

BAMT GUIDELINES FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY FOR DISABLED STUDENTS ON PLACEMENT

These guidelines have been written collaboratively with advice and involvement from members of BAMT Disabled Music Therapists network and members of the BAMT Training and Education Committee. The guidance is written for Music Therapist Placement Educators, staff teams at training Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and students on placement. They have been written to support the planning and development of high quality, positive experiences for disabled students on placement. Any specific questions should be directed to the relevant organisation.

1. Central principles for supporting disabled students:

- 1.1 An acknowledgement that disabled Music Therapists have a valued place in training programmes and in the profession and that disabled people are represented as both therapists and clients.
- 1.2 An acknowledgement that disabled Music Therapy trainees and Music Therapists have unique skills and perspectives which are of great benefit to clients and organisations.
- 1.3 A recognition that disabilities may not be visible, may be newly diagnosed or as yet undiagnosed (for example a chronic health condition).
- 1.4 An understanding that communication is vital between the student, the placement manager, the university, the clinical supervisor and occupational health teams.
- 1.5 An acknowledgement that students are the experts on their own strengths and areas where reasonable adjustments may be beneficial.
- 1.6 An understanding that disabled students may need reasonable adjustments to allow for accessibility in all areas of the training.

- 1.7 The promotion of good practice. Share this guidance and include reference to it in documentation (e.g. handbooks and information).
- 1.8 An acknowledgement that these are not easy conversations, that stigma, ableism and unconscious bias exist everywhere and that students may have had traumatic experiences.
- 1.9 Placement settings have a responsibility to ensure that they comply with the relevant legislation. For reference; the Equality Act can be accessed [here](#). Guidance from EHRC can be found [here](#).

2. Structures and support:

- 2.1 Music Therapist Placement Educators should complete Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training and Unconscious Bias training, where available. Placement Educators should be aware that disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.2 Placement planning to begin early wherever possible to allow for a thorough consideration of all issues (including travel, accessibility, timetable).
- 2.3 Open and clear communication prior to, during and after the placement. Some students may prefer to talk directly with the placement provider about their needs, others may prefer the HEI team to do this (with their permission).
- 2.4 A visit to the placement setting to be offered prior to the placement where possible.
- 2.5 The student should be introduced to Occupational Health if this is welcome and appropriate.

2.6 Where a disability has already been disclosed, an initial meeting with the student, their personal tutor and their placement educator or provider prior to the placement beginning should be offered.

2.7 Meetings should then be scheduled at regular intervals throughout the placement to keep communication active as the work evolves and to discuss any changes that might be necessary, how the student's needs are being met, and their progress on the placement.

2.8 Both the placement setting and the HEI setting should make the student aware of the formal processes for raising issues, and for making complaints where issues cannot be managed within regular meetings or learning and teaching opportunities.

3. Topics to discuss with the student may include:

3.1 Asking the student what language they wish you to use to refer to any disclosed disability (e.g. identity first or person first language). In this document, we use language as advised by the disabled Music Therapists' network.

3.2 Trying to understand the person's unique experience.

3.3 How you can understand their experience and support them without asking the student to repeat information and experiences if they do not wish to do so.

3.4 Asking what specific support needs the student has, including what works and what doesn't work for them. It is important to discuss this throughout the placement as needs may change.

3.5 Asking who the student would like you to communicate with at the Higher Education Institution (HEI) if there are options.

- 3.6 Asking if the student would like to be in touch with a student previously at the placement, if appropriate and useful.
- 3.7 Asking what kinds of communication styles are most useful for the student. For example, an autistic student may want any unspoken expectations to be clearly stated. A d/Deaf student may need a specific environment for meetings.
- 3.8 Discussing a schedule, including travel arrangements, breaks, and timetable.
- 3.9 Processes for information sharing, including any existing guidelines and the student's preferences. This may include clinical note writing.
- 3.10 How best to introduce any changes on placement (e.g. to timetable or a new initiative).
- 3.11 How feedback (formative and summative) will be given and what feedback method is most useful for the student (e.g. in conversation, given in email/in a document).

4. The placement environment

- 4.1 How will the placement setting make reasonable adjustments to ensure an accessible environment?
- 4.2 A busy, noisy office with lots of different people coming and going may be challenging; consider the student's specific needs in terms of environment.
- 4.3 Try to organise a timetable with clear breaks and avoid an assumption that students will be available or remain on site during their breaks.
- 4.4 Understand that students may use their breaks in different ways. Some students may need additional breaks or access to a quiet space, and may not socialise with others in a break or at lunchtime.

5. Time

- 5.1 Flexibility relating to time and timing may be needed.
- 5.2 Consider a slower, more gradual induction to placement, and discuss this with the student and the HEI.
- 5.3 Consider the placement day; would it be useful to have a late start, a break after arrival, an adapted schedule, or an early finish? Might the student do some work from home if appropriate and helpful?
- 5.4 Disabled students may need more tutorial support, more supervision support, shorter or longer placements, as well as accommodating any adjustments identified by occupational health or the student themselves.
- 5.5 More opportunities to understand systems, including computer or notes systems, may need to be offered. Ensure that the student has had opportunities to ask questions and to understand details. Information already given may need to be revisited or communicated in different ways.

6. Equipment and other support

- 6.1 Assistive technology and other IT support may be required and may need to be set up in advance.
- 6.2 Equipment such as chairs, tables and workstations may need adjustment.
- 6.3 Specific and specialist equipment may be required, which may involve ordering in good time. The student should be consulted about what is most useful.
- 6.4 Musical equipment may need to be set up or moved if required.

6.5 Some students may choose to bring their own equipment, or need equipment that is not usually present in the setting (e.g. noise cancelling headphones).

