

# Disability Services Panel - terms of reference

## Background

The University of Leeds and its Disability Services department are committed to adopting the social model approach to the provision of their services. This approach understands that students are disabled by the barriers they face; by certain practices and environments at university, rather than by their physical or learning attributes.

To ensure an understanding of these barriers, Disability Services organise a joint panel. This comprises service management staff, disabled researchers, and disabled students. The panel offers a way for disabled students to influence the practices, processes and provisions of Disability Services.

The panel jointly reviews matters of interest to both staff and student members, with the balance of the panel's membership being with non-staff members. The position of chair is held by a researcher or student member of the panel.

Student and researcher panel members will be invited to provide constructive feedback to Disability Services, and are asked to represent themselves, not the wider student body. Where broader views are required the panel will jointly decide the approach to be taken. Induction activities will be organised for new members prior to the first panel meeting of each year to make sure that participants can fully engage in the experience.

## Terms of reference

1. To offer a forum for constructive discussion about Disability Services' procedures, practices and provisions.
2. To enable student and researcher service users to influence the service and its developments.
3. To annually consider Disability Services':
  - transition practices and provisions
  - communication modes and messages.
4. To enable service users or staff to raise matters relating to the service for consideration by the panel.
5. To collate views and feedback about other aspects of University provisions on the understanding that these will be passed to the relevant area.
6. To identify other opportunities and methods for gathering wider user feedback.

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### Constitution (Membership)

The panel's membership is weighted towards service users, and will seek to include:

7. - Up to nine disabled students or researchers registered at the University
  - Three managers from the Disability Services Management Team
  - A Student Panel Coordinator, normally the Disability Services Engagement Officer
  - The Disability Contact Liaison Officer, as a link to the school based Disability Contacts.
  - The head of Disability Services may attend as an associate member, with no voting rights, to provide insight or feedback as requested by the panel.

Additional details regarding student and researcher members:

8. Student members will be registered students of the University of Leeds who identify as disabled.
9. Student membership of the panel will be undertaken by application.
10. Should more than nine students apply to join the panel, places will be selected on merit, based on their application.
11. The role of the chair is to be filled by a student member of the panel.
12. Volunteers for the position of chair will be requested in the first meeting of each academic year. In the case of more than one volunteer, an anonymous vote will be cast by all members of the panel.
13. Membership will be for any remaining duration of the student or researcher's current studies, or for as long as is wished during that term.
14. Each academic year applications will be open for any vacant places.

Additional details regarding the Panel Coordinator:

15. The Student Panel Coordinator will:
  - Minute meetings.
  - Send invites, agendas and associated paperwork to panel members.
  - Coordinate the marketing of the panel to prospective student members.
  - Be a liaison for user members.
  - Provide logistical support to the panel.

### Support for user members

16. This is a voluntary role offering the opportunity to gain experience in collaborative working and to collectively influence peers, the service and its staff.

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17. Student members will be expected to undertake induction or training to support their time on the panel and ensure they get the most out of the experience. Any induction events may cover topics such as:
- Equality and inclusion
  - Overview of Disability Services
  - Developing your speaking and influencing skills
  - How to effectively contribute in and lead meetings
  - Strategic thinking
  - Effective communication
  - Dealing with conflict and negotiation
  - Setting rules for the group that support engagement and interaction

Induction activities are intended to support student panel members to confidently and constructively share their opinions, whilst respecting others' views in the meetings.

### Panel cycle

18. The panel is anticipated to meet up to ten times in a year.
19. Meetings are expected to last between one and three hours, with meeting preparation time of approximately an hour per meeting.
20. Any other work is optional.
21. The final meeting will propose agenda items to be carried over into the following year.
22. Advertising for the student panel will commence from October each year.

If you have any questions regarding these terms of reference or the Disability Services Panel, please contact Megan Owen ([m.e.owen@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:m.e.owen@leeds.ac.uk)).