Student Personal Learning Support Plans

Staff Guidance

1.0 Scope

1.1 This guidance outlines the process associated with compiling student PLSPs for students with a declared disability. It promotes consistency of approach, and therefore contributes directly to equivalence of the student experience for the University partnership. This guidance applies to PLSPs written for FE and HE students enrolled within the partnership.

2.0 Background

2.1 Under current equalities legislation, The University has anticipatory duty to make reasonable adjustments. This means that the University partnership must consider the requirements of disabled people on an ongoing basis, and take reasonable steps in advance to reduce or remove barriers.

2.2 Students who disclose additional needs will be invited to have an assessment of their needs with student support services at their Home Academic Partner (HAP). This assessment will typically lead to a Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP) which details the adjustments, including those relating to academic assessment, that have been approved in light of a student's specific needs.

2.3 As stated within University Regulations[1] an approved PLSP adjustment that entails a variation from the standard academic regulations, or those specific to a module or programme, is acceptable as long as:

- The adjustment is necessary to enable the student to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes, and
- The adjustment has been approved following a contextualised assessment of need by authorised staff.

2.4 The University partnership has an effective internal quality assurance system for identifying and verifying students' assessment needs. Academic Partner Quality Managers undertake periodic, risk-based, sample auditing to ensure that local decisions to provide, or not provide, assessment arrangements for individual students with declared disabilities are made in line with internal and external requirements and relevant equality legislation. This sampling process also ensures that appropriate and sufficient current evidence has been collated to justify the provision of an assessment arrangement in SQA assessment.

2.5 It is recommended that HAP student services liaise with the student's Programme Leader during the information-gathering stage of the PLSP process as necessary. Ongoing dialogue with relevant academic staff will ensure that PLSP recommendations are matched to the student's individual needs and to specific course requirements.

2.6 Note that a student is not required to apply for consideration of mitigating circumstances in order to access any entitlement that has already been agreed

[1] www.uhi.ac.uk/regulations

within their approved PLSP. This is because mitigating circumstances occur unexpectedly for any student and outside of a student's control regardless of need, whereas an agreed entitlement to a support measure specified in a PLSP is a planned adjustment approved in response a student's specific disclosed needs.

2.7 This too is made clear in University Regulations:

Special circumstances

For the avoidance of doubt, the arrangements for dealing with claims of mitigating circumstances do not normally apply where students have a long-term support need, eg arising from a disability. Where a student considers that they have a support need which may affect their study and / or assessment, it is the responsibility of the student to seek advice as early as possible and use the Personal Academic Tutor and other support services available through the Home Academic Partner, to ensure that they can undertake their chosen programme and its associated assessments in a way which meets their special needs but still allows them to demonstrate their true academic ability.

2.8 PLSPs will be formally reviewed with the student at least once per academic session and informally on an on-going basis as required.

2.9 Depending on the student's specific needs and circumstances, HAP student services staff may refer the student for a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) assessment[2]. A student's PLSP will include details of any DSA-funded support, although a student can have a PLSP in place without necessarily having access to DSA funding.

2.10 To avoid duplication, a student's DSA needs assessment report may provide the basis of a PLSP, where a student has been assessed for DSA.

3.0 Student-Centred Approach

3.1 The provision of Additional Support is most effective when based on an early identification of need. All students and prospective students are encouraged to disclose any specific requirements at the earliest opportunity, in order that appropriate support can be identified as soon as is practicable.

3.2 Students will have opportunities to declare additional support needs formally at Application and/or Enrolment, and informally at any time during their studies. Where it becomes apparent during the student journey that a student might benefit from targeted support, staff can make a referral to HAP student services, with the student's agreement. This can be done using the 'Refer student to support' button within UHI Records.

3.3 Any member of staff who receives a disclosure of a disability should respond initially by highlighting the University's commitment to support students and to make adjustments where reasonable and appropriate. The member of staff should also refer the student to HAP student services, given that the University will be deemed to be aware of the student's disability. If the student declines the offer of support, HAP student services will record this decision and advise the student that they can change their mind at any time.

[2] See https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/students/support/disability-matters/dsa

3.4 The student themselves will always be regarded and treated as a central figure in the PLSP process and will be expected to participate fully in the drawing up, approval and periodic review of their PLSP. HAP student services may require the student to access UHI Records in order to approve their PLSP[3], and a PLSP can only be finalised once the staff and student sign-off stages have been completed.

3.5 It will be essential that students provide relevant and up-to-date documentary evidence or supporting information in relation to their disclosed additional needs in order to allow reasonable adjustments to be made and support put in place as appropriate. Students will be advised of the nature of the evidence/information required as soon as is practicable and generally during preliminary discussions. HAP student services may refer/signpost a student to an external agency to obtain the necessary evidence of need before the PLSP process can be completed. Academic Partner disability practitioners may also require a student to provide specific evidence of need during their studies, e.g. for the purposes of verifying the student's need to access assessment arrangements as a result of their disclosed additional support needs.

3.6 Where appropriate, and with the agreement of the individual student, HAP student services staff will work in partnership with colleagues in other sectors, institutions and agencies to confirm the nature of the individual's need and relevant details of support measures previously in place. Information gathered should be supported by current evidence of assessment need, where required, in order that the University and Academic Partners can demonstrate that support measures recommended within the student's PLSP remain the most appropriate in the student's current situation. Even in situations in which the student's disability adviser works in partnership with people other than the student, a core working relationship will be maintained with the student. Thus, communications will be directed to or through the student.

3.7 The PLSP is a confidential document, which will be stored securely and within the parameters of the Data Protection Act. Information contained within, or relating to, a student's PLSP will only be shared with other people in compliance with the Data Protection Act. As such, students will have an opportunity to specify individuals with whom they are happy for information about their support arrangements to be shared and this will be recorded within the PLSP document.

3.8 Every student will be able to access details of the support measures approved for them within their PLSP, once the PLSP is complete.

4.0 Process

4.1 Wherever possible, partnership disability practitioners should utilise the University's online PLSP form within UHI Records[4] to compile student PLSPs[5]. The routine use of UHI Records enables students, disability practitioners and other relevant staff to work from a single source of data on a need-to-know basis, regardless of geographic location. This, in turn, helps to promote the student as an equal partner in the PLSP process, and enables relevant data to be generated for reporting purposes, as required.

[3] e.g. if the student is working at distance.

[4] https://www.studentjourney.uhi.ac.uk

[5] The University's paper PLSP template, available at **[insert document location],** can be used in exceptional circumstances.

4.2 The recommended partnership-wide process for compiling reviewing student PLSPs in outlined in Appendices 1 and 2.

5.0 Quality Assurance

5.1 In order to quality assure PLSPs compiled within the University partnership, the University's Executive Office student support team will ask each Academic Partner[6] to complete an internal PLSP quality form (Appendix 3) for a self-selected sample of 10 new PLSPs completed in the course of each academic year. Disability practitioners will not be required to provide any information identifying an individual student when completing the quality form.

5.2 The sample should include an equal split of PLSPs completed for FE and HE students. In the event that an Academic Partner has compiled fewer than 10 new PLSPs in a given academic session, the Academic Partner will be asked to provide quality forms for an agreed percentage of new PLSPs compiled in that time period.

5.3 Members of the University's PLSP Quality Group (PQAG, Appendix 4) will review a given number of anonymised PLSP quality forms individually before convening to discuss the sample of quality forms provided, and make recommendations to promote a consistent, partnership-wide, approach where required.

5.4 PQAG will consider quality forms from approximately half of the University's Academic Partners at any one time. A sample of quality forms from the remaining Academic Partners will be considered during the next academic year.

5.5 PQAG's role will be to provide an assurance that an equivalent PLSP process has been applied across the sample of quality forms provided. PQAG will not comment on the appropriateness of individual PLSP recommendations, as this will continue to be determined by the professional judgement of disability practitioners.

5.6 The work of PQAG will not impinge upon sampling and verification processes undertaken locally by Academic Partner Quality Managers. The outcomes of local sampling processes will be discussed at the University's Disability Practitioners' Group, where appropriate. This will provide a further means of promoting consistency of approach, and of identifying and sharing existing best practice.

