occupational Health Advisor. Each case will be different depending on your job role, environment and condition so please seek advice.

I have been absent from work because of my condition but am now ready to come back to work. What should I do?

Hopefully, during your period of absence, you will have maintained contact with your manager and advised them of your progress. It is always advisable for people who have been absent for a while to attend an appointment with the Occupational Health Advisor before returning to work. The Occupational Health advisor will provide advice and guidance to your department on any restrictions to your duties, eg, no heavy lifting, limited stair climbing, etc and the likely duration of such restrictions. At this point, if long term or permanent restrictions are likely, it may be suggested, either by OHU, your line manager or Personnel Officer, that you make contact with the Access to Work Team prior to returning.

**Why doesn't the University just order the equipment I require?
Why do I have to go through Access to Work?**

By contacting Access to Work you and the University are gaining the expert advice on working practices and equipment from the Disability Advisors. Once your assessment has taken place and any equipment is received, the Advisor will come back to show you how to set up and use the equipment correctly. They will then review your access needs and the equipment every three years. This level of expertise is not available in-house.

My condition is covered by the DDA. Although I don't need anything specific to allow me to retain my job, I am finding certain aspects of it difficult, eg working hours, location etc. What should I do?

Initially, talk to your Line Manager or Personnel Officer to discuss the aspects of your work which you are finding difficult. The University has a duty to make reasonable workplace adjustments under the DDA and, in such circumstances, is likely seek the advice of the Occupational Health Advisor for some expert guidance.