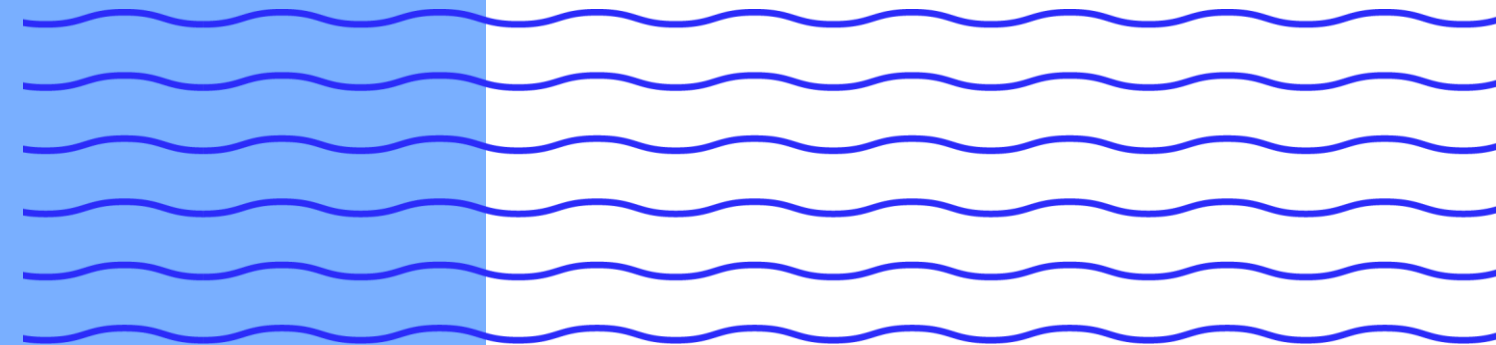


This week

Mond	Democratic models and democracy reviews
Tue	Righting the wrongs for Disabled students
Wed	Student on student conduct, complaints, discipline
Thu	Parliament and government advocacy
Fri	Won't somebody think about the Postgraduates?



WONKHE
SUs

Disabled students

An introduction to the big issues and things to think about re pandemic recovery



WONKHE
SUs

Working for change

Disabled Students UK is a grassroots student-led organisation.

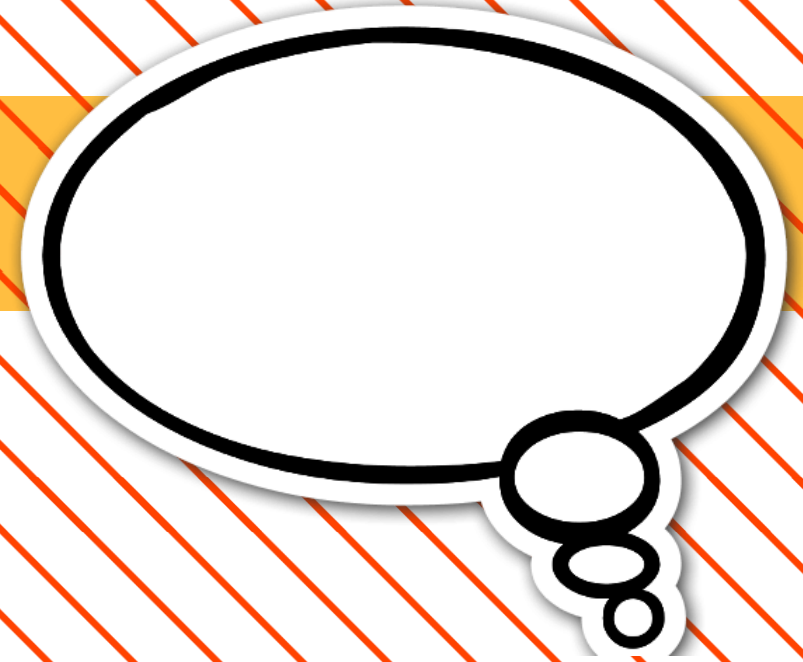
We envision a world where disabled students have the same access to education as non-disabled students.

We are working to make universities truly accountable to their disabled students and to disability law.

[About us](#)[View Our COVID-19 Report](#)