5.7 The University's process for quality assuring PLSPs is outlined in Appendix 4.

5.8 PQAG will meet annually, towards the end of each academic session. The membership of each PQAG meeting will include:

- The University's Executive Office Disability Support Coordinator (Chair)
- 6 disability practitioners, drawn from at least 3 Academic Partners
- An Academic Partner Quality Manager
- The University's Executive Office Student Support Assistant (Clerk)

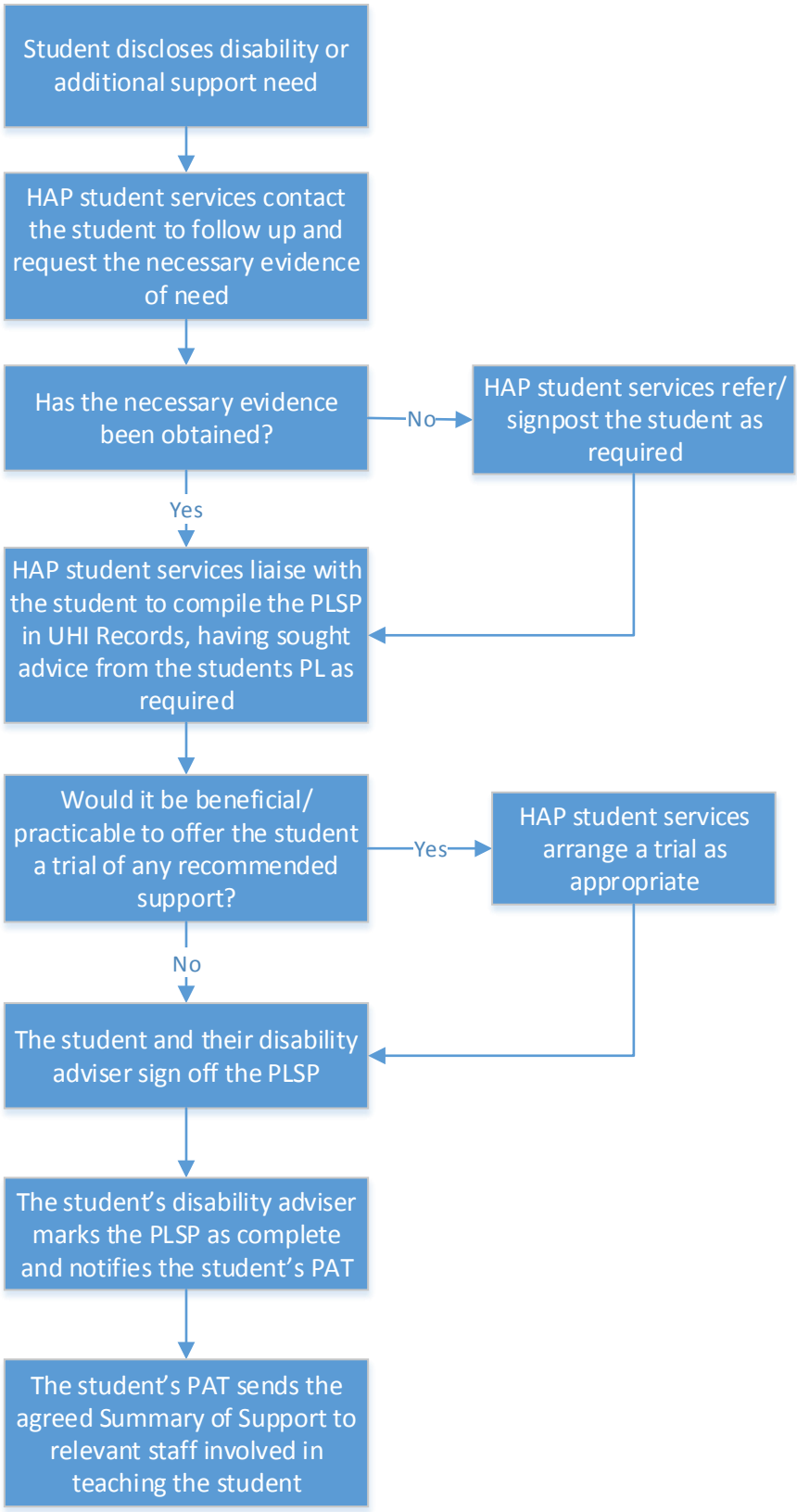
[6] This will include Executive Office.

