

**Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference:  
Next steps for supporting disabled students in higher education in England**

Timing: Morning, Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2026

\*\*\*Taking place online\*\*\*



WESTMINSTER  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
FORUM

Draft agenda subject to change

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Key considerations for supporting disabled students**  
Senior commentator  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Institutional approaches and responsibilities in supporting disabled students**  
*insights from Disabled people's lived experience of education in the UK report | implementation of the Equality Act 2010 and Disabled Students' Allowance | individual entitlement and provider responsibility | effectiveness of current support arrangements | governance, accountability, and co-ordination across academic, professional, and specialist teams | legal obligations of higher education providers | embedding inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment | staff training and professional development | student voice and service improvement | consistency, timeliness, and administration of reasonable adjustments | findings from the National Student Survey | transitions between stages of education | sustainable staffing and resourcing models*  
**Marissa Hill**, Assistant Director, Student Equality and Inclusion, Sheffield Hallam University  
**Professor Suanne Gibson**, Professor, Inclusive Education, University of Plymouth  
**Abigail Hamer**, Legal Principal, Equality and Human Rights Commission  
Senior representative, university  
Senior representative, students  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.20 **Student feedback, casework insights, and improving support and outcomes**  
**Jo Nuckley**, Head, Outreach and Insight Team, Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
- 10.40 **Chair's closing remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.45 Break
- 10.55 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 11.00 **Developing non-medical help, assistive technology, and artificial intelligence-enabled support**  
*responsibilities of universities and the Student Loans Company in non-medical help | DfE consultation on assistive software funding | reform to DSA-funded non-medical support | widening access to specialist support | the role of assistive technology and AI tools | accessibility of digital learning environments | recruitment and retention of disability specialists and non-medical help practitioners | continuity of provision during reform | role of external providers in needs assessment and support | effectiveness, equity, and data governance of emerging tools | sustainability of future delivery models | strategies for sustainable and high-quality support*  
Senior representative, university  
Senior representative, technology  
Senior commentator  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.30 **Strategies for improving outcomes for disabled students**  
**Professor Deborah Johnston**, Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive, University of Bedfordshire; and Member, Disability in Higher Education Advisory Panel, Office for Students  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.55 **Strengthening attainment, outcomes, and progression pathways**  
*reducing disparities in attainment and progression | effective practice in retention and academic achievement | transitions into and through higher education | addressing barriers in curricula design, assessment, and wider institutional culture | data use across Access and Participation Plans | monitoring institutional performance | regulatory consistency and accountability | improving recruitment, careers advice, and ongoing study support | collaboration between government, universities, and support bodies | reducing barriers to employment and supporting longer-term outcomes*  
Senior representative, careers services  
Senior representative, employer  
Senior representative, charity  
Senior commentator  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.40 **Policy priorities and next steps for supporting disabled students**  
Senior representative, policy  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 13.05 **Chair's and Westminster Higher Education Forum closing remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian  
**Sean Cudmore**, Westminster Higher Education Forum