6.6 Consider the spaces that the student will use and discuss whether they are appropriate eg in terms of access, noise, busyness.

6.7 Note that there will be specific processes for accessing support through Disability Services and Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). Individual HEIs will be able to signpost to their Disability Services. See here for information about DSA

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa>

7. Communication between placement, student and HEI

6.8 Ensure that you have contact details for the student's academic guidance or personal tutor, and their supervisor/reflective practice tutor.

6.9 Be aware of the different people at the HEI who are supporting the student (e.g. Disability Services may be a useful contact).

6.10 Arrange opportunities to check in with the HEI contact at the start of the placement.

6.11 Ensure that consent is discussed and is in place for the student's information to be shared.

6.12 Ensure that you are aware of any reasonable adjustments (often referred to as an SOA – summary of adjustments) that the student has in their academic studies. There may be additional reasonable adjustments required specifically for the student's placements, and these may vary from one placement to the next.

- 6.13 Ensure that you are aware of any adaptations to assignments/assessments and any impact upon placement work.
- 6.14 Have a process agreed between Placement Educator, student and HEI to allow responsive adaptation should any issues arise during the placement. This should include a named person (eg a course tutor or disability advisor) who will be the first line of support for the student.
- 6.15 Be open to pausing or extending the placement should this be a reasonable adjustment.
- 6.16 Ensure that there is opportunity for the student to give feedback on their placement experience (eg an end of placement meeting or online form). An evaluation of the whole placement, including discussion of any identified barriers will allow a process of learning for all involved. If a meeting is organised, a member of the HEI should offer to accompany the student in a supportive role.

Placement Educators – being an ally, and dos and don'ts:

This section is informed by feedback from recent Music Therapy graduates.

Being an ally means acknowledging that everyone is different and moves away from binary and ableist language (e.g. right/wrong, able/disabled). The pillars of allyship are; to educate ourselves, own our own privilege and work towards transferring the benefits of privilege to those who lack it, accept feedback and listen, and accept we will get things wrong sometimes.

DO...

- Show an interest, be curious about your student's disability. Be sensitive when asking questions but be reassured that warm interest is more welcome than inaccurate assumptions.

- Be open about your own not knowing and do your own research to educate yourself so that you have a better understanding of, and empathy with the student's potential experience.
- Be aware that living with a disability can be changeable and unpredictable and therefore needs may change through the placement.
- Learn about ableism and othering so that you can recognise your own knowledge gaps and assumptions.
- Be aware that students may have experienced trauma related to their disability or to people in positions of power and feel re-traumatised when discussing some issues. Be gentle and kind.
- Notice and challenge your own binary assumptions and polarisations. These will inevitably exist, particularly in organisations which all have systems and models (eg the medical model, educational systems).
- Ask for advice and help from appropriate sources if you get things wrong.
- Be mindful that the student may find placement and discussions around it challenging, including being offered help.
- Remember that the student is learning how to be a Music Therapist, and that as in any learning relationship, power is at play. The student, who is in a process of assessment, may not feel able to give direct feedback to Placement Educators or HEI staff.
- Be open to feedback at the end of the placement and learn from this.

- Consider how you might support the student to move out of study into employment.

DON'T...

- Look for external validation that a disability exists.
- Minimise or negate the student's situation or experience.
- Keep asking the same questions; if you might forget information ask the student how they would be happy for you to make a note of important information.
- Be defensive - remember that your student is not responsible for your mistakes or your defences.

Tessa Watson, Gill O'Dempsey, Nicola Demosthenous, Kelly Fraser, Verity Gray, David Limmer, Katie Richards, Disabled Music Therapists Network, BAMT TEC committee

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Resources

BBC (2021) 'The harmful ableist language you unknowingly use' [here](#)

Bogart, K.R. and Dunn, D.S. (2019) Special Issue; Ableism, [Journal of Social Issues](#), Volume 75, Issue 3

British Psychological Society (no date) [Power Threat Meaning Framework \(PTMF\)](#), available [here](#)

Cameron, R. (2023) [Working with Difference and Diversity in Counselling and Psychotherapy](#), London; Sage

Davies, H. (2022) 'Autism is a way of being: An 'insider perspective' on neurodiversity, music therapy and social justice' in *British Journal of Music Therapy*, 36, 1, 16-26.

Nario-Redmond, M.R., Kemerling, A.A., Silverman, A. (2019) 'Hostile, Benevolent, and Ambivalent Ableism: Contemporary Manifestations' in Special Issue; Ableism, [Journal of Social Issues](#), 75, 3, 726-756

Rajkumar, S. (2022) [How to talk about disability sensitively and avoid ableist tropes](#), available [here](#)

Remploy (2017) [Disability Guide](#), Leicester, Remploy.co.uk available [here](#)

Ableism and disableism (no date) [Sense](#), [here](#)

Disabled Students' Commission (2023) [The Disabled Student Commitment](#), Advance HE, available [here](#)

Audio visual resources

What is ableism? UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [access here](#)

Inside our Autistic Minds (BBC)

Unmasking my Autism (BBC)

Invisible disabilities (BBC)

You don't look... (BBC)

My Disability Roadmap [access here](#)

Signs for Change Rose Ayling-Ellis (BBC)

AntiSocial – Neurodiversity and autism (Radio 4)

Other sources of support

Remploy

<https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/resource/mental-health-toolkit-for-employers/?read=more>

Office for Students

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/support-for-disabled-students/>

British Dyslexia Association guidance

<https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/advice/employers/creating-a-dyslexia-friendly-workplace/dyslexia-friendly-style-guide>

Disabled students' helpline <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/disabled-students-helpline>

Office of the Independent Adjudicator

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/supporting-disabled-students/>

Gov.uk <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa>