

Students/Graduates with a Disability

As a student with a disability you may wonder about how to best position yourself as a graduate entering the workplace. The resources in this booklet will provide you with the support you need in identifying how to best make the transition from education into employment.

This information will help you to decide when and if to disclose your disability to potential employers, access the relevant resources available to you and find out about organisations available to help you.

Legislation has been enacted in Ireland to ensure that people with disabilities have a statutory right of equal access to the same services, buildings and information as other citizens. It is unlawful for employers and institutions to discriminate against people on the grounds of their disability.

Note: The information below is subject to change. As such please use it as a guideline only and consult the organisations & government departments referred to, to verify that the information is the most up-to-date.

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Available Supports

Educational Supports

Supports which exist in third level for students with disabilities:

1. Students with disabilities such as: asthma or cystic fibrosis, diabetes, epilepsy, psychological disabilities, significant health/medical disabilities and speech and language disability may avail of a wide range of supports provided directly by the higher education institution that they are attending.
2. The TUD Disability Service can be contacted at (01) 402 7681 Or (01) 402 3000 or via e- mail: disability@dit.ie
3. A full list of the examples of supports which may be offered to you as a student plus details of relevant learning support officer can be found at: [Disability support service | TU Dublin](#)
4. Supports may also be provided by external organisations for which you will find contact details at: <https://www.ahead.ie/>

Employment Supports

AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability is an independent non- profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in further and higher education for students with disabilities and to enhance their employment prospects on graduation.

AHEAD provides information to students and graduates with disabilities, teachers, guidance counsellors and parents on disability issues in education.

AHEAD works with graduates and employers through the [GET AHEAD](#) Graduate Forum and the [WAM](#) Mentored Work Placement Programme.

AHEAD coordinates [LINK](#), a worldwide network of professionals promoting the inclusion of students & graduates with disabilities in Higher Education managed by 6 European partner organisations.

The main training they deliver is the “Get Ready for Work” programme. This a unique Career Skills programme for graduates with disabilities/ specific learning difficulties in conjunction with Careers Officers across Ireland. You learn from the experts, careers advisors and employers, who will work to help you to up-skill, re-skill and maximise your opportunities to pursue the career that matches your educational and [professional ambitions](#).

The WAM Programme

Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) is a work placement programme which aims to promote access to the labour market for graduates with disabilities and build the capacity of

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employers to integrate disability into the mainstream workplace.

Participating employers (WAM Leaders) collaborate with WAM to **offer mentored, paid work placements** for graduates with disabilities. This partnership brings graduates with disabilities and WAM's network of employers together so that both can benefit from each other - ensuring genuine learning opportunities for all.

WAM is unique in that it seeks to engage and support employers in order to simultaneously develop the potential of employers and graduates with disabilities

To date, the AHEAD WAM Programme has **provided over 250 placements** for graduates with disabilities and worked with the following dynamic network of employers:

- Abbott Ireland; Bank of Ireland; Citi; ESB; IBM International Ltd.; Irish Life & Permanent; Microsoft; O2; Public Jobs.ie Dell, Arthur Cox, Deloitte, Enterprise Rent a Car, Covidien, Savills, National Treasury Management Agency.

Further information on WAM can be found at; <http://www.ahead.ie/wam>

Marketing Yourself Effectively to Employers

Targeting employers:

Many employers are determined to develop diverse work forces, which include people with disabilities. Their commitment can be shown in a number of ways, and these can help you to decide how disability-friendly an organisation is.

Research the following, when considering which employers to target:

- Does the company recruitment literature include a policy statement on equal opportunity for people with disabilities?
- Is the organisation an employer which is Positive to Disability? (This will usually be stated on their website and company information).

Do not limit your applications to those that publicise their commitment to employing people with disabilities, apply to every employer you choose.

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The Ability Awards:

The Ability Awards are a business awards programme that promotes, recognises and continuously improves Best Practices within businesses ensuring the inclusion of people with disabilities as employees, customers and members of the community. The Ability Awards programme examine all aspects of employment and customer service recognising best practice and progressive attitudes in businesses that see disability and diversity as a corporate asset and key to success. For full details of this programme visit; Kanchi.org | [Official Website](#)

Marketing yourself effectively:

To combat any possible unfair discrimination by an employer, it is important that you "market" yourself effectively. Generally, the first contact an employer will have from you is a CV or application form. Remember, whatever you write will influence how you are perceived by the reader. It is hard for an employer to reject your CV/application if you have been able to match your skills and experiences with those an employer is looking for.

Disclosure

The majority of students with a disability worry about whether they should disclose their disability or health problem. It is also difficult to know when and how information could be given. The decision is a personal one and the following factors may come into play for you:

- You may not want to disclose your health or disability, as you may be concerned about being rejected automatically.
- You may feel that your health or disability does not actually affect your ability to do the job that you have applied for.
- You may feel that employer will not view you objectively.
- You may simply desire privacy.

