

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

Timing: Morning, Monday, 21st September 2026

Taking place online

Draft agenda subject to change



**WESTMINSTER
HIGHER EDUCATION
FORUM**

- 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 coordination 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, Head, Education Law, Watkins & Gunn Solicitors
Professor Antony Moss, Pro Vice Chancellor, Education and Student Experience, London South Bank University
Ruby Deakin, Disabled Students' Officer, Warwick Students' Union
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
Questions and comments from the floor
- 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
Kellie Mote, Programme Lead, Accessibility, Jisc
Rohan Slaughter, Senior Lecturer, Assistive Technology, University of Dundee
Louise Grimmett, Head, Student Support and Wellbeing, University College London
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
Laura Davis, CEO, British Association for Supported Employment
Keren Coney, Lecturer, Career Development, International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby; and Research and Knowledge Director, AGCAS
Ellen Engstrom, Policy and Engagement Manager, Independent Higher Education
Dr Rebecca Digby, Vice-Principal and Head, Learning, Teaching and Research, Norland College
Senior representative, employer
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