Imagine

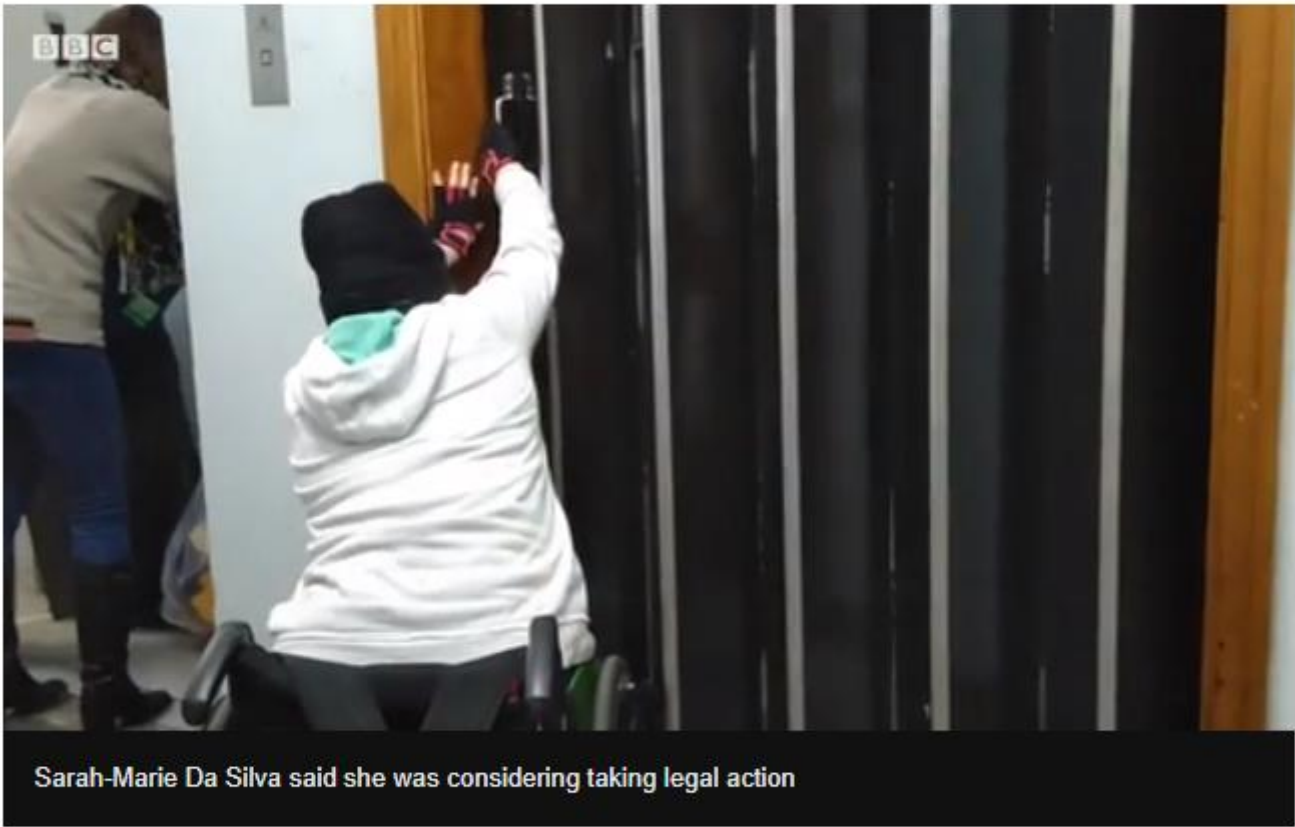
- Cannot apply for any form of examination adjustment when you have cancer and are undergoing chemotherapy.
- Or imagine being charged more than your peers for your accommodation because you happen to be disabled.
- Or imagine – as has been widely reported – being repeatedly made to sit in the stairwell of your lecture and regularly being left with no option but to sit in corners, by entrances, or without a desk to make notes.



Hull student 'humiliated' over lack of disabled access

🕒 14 February 2020

f 💬 🐦 ✉ ➦ Share



Sarah-Marie Da Silva said she was considering taking legal action

A student who uses a wheelchair has described the lack of disabled access at her university as "humiliating".

Sarah-Marie Da Silva said she had been forced to sit in stairwells during lectures at the University of Hull as she cannot negotiate the stairs to a seat.



Sarah-Marie Da Silva
@SarahMarieDS



@DBetterAcademia @UniOfHull



♡ 1,374 2:43 PM - Feb 10, 2020



💬 764 people are talking about this

➤

What do we know?

- One of OfS' key performance measures is to close the attainment gap, currently of 2.8 percentage points, between the proportions of disabled and nondisabled students graduating with first and upper second class degrees.
- These gaps are more uneven at provider level, with some universities and colleges doing very well and others less so. For example, 54 per cent of universities and colleges had a gap of less than 2.5 percentage points (either positive or negative) between the continuation rate for their nondisabled and disabled students.
- In the National Student Survey students with a declared disability had a consistently lower than average overall satisfaction rate. This result persists even when other factors (such as choice of subject, gender and ethnicity) were taken into account.

Beyond the bare minimum

Are universities and colleges doing enough for disabled students?

Disabled students now make up a significant part of the student population. In 2017, 13.2 per cent of students attending an English university or college reported having at least one disability.¹ Disabled students contribute to a more diverse student body and bring a wider variety of views to the seminar room. Students and staff have campaigned for more inclusive practices on campus and against government reforms to their funding. Wider acceptance in society has broadened their opportunities for employment after graduation. Such contributions have made universities and colleges more accessible than ever before. However, challenges and barriers remain. Students who report a disability have lower degree results overall and lower rates of employment after graduation than non-disabled

students.² They may be unaware of the support that is available to them: a recent study by the Department for Education showed that only 40 per cent of disabled students knew about Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) before starting their course.³ There remains much to be done to integrate disabled students fully into the learning and life of universities and colleges.

The social model of disability is widely accepted as the most effective way that universities and colleges can respond to the needs of disabled students.⁴ The social model developed out of an understanding that disability is not something medical to be treated, but rather a failing on the part of society. Understood this way, a response to disability is not about 'fixing' the individual, but rather about

Disabled students are now a vital and significant part of campus life. However, challenges remain. Disabled students are less likely to continue their degrees, graduate with a good degree, and progress onto a highly skilled job or further study. This Insight brief asks what universities and colleges are doing to rectify these problems. What can the data tell us about the extent of these access and participation gaps? Are teaching and learning practices inclusive enough? Are funding changes exacerbating the difficulties that disabled students face?