6.0 Reporting

6.1 The minutes of annual PQAG meetings will be provided to the University's Student Support Group and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. Feedback from these groups will also help inform improvements to PQAG and University PLSP processes, as required. PQAG's recommendations will also be discussed with the University Disability Practitioners Group, whose members have responsibility for compiling student PLSPs on a day-to-day basis.

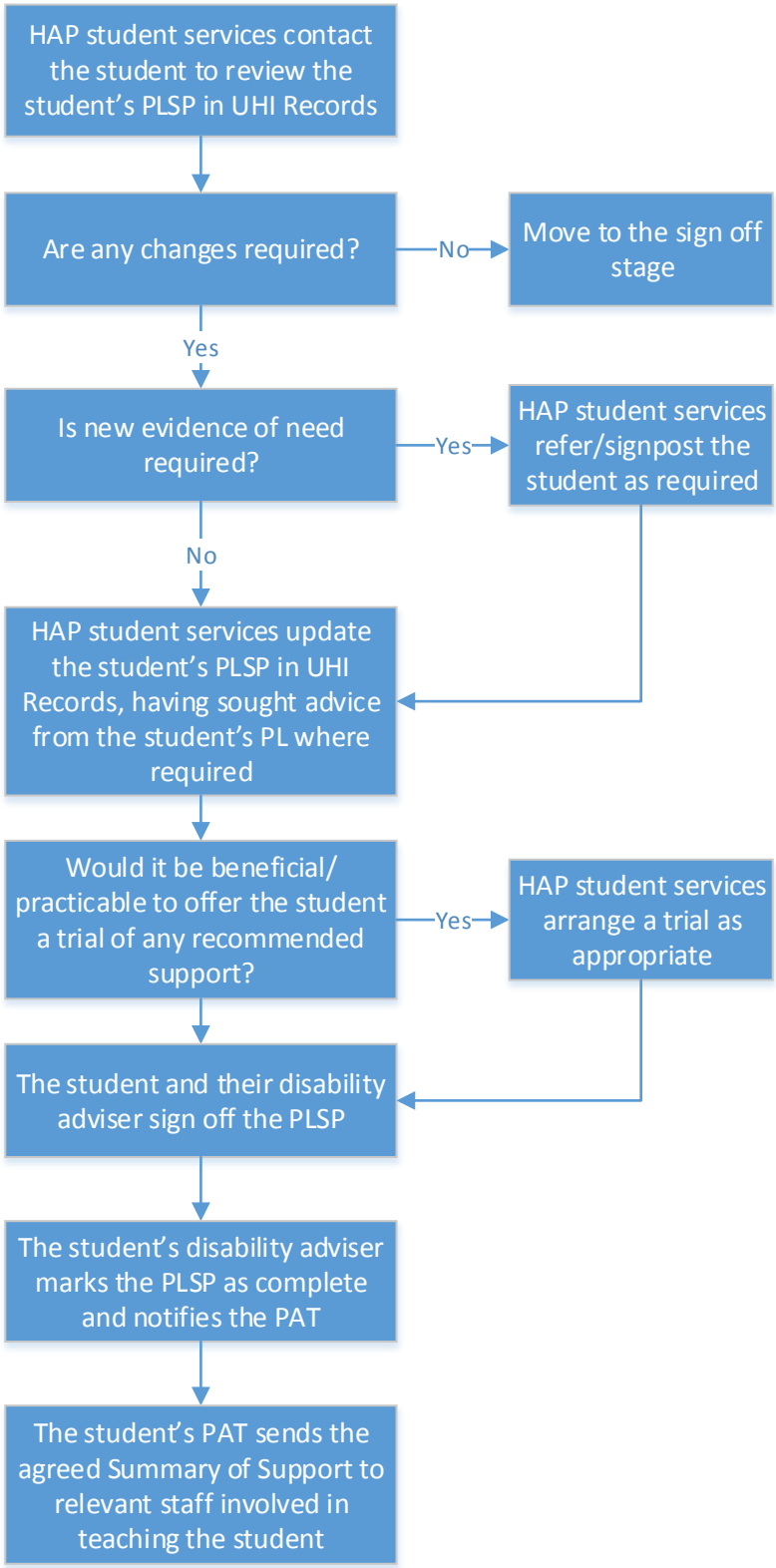
Appendix 1

Fig 1. The University's PLSP Process



[7] This will include discussion of the student's uptake of recommended support and the appropriate assessment arrangements which need to be put in place for the particular subject concerned.