Suggested reasons for disclosure:

Many employers are committed to employing disabled people. Look up their "equal opportunities" policy.

You may be asked to complete a medical form and if so, you must do so truthfully.

There may be a health and safety implication, or the need for work-place adaptations.

Covering Letter

You could mention your health or disability in the letter accompanying your CV. It should be done in a positive manner and could highlight any achievements e.g. successful past employment or voluntary work.

Application

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There may be a section on the form that asks about any serious health conditions or disabilities. You may also want to mention your disability when giving an answer to a question e.g. it is much more of an achievement to get a degree in three years if you have ME than if you don't.

Pre-Interview

If you are invited for an interview and need practical support, you could get in contact with the employer in advance.

Interview

It may be that you will not be able to conceal your disability at an interview. Be relaxed and always present yourself in a positive manner.

You can view The Ahead Guide to Disclosure here

<http://www.dit.ie/media/careers/pdf/A%20guide%20to%20Disclosure%202013.pdf>

Top Tips

- Be very positive about skills and abilities.
- Develop affirmations which empower you to overcome doubts and any lack of confidence
- in your ability to land the job and do it well.
- Provide factual information that is related to your ability to do the job but that does not use
- complicated medical terminology. Remember that *you* know what your health problem or disability
- means and how it affects you or might affect your ability to do the job; others may not.
- Be prepared for the interviewer to ask you questions about your disability. Try to anticipate
- any concerns they may have and develop responses to them.
- Be prepared to make suggestions about what adjustments you would need for you to carry out the
- duties of the job effectively. (Remember that the government provides support for such
- adjustments).
- Give positive examples of how you have met challenges in the past.
- Demonstrate that your disability has neither limited your ability to achieve your life's goals
- generally nor limited your study or work performance specifically.
- Bring any relevant literature about funding or sources of information an employer may wish to follow up on.
- Don't let your health or disability become the focus of the interview.
- Always assume that an employer will view you in a positive light – if you think otherwise it will affect

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- your performance and reduce your chances of getting the job.

Examples of positive disclosure

The following are examples from covering letters, application forms, and CVs that you may find useful when considering your own approach to disclosing your own health problem or disability:

Interests: I am an active member of the Students Union in college. I enjoy swimming (in 2006 I competed for Ireland) and challenging outdoor pursuits. In 2008 I raised €5450 for two charities by completing 32 river swims in 32 days.

General Skills: I am computer literate, having used Microsoft Work, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, and CAD packages and have a good typing speed. I also have an in-depth knowledge of statistics as my degree had a very strong research base. I have a full Irish driving licence and my own car. I have found that skills I have acquired for preparation and forward planning in order to manage my dyslexia significantly improve my ability to manage all aspects of my work. Despite my dyslexia, I am a good communicator, both verbally and in writing as I take time to consider and structure what I wish to say before doing so.

Other Information: (Disability) I am a wheelchair user. I am athletic and independent and would not require any personal assistance in order to carry out the requirements of this position should I be appointed. Should you have concerns about being able to employ a person with a disability then information about financial assistance and expert advice can be provided by [Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation](#). Alternatively I am happy to answer any questions about this at interview.

More examples:

- a. You will notice from my CV that it has taken me six years to complete a three-year course. This is due to the fact that I was involved in a road traffic accident, which necessitated me taking 2 years to recover and starting the course afresh. I feel this demonstrated my determination and resilience, especially when confronted with difficult problems and situations.
- b. I was diagnosed as having MS whilst at University and although this meant I had to attend hospital appointments to help me to manage my condition, I successfully completed my assignments ahead of time. As a consequence of this, I have learned how to overcome difficulties, understand the benefits of keeping people informed of my condition and being effective at time management.
- c. In addition, my enthusiasm and determination can be demonstrated by voluntary work. Having diabetes and still achieving high academic grades, working part-time through my studies and raising large amounts of money for charity, shows that I am extremely capable of meeting targets and managing my work effectively.

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Useful Links & Resources

General links:

AHEAD - Irish Association for Higher Education Access and Disability - <http://www.ahead.ie/>

Irish Higher Education and Government information resource on DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) & HEAR (Higher Education Access Route) <http://www.accesscollege.ie/>

HEA –Higher Education Authority - resource for students with disabilities

<http://tinyurl.com/p9d35vq>.

HEAG - Higher Education Accessibility Guide to disability support services in Higher Education Institutions across Europe <https://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/heag%20>.

QUEST FOR LEARNING resource featuring study skills and employability skills information. <http://www.questforlearning.org/> .