The Office for Students is the independent regulator of higher education in England. We aim to ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers. We regulate to promote quality, choice, competition and value for money in higher education, with a particular remit to ensure access, success and progression for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups of students.

What do we know?

- Between 2010 and 2017, the proportion of students in England self-reporting a disability increased from 8.1 per cent to 13.2 per cent. Much of this increase has been driven by students reporting mental health issues, the incidence of which has grown from 0.6 per cent of all students in 2010 to 3.2 per cent seven years later.
- The proportion of those reporting a social or communication impairment has more than trebled from 0.1 per cent to 0.5 per cent of all undergraduate students over the same period.
- Disabled people with a degree have employment rates of 74 per cent, compared with 49 per cent for those disabled people whose highest qualifications are at GCSE level.
- While there is still a substantial employment rate gap between disabled and nondisabled graduates, it is smaller than for other qualification levels, at 15 percentage points for those with a degree.

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Explore the dashboard:



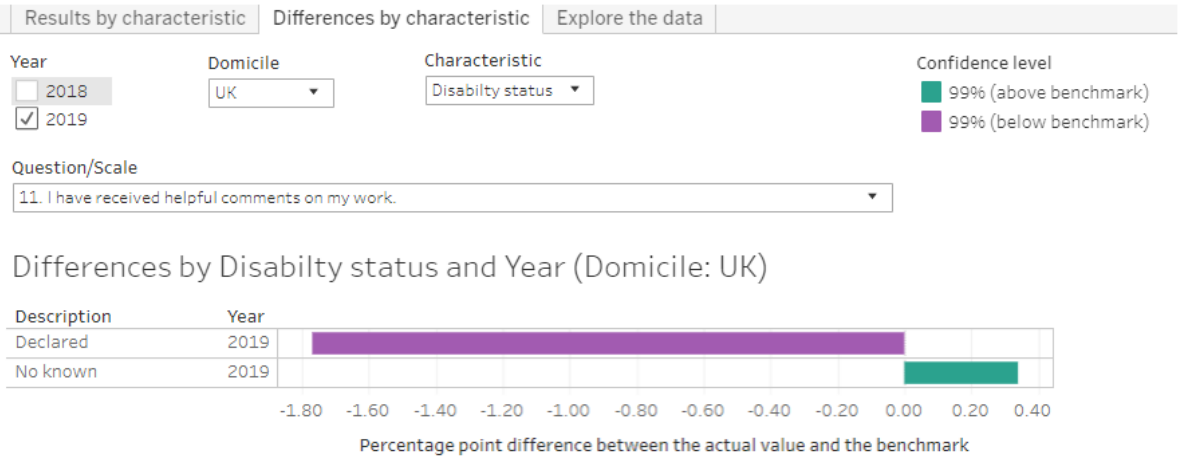
Give feedback on the dashboard ↗

Sector-level characteristic analysis

This page contains analysis of NSS data from the 2018 and 2019 National Student Surveys.

The analysis shows sector-level NSS results split by six student and course characteristics, alongside calculated benchmark values. It can be used to explore the extent to which responses to the NSS differ across student groups.

This data has been developed as an experimental statistic. We are keen to receive user feedback on this data, which will inform how it is used and updated in future. Feedback can be sent to NSS@officeforstudents.org.uk.



Liberation

- Campaigns, Groups, Networks, Collectives
- Social activity – shared identity?
- Group therapy?
- Campaigning and activism (broad brush)?
- Autonomy over voice and lived experience representation

Women

Black (& minority ethnic)

Disabled

LGBT+

Disabled students

- Social?
- Some group therapy/sharing of experiences/peer support
- Rights and treatment issues often fiendishly complex and require expertise
- Harder to justifiably rely on self organisation (but doesn't stop that being the design)
- Shared experiences not obviously “shared”
- Stigma, “disability porn” and “representation”



Models

Medical Model	Functional Model	Social Model
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disability as a consequence of a health condition, disease or caused by a trauma• Disrupt the functioning of a person in a physiological or cognitive way	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disability is caused by physical, medical or cognitive deficits• Limits functioning or the ability to perform functional activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A person's activities are limited not by the impairment or condition but by environment• Barriers are consequences of a lack of social organization

Medical

- A defect that medical professionals and treatment can fix

Tragedy/Charity Model

- Victims of circumstance, deserving of pity

Functional model

- Caused by deficits, functional limiter

Social Model

- Views disability as a consequence of environmental, social and attitudinal – disabled *by*

PSED

Those subject to the equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are sometimes referred to as the three aims or arms of the general equality duty. The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Equality Act 2010

- You're disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.
 - 'substantial' is more than minor or trivial, eg it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed
 - 'long-term' means 12 months or more, eg a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection



Rights/discrimination

- Discrimination is when an education provider or employer treats you unfairly and puts you at a disadvantage when compared with non-disabled people.
- This could be because someone is purposefully discriminating against you.
- Or it could be because an education provider or employer works in a way that unintentionally puts you at a disadvantage.
- Application to SUs?...



Discrimination types

Direct discrimination

- This is when someone is treated less favourably than someone else because they are disabled.
- Example: A blind woman who meets entry requirements for an IT course is refused because the education provider wrongly assumes that blind people cannot use computers.

Discrimination by perception

- This gives legal protection for people who are mistakenly perceived to be disabled.
- Example: A candidate is not offered a place on a university course because the university suspects they have a mental health condition (even though they do not) and they are concerned they will not be able to complete.

