



# Long-term Medical Conditions and Unseen Disabilities

## ***Key support actions***

- Keep in touch with the student, and be mindful that their health is likely to fluctuate throughout their studies
- Allow breaks for symptom management as appropriate i.e. to eat, take medication, manage physical pain etc.
- Be sensitive to the fact the student may not feel comfortable discussing details of their condition, and similarly may not want their peers to be aware
- Allow for a flexible approach to workload, deadlines etc. to account for flares in symptoms and periods of ill-health

## ***Defining long-term conditions and unseen disabilities***

This encapsulates a wide range of diagnoses which have a long-term and substantial impact on a person's ability to undertake daily activities, for example diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), cancer, epilepsy, gastrointestinal diseases and chronic migraines, to name a few.

## ***Impacts on study***

Symptoms of these conditions will naturally vary widely, though in most instances will come with some level of pain and fatigue, which often fluctuates due to "flare-ups", side-effects of medication and treatment, or sudden attacks/seizures. A student with a long-term condition may be well one day, then suddenly unwell the next day with little pattern nor ability to predict.

Each condition will invariably mean students must take care to manage their symptoms alongside their studies, which may include medication, frequent medical appointments, and the need to pace themselves and account for periods of ill-health.

In an academic context the more common impacts on study are:

- The need to manage fatigue and energy levels
- The need for frequent breaks to manage symptoms
- Difficulty sitting or standing for extended periods
- Concentration difficulties and brain fog
- The need to control exposure to environmental triggers

### ***Inclusive teaching***

These are strategies of benefit to all students but will also help to remove barriers from students with unseen disabilities:

- Schedule regular breaks in teaching sessions for symptom management, permitting access to medical aids and food and drink as necessary
- Access to lecture recordings
- Provision of teaching materials/slides in advance of sessions to aid with concentration issues
- Priority seating in teaching rooms
- A sensitive approach to fluctuating health levels; accept a students' assessment of their health on a given day
- Discuss arrangements with the student so that if they need to leave the room at short notice, they can do so discreetly

### ***Reasonable adjustments***

Examples of reasonable adjustments which may be suitable include:

- Priority seating in teaching rooms
- Directed reading lists
- Access to lecture recordings
- Access to campus rest rooms
- Extended deadlines on a case-by-case basis
- Provisions for presentations/oral exams e.g. breaks, seating etc.

### ***The legal position***

Where students are issued adjustments from the School's Disability and Mental Health service, this means their condition meets the definition of a disability under the Equality Act (2010). As such the School has a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to ensure these students have equal access and opportunity in the education we provide.

*This guide has been produced for LSE by the Disability and Mental Health Service, with credit to the Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre at University of Cambridge who kindly permitted use of their staff guides in production of our own.*