Fig 2. The University's PLSP Review Process



[8] This will include discussion of the student's uptake of recommended support and the appropriate assessment arrangements which need to be put in place for the particular subject concerned.

PLSP Quality Form

As stated within University Regulations[9] an approved PLSP adjustment that entails a variation from the standard academic regulations, or those specific to a module or programme, is acceptable as long as:

- The adjustment is necessary to enable the student to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes, and
- The adjustment has been approved following a contextualised assessment of need by authorised staff.

The role of the University's PLSP Quality Group (PQAG) is to provide an assurance that an equivalent PLSP process has been applied across a sample of quality forms provided by each Academic Partner. PQAG will also make recommendations to promote a consistent, partnership-wide approach, where required.

PLSP assessor's details	
Home Academic Partner	
Name of assessor	
Assessor's email address	

PLSP details	
Has this PLSP been compiled in UHI Records?	Yes/No
Student's level of study	FE/HE

[9] www.uhi.ac.uk/regulations

PLSP Assessment	
Disclosure date	
Follow-up date(s)	
PLSP assessment date(s)	
Mode of assessment delivery	Face-to-face
	VC
	Telephone
	Skype
	Other (please specify)
Has the student been offered a trial of any recommended support?	Yes/No
PLSP sign-off date	
Date PAT notified	

PLSP Review	
PLSP review date(s)	
Mode of delivery	Face-to-face
	VC
	Telephone
	Skype
	Other (please specify)
Reason(s) for review	
Date PAT notified of updated PLSP, where applicable	

Student's Presenting Need(s)		
☐ Physical Disability	☐ Sensory Impairment	☐ Mental Health Difficulties
☐ Health Issues	☐ Specific Learning Difficulties	☐ Social Communication Condition
☐ Other (please specify)		
Evidence of need		

Assessor comments (please reflect on the process of carrying out this PLSP assessment, in particular noting any positive aspects and/or challenges/difficulties in following the process)

PQAG comments / recommendations

This form has been quality assured by

Date

Signed

Appendix 4

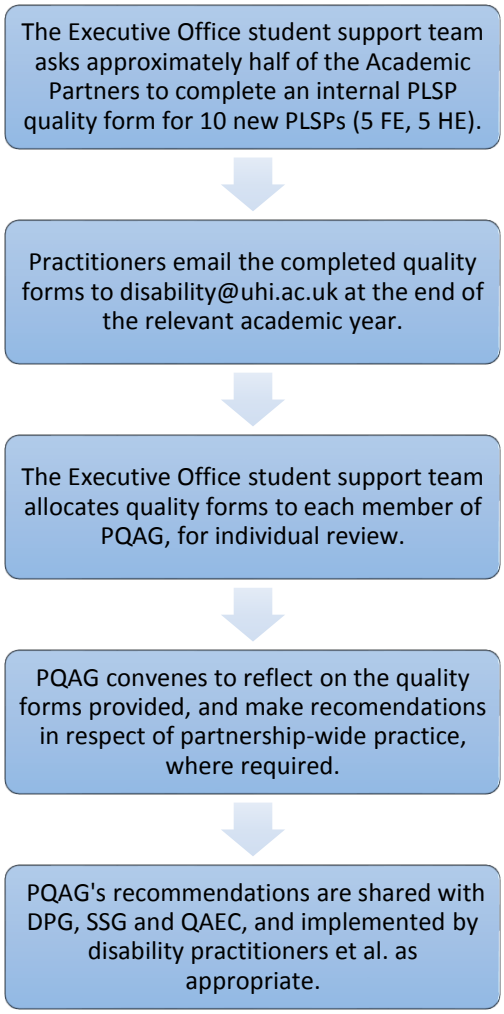



Fig 3. The Quality Assurance of Student PLSPs