Discrimination by association

- Non-disabled people are also protected from discrimination by association to a disabled person. This might be a friend, partner, fellow students or relative. This is important to remember if you are a carer for a disabled person.
- Example: A training provider rejects a candidate because they are concerned the candidate's caring responsibilities (for a disabled partner) will impact on their ability to complete an Apprenticeship.



Discrimination

Indirect discrimination

- Indirect discrimination is when there is a practice, policy or rule which applies to everyone in the same way but has a worse effect on some people than others.
- Example: A university has a policy that requires all students to register for units on an online system. The system is however not accessible to assistive technology. This could be seen as indirect discrimination against a student with a visual impairment using such technology.
- In some cases the policy or practice may be justified. In the above example, the university's decision to introduce the online system might be justified if it is more efficient and saves on staff and student time. However, the university should take steps to ensure that the online system is accessible and provide reasonable adjustments for students who need them.

Discrimination arising from a disability

- This is when a disabled person experiences discrimination because of something connected with their disability.
- Example: An employee with a medical condition needs to take more time off work than their colleagues to attend medical appointments. The employer must not treat that person unfavourably because they are off work.



Discrimination

- **Failure to make reasonable adjustments** is another type of discrimination. The duty requires education providers to take steps to ensure that disabled students can fully participate in education and other benefits, facilities and services provided for students. It covers all arrangements, policies, procedures and activities.

What are adjustments?

- The obligation to make reasonable adjustments is split into three individual areas. Adjustments can:
- be changes to policies and procedures
- be changes to buildings to make them physically accessible, for example provision of ramps, stair-lifts, doors of a suitable width
- mean provision of equipment and human support.

The aim of making reasonable adjustments is to prevent disabled people being disadvantaged compared to non-disabled people so they can achieve their maximum potential. Where a disabled student is at a disadvantage, there is a duty on education providers to take reasonable steps to remove that disadvantage.



Adjustments

- Putting in place arrangements for time off and keeping up-to-date with course work for a student whose medical condition leads to frequent hospital admissions.
- Ensuring students using hearing aids have access to lecture theatres with hearing loops. Or ensuring that students with dyslexia have access to specialist software on the college's computers.
- Providing support workers such as readers for students with visual impairments or note-takers for students whose impairment makes it difficult for them to take notes in classes and lectures.



Adjustments reasonable?

- The duty requires that only adjustments that are reasonable are made. The Equality Act does not say what is 'reasonable'. What is reasonable in one set of circumstances may not be reasonable in another.
- There is no justification for failing to make a reasonable adjustment. The following factors are likely to be taken into account when considering whether adjustments are reasonable:
 - The effectiveness of making the adjustment. Will it be effective in overcoming the substantial disadvantage suffered by the disabled student?
 - The practicality of the adjustment
 - The financial resources of the education provider or employer
 - The cost of making the adjustment.
 - The availability of grants, loans and other assistance to disabled students, such as DSAs, Access to Work or charitable trusts
 - The extent to which aids and services will be provided to disabled students from other sources
 - Health and safety requirement
 - The relevant interests of other students – for example if the adjustment results in significant disadvantage for other students.



Anticipation...

- For education and service providers, the duty to make reasonable adjustments is a duty owed to disabled people generally, regardless of whether the provider knows that a particular student is disabled or whether they have any disabled students at all.
- This means that they must plan ahead for reasonable adjustments and not wait for disabled people to approach them before considering how to meet the duty.
- They must anticipate the type of barriers that students with various impairments may face.
- They must also anticipate the adjustments they can make to remove these barriers.
- The anticipatory duty might include altering physical features of a building to ensure access, ensuring that services, such as BSL sign language interpreters can be arranged at short notice or the provision of handouts in advance of lectures and tutorials in electronic format.
Employers do not have an anticipatory duty.



Support

- You can apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) to cover some of the extra costs you have because of a mental health problem, long term illness or any other disability.
- You can get the allowances on top of your other student finance. You will not need to repay DSAs.
- If you're a part-time student your 'course intensity' can affect how much you get.
- You can get help with the costs of:
 - specialist equipment, for example a computer if you need one because of your disability
 - non-medical helpers
 - extra travel because of your disability
 - other disability-related costs of studying
 - You may get a new computer if you do not already have one, or your current one does not meet your study needs. More information will be provided to you if you're assessed as needing a new computer
 - You'll need to pay the first £200, which is the minimum cost that any student is likely to incur when buying a computer.
 - DSAs do not cover disability-related costs you'd have if you were not attending a course, or costs that any student might have.



- (2) The responsible body of such an institution must not discriminate against a student—
- (a) in the way it provides education for the student;
 - (b) in the way it affords the student access to a benefit, facility or service;
 - (c) by not providing education for the student;
 - (d) by not affording the student access to a benefit, facility or service;
 - (e) by excluding the student;
 - (f) by subjecting the student to any other detriment.

Student unions

Although these are often thought of as educational provision, they are in fact service providers under the Act and their legal obligations towards students are covered by the services provisions of the Act accordingly (see Services Guidance).

