

## **Case Studies for DDA Amendment Regulations: What you need to know and what you need to do.**

### **Placement Case Study - Martin**

Martin is in the third year of a degree course leading to a qualification in Podiatry. When Martin became a student, he disclosed that he was dyslexic, and various arrangements were put in place by the institution to support him in his study: he received equipment through the Disabled Student Allowance scheme; additional time and the use of a scribe was provided for written exams; reports and essays were checked by a proof-reader prior to submission; lecturing and tutorial staff have routinely, in advance of teaching, made copies of overheads and other materials available on the University Intranet. The Disability Service in the institution holds a copy of Martin's dyslexia assessment.

Immediately prior to the second year placement, which is in a geriatric hospital setting, Martin discloses to his tutor that he has become increasingly depressed over the last few months, and that he has experienced recurrent bouts of anxiety and panic. His GP has prescribed medication which has taken the edge off, but not disposed of, the worst symptoms. Martin says that he does not want any information about his mental health to be relayed to the placement provider, or to any of the other teaching staff. Nor does he want information about his dyslexia to be passed on to the placement provider. He prefers to attempt the placement without support.

Q1 If you were his tutor having this discussion with Martin, what view would you take of what you have been told, and how would you proceed thereafter?

At an early stage in the placement it becomes clear to Martin that he is having difficulty with the demands represented by seeing patients at regular intervals. In the time available, he is having real difficulty in reading and comprehending a patient's notes, which are made available to him as the patient arrives at the clinic. He is also having difficulty in concentrating on the

patient because of his concern about taking adequate notes, as supervisors will wish to see these.

- Q2 What are the possible forms of support which might alleviate Martin's difficulties?
- Q3 Are any of these in potential conflict with academic or other professional standards?
- Q4 Would any system or arrangements have made it possible for the likely difficulties to be anticipated?

Towards the end of the placement, the placement clinician contacts the University, and expresses concerns about Martin's interactions with patients. She comments that Martin has been abrupt with, to the point of being rude to, a patient; that his apparent anxiety has been commented on by a number of clinicians, who are concerned about the effect on patients; that on another occasion, a patient was in tears after a session with Martin, and said that he was a most unpleasant young man.

Martin fails the placement. He does not wish to appeal this decision, but does wish to re-take the placement, as the course regulations would permit. However, some staff express concerns about allowing him to undertake a repeat placement because of the concerns raised by the placement clinician.

- Q5 Is there justification for NOT allowing Martin to undertake the repeat placement? If you think so, what would constitute such justification?

## Placement Case Study – Sarah

Sarah is a student on a B.Ed course of teacher training. She has a diagnosis of bipolar depression and has in the past experienced mood changes, usually gradual but occasionally rapid and dramatic. She describes the depressed cycle as characterised by:

- difficulty in concentration and making decisions
- feelings of profound hopelessness and pessimism
- insomnia and early-morning awakening and fatigue
- loss of interest in things which at other times are enjoyable.

The manic phase she would describe as involving:

- a marked increase in energy
- severe insomnia
- grandiose ideas
- disconnected and racing thoughts
- often inappropriate elation.

Having achieved well at school, Sarah was thereafter subject to prolonged periods in hospital, and it is only within the past 3 years that she has found herself able to consider higher education.

At the start of her course, Sarah, who is now in her second year, chose not to disclose her mental health history, as she feared that this might disqualify her from admission. However, she subsequently (half way through her first year) sought the assistance of the University's Disability Service, and gave that Service documentary information about her difficulties. At that time, she described herself as 'reasonably stable on medication'. She asked the University's Disability Adviser to keep the information confidential.

Q1 Are there grounds for any particular concerns in relation to Sarah's 3<sup>rd</sup> year placement?

- Q2 What, if any, information should the University's Disability Adviser pass on about this student?
- Q3 Where does/should responsibility lie for risk assessments, occupational health assessments, or any other type of checks, in respect of disabled students on placements, bearing in mind that some disabled students may not disclose to anyone that they are disabled?

## **Placement Case Study: Daniel**

Daniel is in his second year of a Social Work course. He is partially sighted and uses a computer with appropriate access packages, including a scanner, screen reading software and magnification software. He can read text which is minimum point 20, Ariel or Verdana font. He has needed a sighted guide for orientation in new environments, such as the start of a semester when he is unfamiliar with the locations to classes, and routes involved.

Prior to the second year placement the department provides details of the placement, and the University's placement organiser invites students to indicate whether they have any needs associated with it. Daniel approaches his tutor and informs him that twice in the last three months he has had a seizure, and that there are ongoing medical investigations. But he makes it clear that he does not wish this information to be passed on to anyone, including the placement provider, the Disability Service and the Professional Body.

Q1 As his University tutor how would you respond to this request for confidentiality?

If Daniel becomes willing to share the information about his impairments:

Q2 As placement organiser for the University, how might you set about obtaining a suitable placement for Daniel?

Q3 How might you deal with a refusal by a placement provider to accept Daniel on a placement?

Subsequent medical evidence suggest that a part time placement restricted to afternoons would be likely to avoid the possibility of seizures occurring while on placement. Neither the university's regulations nor the professional body's requirements allow for such a possibility.

Q4 What action might you, as placement organiser for the University, take?

## **Placement Case Study: Marjory**

Marjory is hard of hearing and relies quite heavily on it being possible for her to lip read. She did not declare her impairment when she registered for her MSc in Electrical Engineering and managed to pass the first two years of her course. She is aware that there is a placement in the third year but does not know much about the detail.

In the second semester of the third year Marjory is allocated a placement in a large factory where they design and manufacture electrical components. She frequently misinterprets instructions, particularly if these are given when she is looking at the computer. The placement provider raises concerns with the university about the poor performance of the student and is doubtful about giving her experience on the factory floor, which is usually regarded as an important element of the placement.

As placement organiser for the Department of Electrical Engineering,

Q1 How would you respond – to the provider, and to the student?

Q2 If what the student was unable to do appeared to compromise health and safety and/or competence standards what action might you take?

Q3 How might you minimise the possibility of this kind of difficulty occurring?