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Arriving at Thriving:

Key findings and recommendations

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Themes

- The importance of senior leadership
- Teaching and learning
- Bureaucratic and financial burdens
- Living and social
- Transitions and employment

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Methodology

Evidence sessions

- Two sessions held in 2019 with disabled students and disability practitioners
- Two sessions held in 2020 with expert witnesses from the HE and disability sectors

Student survey

- Over 500 responses received
- Students from 76 different institutions around the UK responded

Public call for evidence

- 70 written submissions received

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Key findings: teaching and learning

- 26% of respondents to our student survey rated the accessibility of their course as only 1/5 or 2/5
- The top four most common themes in inaccessibility were: no lecture capture; a failure to implement the support plan; inconsistency of support; physical inaccessibility
- Varying support from academic staff
- No accountability for their access and inclusion

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Key findings: bureaucratic and financial burdens

- Disabled students need help with bureaucratic and financial burdens
- Aspects of the DSA system create particular challenges for students with mental illness
- Disabled students often interrupt their studies because of the financial burden, a lack of support, and struggling to fully access their teaching and learning
- Complaints processes can inhibit disabled students from complaining

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Key findings: social and living

- 26% of 513 respondents to the student survey said they always or often feel excluded from social activities, societies and clubs because of a lack of disability awareness
- Less than half of respondents said they ‘never’ feel excluded
- Lack of care and understanding for disabled students’ experiences
- Stigma is a key issue
- Intersectionality

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Key findings: transitions and employment

- Information and advice are key to successful transitions
- It's particularly difficult to encourage students with mental illness to disclose their condition/impairment pre-enrolment
- Many students arrive to HE without knowing about the DSA
- Disclosure and 'disabled' status is a challenge for entering students/graduates entering the workplace

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Key findings: senior leadership

- To create change, there must be a strong message from senior leadership that disability inclusion is a priority for the leader and the institution
- Students emphasised that the inconsistency of the support they receive is one of the most frustrating things about their experiences
- Good practice: University of Worcester

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Key recommendations

- Senior leadership accountability
- Provide training for all staff on supporting disabled students
- A new, cross-departmental lifelong system of support for disabled people
- Students' unions must be funded to provide more support for disabled students

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