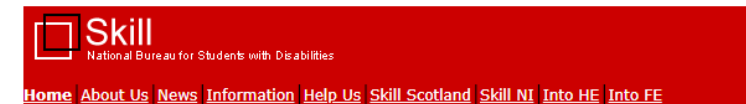
However, you will need to ensure that you do not act in a discriminatory way in respect of your student body in your dealings with your student union and it is good practice to work closely with the union in ensuring that students enjoy a discrimination-free environment.

Recommendation 9: Students' unions must take on the access and inclusion of disabled students as an institutional priority. HEPs should support this by providing funding additional to the block grants they provide to students' unions, to enable students' unions to improve their practices with regard to the inclusion of disabled students.

HEPs and their students' unions should draw up an agreement together of what they want inclusion to look like for all students. This could involve requiring the students' union or association to submit an annual plan demonstrating how they will work to engage with, include and ensure the access of disabled students to SU activities, events, buildings, clubs and societies. This could also involve providing training for all SU staff, students' union officers and volunteers to create awareness and understanding of the needs of disabled students; and ensuring that all activity and event adverts contain information on accessibility. Students' unions can also have the capacity to influence the culture among the wider student population, meaning that events such as a disability history month could have a knock-on effect of improving general awareness and understanding of disabled students and their experiences.



Space



Skill: National Bureau for Students With Disabilities. Skill promotes opportunities for young people and adults with any kind of disability in post-16 education, training and employment across the UK.

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Thanks to Will - Skill's vital work continued
Skill has joined over 80 other charities in the current Remember a Charity campaign... [15th Nov 2002]

[more/](#)

Are you a disabled student, trainee or jobseeker with a story to tell?
If so, Skill would like to hear from you.... [13th Nov 2002]

[Policy](#)
Read and print out our digital or agency policy documents [12th November 2002]

[Into Higher Education 2003](#)
Skill's publication Into HE 2003 - available now! [25th October 2002]



Disabled Students UK 

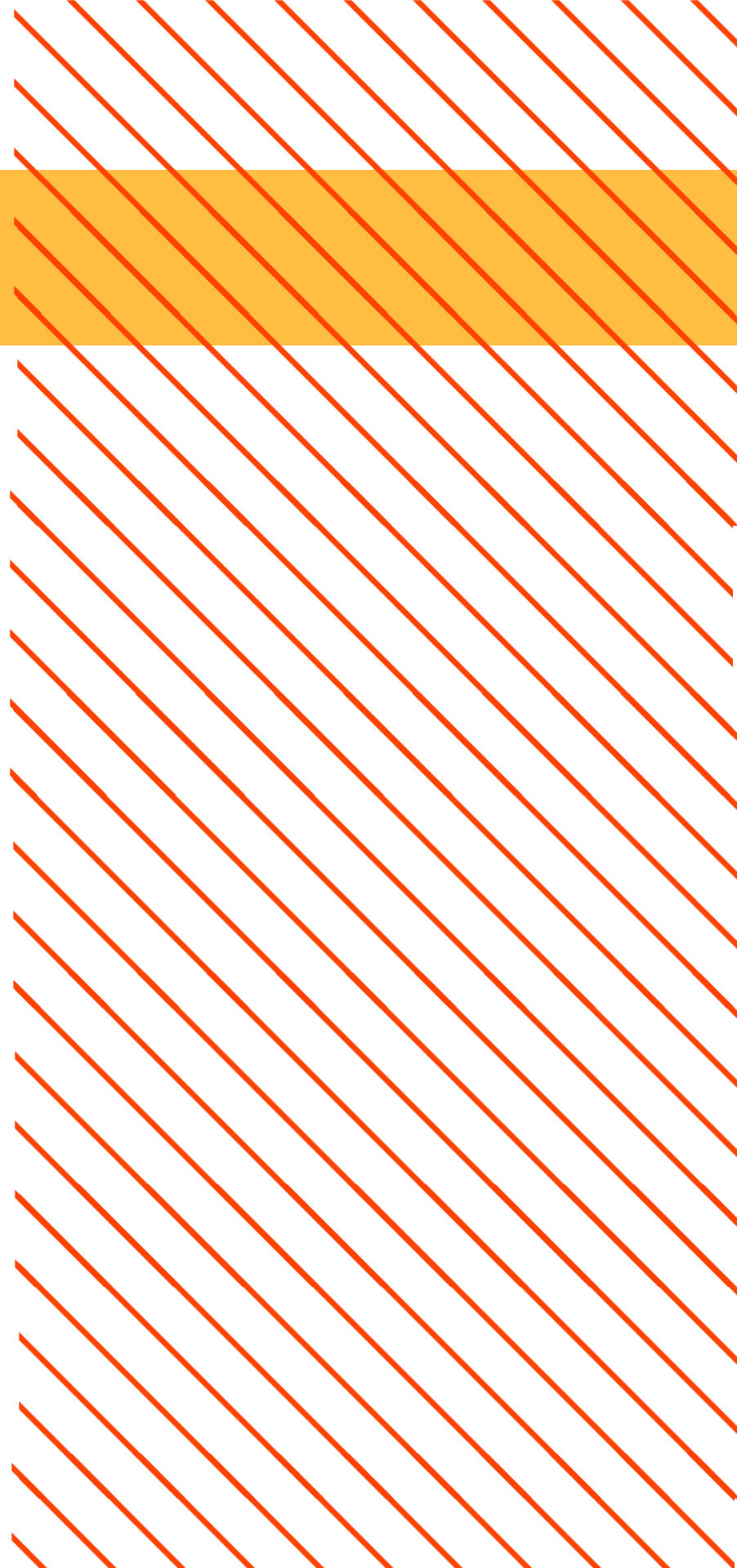
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Working for change

