

A social model approach to student wellbeing and inclusion

Carys Kennedy, Disability Service

Social model of disability

- People are disabled by **barriers**, not medical conditions or impairment.
- Barriers can be **environmental, attitudinal, procedural.**
- The social model allows us to focus on **practical, not personal, information.**

The social model and wellbeing

- Encountering barriers may have an adverse impact on student wellbeing.
- Additionally, students experiencing mental health difficulties may encounter environmental, attitudinal and procedural barriers.

Case study

- Keiko is running late for a lecture.
- She gets to the door, and decides not to go in.
- Keiko tries to catch up via Moodle, but only the slides – which are all images - are online.
- At a later date, students are asked to present on a topic linked to the lecture she missed.
- Keiko doesn't attend on the day of the presentation.
- She starts to fall further behind, which impacts on her wellbeing.

Case study

- Reassure students that it is better for them to come late than not at all.
- Provide information on Moodle – ideally lecture capture, but the more detail the better.
- Recognise that students may find it difficult to reach out when they miss things – make it as easy as possible.

“Curricula and teaching practices have a significant impact on mental health. Introduce learning communities to foster connectedness and motivation, enhance the role of the personal tutor, offer flexibility in course design and assessment and in adjustments all to understand and support the needs of diverse students.”

- Universities UK, #stepchange guidance on Mental Health in Higher Education

My course allows us to access materials online, including uploading recordings of lectures, which can be super helpful on days when my mental health leaves me unable to physically attend. Our tutor also emails us the presentations from our sessions, and all of this contributes to a better learning environment. It means that, on days when my mental health is bad, I still feel able to participate and learn, without the added anxiety and pressure of having to physically attend. If all courses offered this kind of learning, higher education would be much more accessible.

MA student, Camberwell

Further training

Disability Equality Training

Search 'disability' on iTrent (ess.arts.ac.uk)

Workshop: Supporting Student Mental Health through Inclusive Practices

Search 'mental health' on iTrent (ess.arts.ac.uk)

For more information (external)

Universities UK #StepChange guidance: Mental Health in Higher Education
<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange>

Higher Education Academy, Embedding mental wellbeing in the curriculum
<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/embedding-mental-wellbeing-curriculum-maximising-success-higher-education>

Disabled Student Sector Leadership Group, Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-teaching-and-learning-in-higher-education>

For more information (Disability Service)

Website:

<http://www.arts.ac.uk/study-at-ual/student-services/disability--dyslexia/>

Intranet information for staff:

<https://canvas.arts.ac.uk/sites/working-at-ual/SitePage/45674/disability-and-dyslexia>