

STUDENT COUNCIL NOTES:

Ulster University as an institution recognises that it has an obligation to make reasonable adjustments for the purposes of disabled access. However, UU must also recognise that as the accessibility needs for each individual are different, it is important for individuals to be able to report issues that arise with ease.

As required by current legislation UU aims to reduce or where possible remove systemic barriers that make it difficult or impossible for disabled students to access resources.

That not all disabilities are visible. Many students have disabilities which limits their ability to communicate if they are need of specific help or assistance. There are currently few methods for students to express this non-verbally.

UU's disabled students should be made to feel they are valued members of UUSU, however, as many societies occur in the evenings when there is reduced accessibility this has caused disabled students to feel they are not welcome at societies, or physically be unable to attend.

That there is a fundamental lack of social, academic & accessible support to disabled students. Especially those who first arrive to university who generally have no connections bar their mentors.

STUDENT COUNCIL BELIEVES:

Both UU and UUSU must recognise, that due to the diverse accessibility needs of individuals, accessible avenues for reporting issues are vital. Therefore, multiple formats for contacting estate services should be available.

That students should have a go-to for issues that may arise on-campus, that these should be addressed by a network which can make it easier for disabled students to raise physical obstructions or issues that may make traversing the campus difficult i.e. lack of ramps or elevators for certain floors/blocks.

Where there are temporary issues that may impede access to campus services and facilities, students should be made aware in advance to enable route-planning and contact supportive services that may be able to assist with such matters (e.g. Student Wellbeing). Accessible routes should remain open to allow disabled students access to campus services and facilities during non-working hours. Students should be informed how to access these routes if they wish to work on campus during these times.

STUDENT COUNCIL BELIEVES CONTINUED:

There should be efforts made to ensure that students with invisible disabilities are given the support that they deserve in order to thrive and achieve excellence during their time at university. That they should have the ability to non-verbally tell members of staff that they need additional support.

The university monitors and reviews its disability access policies regularly, this process could be enhanced by the contributions of its disabled students. Reviews of disability policies and services should be preceded by giving an opportunity for feedback from disabled students, this feedback should be accessible, an example of accessible survey design can be found here: https://help.surveymonkey.com/articles/en_US/kb/Accessibility-at-SurveyMonkey

Online resources for disabled students should be clear and centrally accessible via the UU website. This should include (but is not limited to): relevant active disability-based policies, advice and instructions for adapting accessibility of online resources, links to Student Wellbeing and other avenues of contacting relevant staff regarding issues arising from disability. This may be achieved through a master list of links to the resources but all possibilities should be explored.

STUDENT COUNCIL RESOLVES:

UUSU will lobby the UU for the following enhancements to the accessibility of UU services:

Appropriate signage for services and facilities (including those for the use of disabled students) in bold clear print and Braille

Inclusion of feedback from disabled students in the review of disability policies and services.

Student Councillors and Diversity Networks should be explored as means of facilitating such.

Students to be made aware of temporary issues, broken elevators, broken automatic doors, and blocked wheelchair ramps etc. that may impede their ability to access services and be given estimated resolution dates, in a timely manner. This should also take into consideration the unique differences affecting each student in its format.

To support disabled students in raising estates issues, a review should be conducted to establish whether the current software ("Plan-on") can be used with screen-reading and dictation software. Additional methods for contacting estates services should also be supplied to students.

STUDENT COUNCIL BELIEVES CONTINUED:

That the student cohort should be made aware of the Students With Additional Needs Network (S.W.A.N.N.) so that they can more easily raise issues within the university. Additionally these issues should be reflected to the student council & EDI Department to ensure that they are properly addressed.

That the SU continue lobbying efforts to ensure that Sunflower lanyards remain available for students & staff that request them.

For the review of "timed locking of doors on campus;" calling for only those doors that are not necessary to be locked and for automatic doors to remain on outside of normal working hours. Assessments should also be made in terms of doors that must be locked outside of these hours to determine whether this may impede disabled students' access to vital services and/or entrance or egress to campus buildings. Disabled students should be made aware, in their preferred format, how to access campuses outside of normal working hours.

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