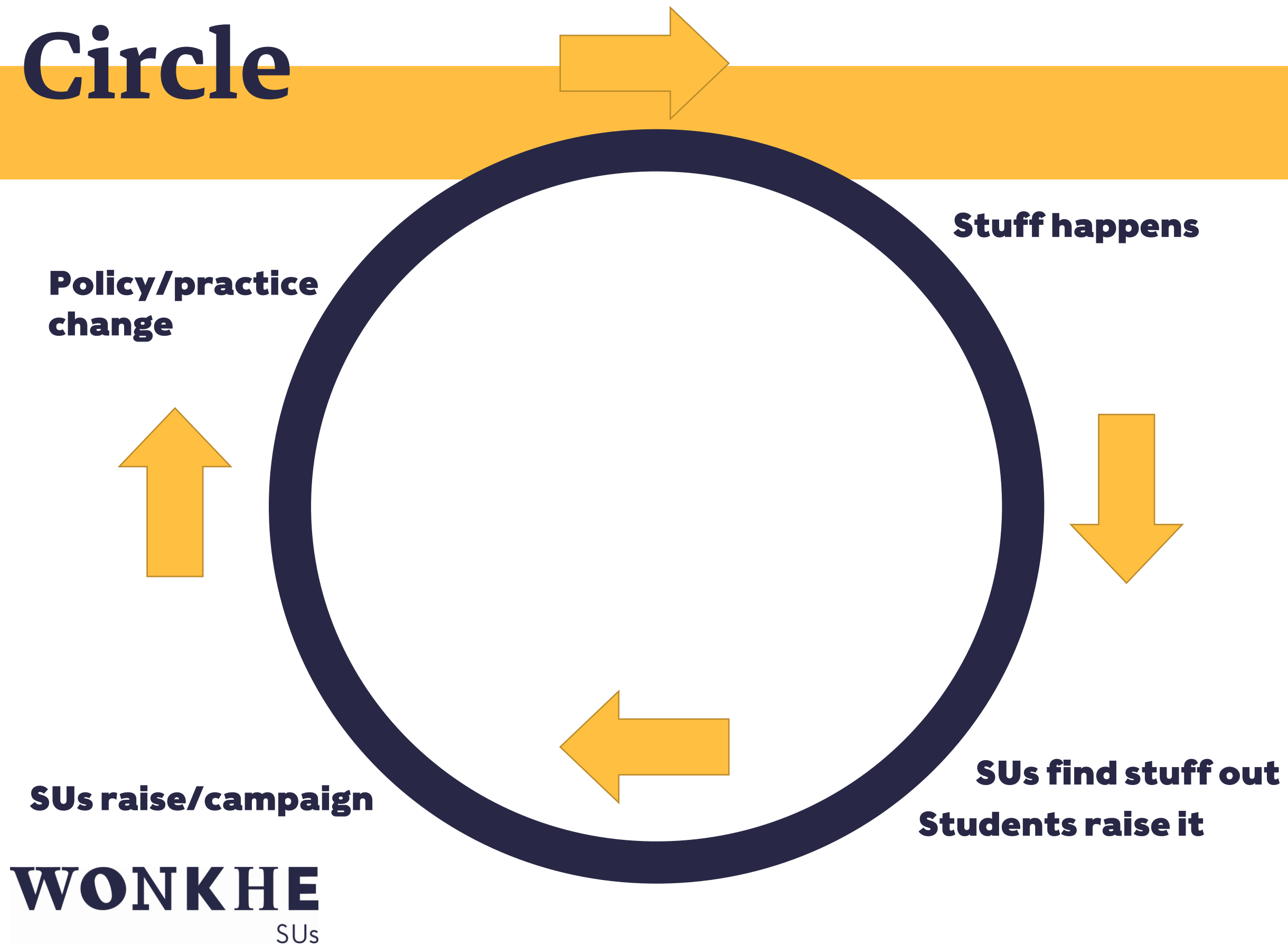
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[About us](#)

Circle



Deaf students report

- Nearly half of those who needed help at university were still waiting for support when their degree began.
- Of those, nearly three in five (59%) experienced delays of more than two months for the support to be in place
- More than a quarter (28%) waited six months or more.

Lack of support in universities drives deaf students to consider leaving degrees

Undergraduates feel they are wasting £9,250-a-year tuition fees amid long waits for help

Eleanor Busby Education Correspondent | @Eleanor_Busby |
Saturday 8 June 2019 12:04 |



The SE solution

- Point problem out (deaf students not getting required)
- Point problem out
- Point problem out
- Embarrass
- Set up a
- Secure s
- Secure o
- Expect s
- Hold mee
- Treat dea
- Agree tha
- Set long te
- Rinse and repeat in about three years time

- Are issues individual or systemic?
- Are they “owned” by a central (support) unit or across institution?
- Is the focus on rights & minimums or voice and maximums (and where should it be?)



Disability Discrimination Faced by UCL Students and Recommended Measures

Written by the Disabled Students' Network

The Disabled Students Network (DSN) is an autonomous collective which aims to represent students at UCL who are disabled. During November and December 2019 we conducted a survey of Disabled Students' experience at UCL as a result of more and more students coming to us with worrying reports about their treatment at UCL.