STUDY ABROAD WITHOUT LIMITS resource for European students (with a disability) who want to study abroad in the countries involved in this website; Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Ireland, The Netherlands and Sweden. <http://www.thelinknetwork.eu/index.php/component/content/article/9-no-menu-articles/19> .

DFI - Disability Federation of Ireland website for the voluntary disability sector supporting organisations to enable people with disabilities.

<http://www.disability-federation.ie/> .

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

<http://www.ihrec.ie/>

STUDENT FINANCE resource covering every aspect of student funding.

<http://www.studentfinance.ie/mp7575/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/index.html> .

USI – Union of Students in Ireland Guide to Grants.

<http://usi.ie/student-grants/>

Solas – web resource on grants and funding.

<http://www.fas.ie/en/Allowances+and+Grants/default.htm> .

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Please ask your Career Development Centre for any other information sheets you require.

Employment Supports and Grants

Like all employees, people with disabilities bring a range of skills, talents and abilities to the workplace and there is a range of supports to help you find and keep employment. Be prepared to make suggestions about what adjustments you would need for you to carry out the duties of the job effectively. (Remember that the government provides support for many adjustments). See:

<http://www.ahead.ie/employer-accommodations>

<http://www.ahead.ie/workgrants>

Example of Supports Available

- **Adapting the workplace and assistive technology:** an accessible workplace and assistive technology can allow you to perform your job without difficulty.
- The Workplace/Equipment Adaptation Grant provides funding towards the costs of modifications or special equipment that will allow a disabled person to take up an offer of employment or to remain in employment.
- **Personal Reader Grant:** If you are blind or visually impaired and you need help with job-related reading, you may be entitled to a grant to allow you to employ a personal reader.
- Workplace/Equipment Adaptation Scheme: If you have to make changes, you may be able to get this grant towards the costs of adapting your premises or buying equipment.
- The Employee Retention Grant Scheme can help you to retain an employee who has acquired an illness, condition or impairment that affects their ability to carry out their job.
- The Disability Awareness Training Scheme is open to all companies in the private sector. Disability awareness training can help your staff provide the best service to customers or clients with disabilities and ensures that they also develop and maintain good working relationships with colleagues with disabilities.
- The Wage Subsidy Scheme provides financial incentives to employers, outside the public sector, to employ certain people with disabilities who work between 21 and 39 hours per week.

AHEAD – Employment Support

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GetAHEAD

GetAHEAD is an initiative of AHEAD which has been running since 2005. It is a network of student and graduates with disabilities currently making the transition from third-level education to full time employment.

GetAHEAD works to up-skill graduates with disabilities by providing training events and valuable information covering a wide range of topics and resources including;

- [Volunteering & Work Experience](#)
- [Interview Preparation](#)
- [Writing Your CV](#)
- [Job Seeking](#)
- [Legal Entitlements](#)
- [Grants Available](#)
- [Disclosure](#)

The WAM Programme

The WAM Programme offers graduates with disabilities the chance to undertake 6 month paid mentored work placements with high profile Irish employers such as the Civil Service, Dell, ESB, Abbott Ireland and many more. The first step to applying for a WAM Placement is to register with AHEAD on their WAMworks database: [register here](#).

EmployAbility Service

EmployAbility is an employment and recruitment service that assists people, who have a range of disabilities and impairments, to obtain and keep a job. The Service provides a number of 'on-the-job' supports, such as a Job Coach who will assist both the employer and the person seeking employment. In order to avail of the EmployAbility Service, you must genuinely require the initial support of a Job Coach to obtain employment in the open market.

The range of supports provided by the Service include:

- Individual needs assessment
- Vocational profiling and career planning
- Individual employment plan
- Job sourcing and job matching
- On-the-job support and coaching
- Advice and support to employers
- Follow-up support and mentoring to both employers and employees

Jobseekers

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The Service provides jobseekers with career advice and employment support. Career advice includes identification of skills and assistance with searching for jobs. Employment support is provided when accessing vacancies and applying for jobs. It also includes matching skills with the employers' needs, work experience placements, finding employers and assistance with integrating into the workplace. The Service provides access to support services when required to maintain employment and advice on employment benefits and entitlements.

[Click here for further information](#)

Specialisterne – Supporting Graduates with Autism and Aspergers

Specialisterne is a specialist consultancy that recruits and supports talented people with Autism and Aspergers, and similar challenges.

They help employers recruit and retain talented people and grow diverse, effective teams.

Their ambition is to build a national organisation, which partners with local service providers and businesses to develop the most sustainable programs possible while developing a mentorship/management model to enable employers to expand their recruitment to include high functioning people with autism and similar challenges.

Services Offered:

- Assess your skills and advise on what job roles may best suit your profile and skill set
- Search for employment opportunities and support you throughout the interview process
- Carry out a mock interview to help you perform at your best
- Support you throughout your employment

See: www.specialisterne.ie/

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