We hoped that if students and staff could hear the testimonies that we hear, and see the statistics, that they may understand that the situation needs to change. After many years of internal lobbying and not being heard, we still hope that #UCLcares about its disabled students.

Ten years after the passing of the Equality Act 2010, the testimonies from the survey reveal systematic ways in which UCL is not providing equal access to education. 67% of disabled students surveyed stated that they had experienced ableism at UCL and 58% of disabled students stated that they had been made to feel unwelcome at UCL due to their disability.

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What's On	

Affiliating departmental societies

Example

The report uses testimonies of students to compare the reality with the stated duties. Examples include:

- A section on **academic departments** finds “no structured way of dealing with disabled students within departments”, that disability contacts exist in departments but are “lacking training”, blanket academic policies that are discriminatory and directly discriminatory behaviour from some staff;
- The section on **Student Support and Wellbeing** finds evidence of giving different information about the same issue to different students; a lack of complete and up-to-date information on reasonable adjustment procedures; and failing to tell students about reasonable adjustments available to them;
- A later section on **Student Psychological and Counselling Services** finds evidence of delays, organizational errors, unsympathetic counsellors and unsympathetic staff.
- And a section on **Estates** finds both problematic buildings and poor understanding/behaviour in relation to access from staff.

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Affiliating departmental societies

- There’s also a fascinating section headed “Why has this not been reported before?”. It finds that both students and staff lack information about rights, and a lack of systematic investigation into the conditions of disabled students. It also notices that drop-out rates for disabled students are not systematically highlighted or discussed.
- Among the report’s recommendations, DSN calls for:
 - a new team of trained staff to address the issues raised by its report;
 - disability equality training for staff running UCL’s facilities;
 - all broken lifts to be fixed;
 - a map of toilets on the university’s campuses in central and east London;
 - training for all heads of department by a disability consultancy;
 - regular surveys of disabled students’ experiences;
 - a more streamlined complaints process; and efforts by UCL to inform disabled students of their rights.
- DSN also wants the university to set up a system that will ensure that all students who disclose they are disabled when they apply for a place can set up a “summary of reasonable adjustments” before they begin their studies;
- and for all lecturers to be told they can no longer refuse requests to record their lectures without providing equally good alternatives.
- And it wants the university to contact all disabled students with information about overcharging for accessible accommodation and how they can secure reductions in their rent.

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Affiliating departmental
societies

1. Information about rights and adjustments

- Students have no idea that what they are experiencing may be classed as discrimination.
- Neither do most staff members who discriminate.
- It is impossible to speak up for your rights when you do not know your rights.
- *“Whenever I would bring up my situation to my examinations officer he would advise me to either drop out or simply get on with it.”*

2. Reasonable adjustments and raising issues

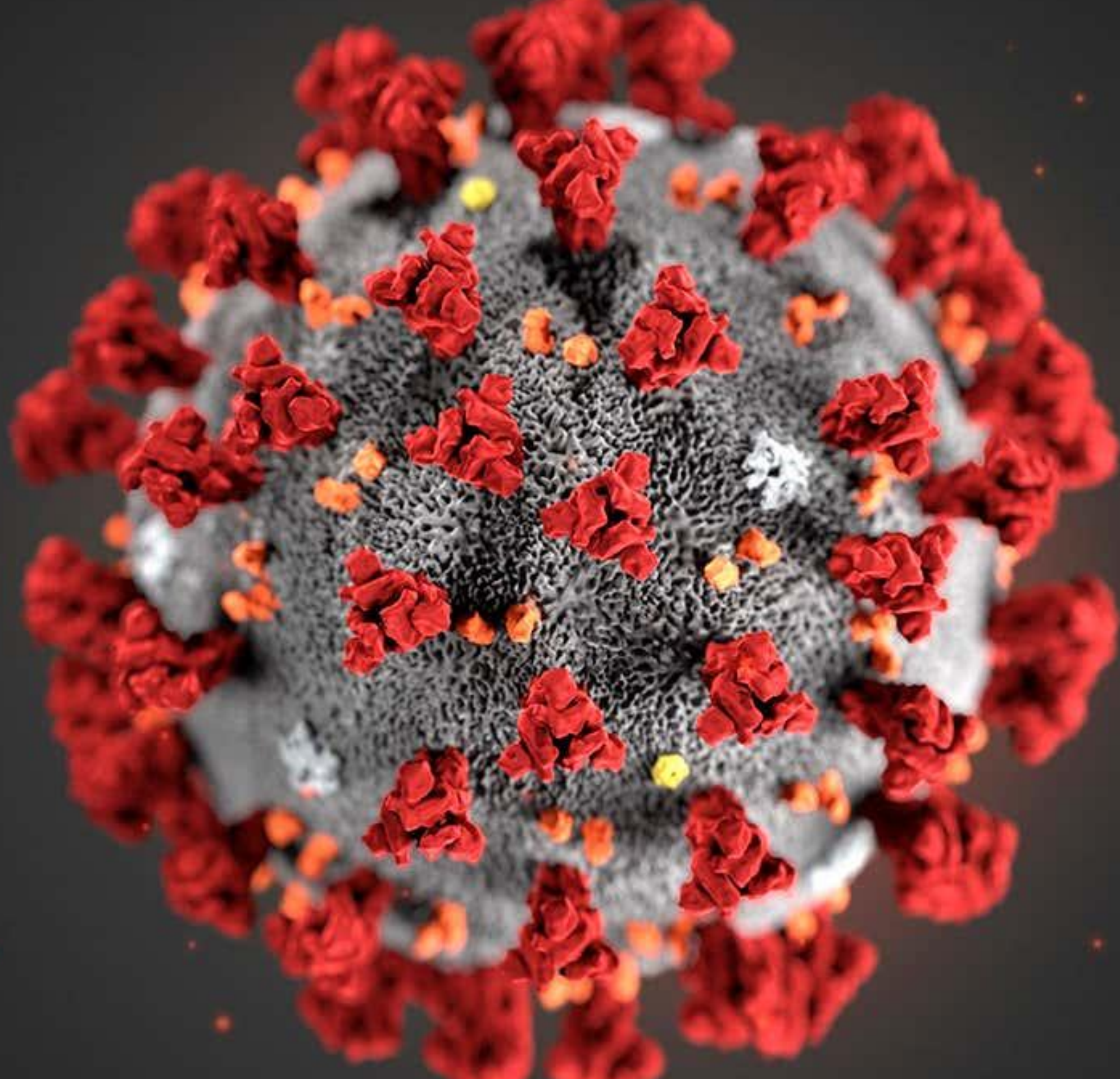
- Even when students know their rights, they need qualified independent advocacy.
- Universities are consistently failing to provide students with reasonable adjustments.
- When this happens, the student who is affected (and thus would be ideally suited to complain), often is so disadvantaged that they do not have the time or energy to advocate for themselves or others.
 - *[my lack of support] is directly negatively impacting my ability to keep up with assignments, homework, studying"*
- This barrier is further compounded when students are not actively supported in raising complaints.
- Even when there is an SU Disabled Students' Officer, in all but one university this person is a full-time student. No university employs an advocate with knowledge of disability rights.

3. Internal accountability and oversight

- At most universities disability inclusion is handled separately by estates, academic departments, the disability services department etc, with little coordination or oversight by upper management.
- This causes problems for students in raising complaints.
- If your supervisor is uninformed about disability law and denies you adjustments, ideally there should be someone above them who you can speak to.
- But if the structures of accountability are unclear and there is no group with ultimate responsibility for making sure that each body is acting in accordance with disability law, making it more likely your complaint will be ignored.
 - *[the disability services] did not respond to my complaints for the bullying that I was receiving since 2017 until I met one of the mental health managers in December 2019”*
- Without internal accountability discrimination will not be addressed.

Practical steps? eg...

- There should be a centralised body with close ties to upper management which has the ultimate responsibility for building accessibility into all aspects of the university. This body should hold disability services, academic departments, estates etc accountable and be an accessible point of escalation for any disabled student who feels that their disability rights have not been respected.
- There should be an annual review of universities' disability approach based on disabled students' experiences. This review must extend beyond asking if disabled students achieved the same degree outcomes as nondisabled students to instead focus on whether disabled students are being provided with equal access.
- Information regarding disability support at university and disabled students' rights must continually be provided to all disabled students, whether they have declared a disability or not. At every level of the disability services and complaints hierarchies, staff must be trained. This includes obligatory training for academic staff such as lecturers and supervisors.



Covid-19

- Good for some disabled students, bad for others
- Lots of progress on some things we have told would never be possible
- Lots of ignoring/forgetting existing disabled students and little consideration of “new” (ie now important they declare) disabled students
- What about the “snap back”?

Big issues around Disability and M/H

- Abrahart case – appeal or not?
- Process of “becoming” Disabled
- Assessment adjustments
- Challenges to the SU model

Do you know what the university is doing?





Disabled
DWP ove



15/03/22
**GOING
BACK
IS
NOT
A
CHOICE**

WONKHE
SUs

WONKHE
SUs

ABOUT US+ EVENTS LATEST+ JOBS+ SUBSCRIPTION+ SUs+

The pandemic has been good for some disabled students – let's keep it that way

SU BLOGS | 26/02/21



Image: Shutterstock



Ruby Jones
Ruby Jones is VP Welfare & Diversity at the University of Exeter Students Guild

Tags
BUILD BACK HIGHER
SU BLOGS
SU FEATURED

All around the country, students' unions are starting to be asked about what they'd like to see in relation to digital teaching and learning post the pandemic.

The Office for Students' [Gravity Assist report](#) contains interesting polling on front. It says that almost 30 per cent of students when asked would like "no part" of their course or student experience to be delivered online.

It highlights for me the need to be careful when feeding into universities' emerging strategies for the recovery period. Because while Covid-19 and the restrictions have been hugely harmful for many students, many of whom will want to return to an in-person delivery model for their student experience, there has actually been a major upside to the pandemic for some of the students we represent.

Ignored

Disabled students are often ignored at the best of times – and many are speaking out about the positive impact that the pandemic has had on their learning experience.

As a disabled sabbatical officer, the opportunity to work from home has been the main reason that I have been able to actually do my job. I honestly can't imagine

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- It's time the sector took a lead on addressing student housing



Working for change

Disabled Students UK is a grassroots student-led organisation.

We envision a world where disabled students have the same access to education as non-disabled students.

We are working to make universities truly accountable to their disabled students and to disability law.

[About us](#)[View Our COVID-19 Report](#)

Disabled students

An introduction to the big issues and things to think about re pandemic recovery



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