Beyond the Document:

Leveraging Teacher Awareness Sheets for Systemic Inclusion in Higher Education Assessment and Feedback

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Section 1: The Contemporary Landscape of Student Support and Disclosure in UK Higher Education

The modern United Kingdom Higher Education (HE) landscape is characterised by an increasingly diverse student body and a corresponding evolution in the frameworks designed to support them. Central to this evolution is the challenge of effectively identifying, communicating, and acting upon the specific learning needs of students, particularly those with disabilities. Within this context, mechanisms like the Teacher Awareness Sheet (TAS) have emerged as critical, yet complex, tools. This section establishes the foundational context for this report, defining the TAS and situating it within the wider ecosystem of student support. It examines the legal, philosophical, and demographic shifts that have shaped the current environment, revealing a system under significant pressure, where the gap between inclusive intent and practical reality presents a profound contemporary challenge for the sector.

1.1 Defining the Tutor Awareness Sheet (TAS)

The Tutor Awareness Sheet (TAS), as defined and utilised by institutions such as the University of Wolverhampton, is a confidential electronic document designed to communicate essential information about a student's individual support needs to academic and service staff.[1] Based on individual needs assessments, the TAS details recommended academic and support adjustments for students who have formally disclosed a disability, which may include physical, psychological, or sensory impairments.[1] This information is typically made available to relevant staff, such as module leaders, on a 'need to know' basis through secure institutional platforms like e:Vision.[1] The core purpose of the TAS is to ensure equitable learning by providing clear, actionable guidance on necessary adjustments across various aspects of the student experience, including teaching and learning activities, examinations, accommodation, and emergency procedures.[2] The process is initiated by the student through a disclosure process, and the dissemination of this information requires the

student's explicit consent, placing student agency at the start of the process.[1] The TAS, therefore, functions as a primary instrument for translating a student's disclosed needs into a set of formal recommendations intended to guide the practice of educators and support staff across the institution.

1.2 Situating TAS in a Typology of Support Documents

The Tutor Awareness Sheet is not a universally adopted term or tool across the UK HE sector; it represents one specific instance of a broader category of student support documents. Many institutions employ similar mechanisms, often referred to as Learning Support Plans (LSPs) or, in the case of the University of Edinburgh, Learning Adjustment Profiles.[3] While sharing the common goal of communicating student needs, these documents can vary in their structure, implementation, and the institutional philosophy they reflect.

A critical theme emerging from qualitative research into student experiences with these documents is a recurring perception of them being "generic" rather than truly individualised.[4] One study involving 13 students with declared disabilities at a UK university found that while LSPs were considered useful, they were often seen as generic, with one student noting, "they have just lumped me with everybody else who has arthritis ... They don't ask you what your individual needs are".[5] This sentiment points to a significant disconnect between the institutional process of creating a supposedly bespoke plan and the student's lived experience of receiving a standardised, one-size-fits-all set of recommendations.

This "generic" paradox suggests a fundamental failure in the communication process. The nuanced, individualised information gathered during a student's needs assessment appears to be lost or flattened into boilerplate language by the time it reaches the academic who must implement it. The document, intended as a conduit for detailed understanding, becomes a bureaucratic artefact. This indicates that the problem may not lie with the existence of the document itself, but with its function as a standalone, static communication tool. It often lacks the necessary context, dialogue, and associated staff development required for effective and empathetic implementation.

In contrast, some institutional models suggest a more structured, human-mediated approach. The University of Edinburgh's system, for instance, which uses a 'Learning

Adjustment Profile', places significant emphasis on the role of a 'Coordinator of Adjustments'.[3] This individual, often the student's adviser, acts as a key liaison between the student, the central disability service, and academic staff. Their role is to help address disability-related barriers, facilitate the implementation of adjustments, and maintain an up-to-date knowledge of disability issues and university policy.[3] This model inherently acknowledges that a document alone is insufficient; it requires a dedicated human agent to facilitate dialogue and ensure that adjustments are understood and applied appropriately within a specific academic context. The following table provides a comparative overview of these support mechanisms, highlighting their key features and reported limitations.

Table 1: A Comparative Typology of Student Support Documents in UK HE

Document Type	Primary Institution Example	Underlying Model	Initiation Process	Key Stakeholders	Stated Purpose	Reported Limitation
Tutor Awareness Sheet (TAS)	University of Wolverhampton [1]	Leaning Social (aims to inform adjustments to practice)	Student disclosure via Student Disability Form (SDF) [1]	Student, Disability Service, Module Leaders, Support Staff [2]	To communicate essential information and recommended adjustments for students with disclosed impairments.[1]	Can be perceived as a static document if not accompanied by dialogue.[1]
Learning Support Plan (LSP)	Generic (common term in UK HE)	Varies (can be interpreted medically or socially)	Student disclosure and needs assessment with Disability Service [4]	Student, Disability Service, Academic Staff [5]	To outline recommended support mechanisms and reasonable adjustments for a	Frequently perceived by students as "generic" and not sufficiently individuali

					student.[7]	sed.[4]
Learning Adjustment Profile	University of Edinburgh [3]	Leaning Social (emphasises coordinated action)	Student registers with Student Disability Service, which provides the profile [3]	Student, Disability Service, Coordinator of Adjustments (Student Adviser), Course Organisers [3]	To provide a basis for Coordinators of Adjustments to liaise with staff and implement necessary, context-specific adjustments.[3]	Success is highly dependent on the training and availability of the Coordinator of Adjustments.

1.3 The Rising Tide of Disclosure

The increasing prevalence and importance of documents like the TAS are directly linked to a significant demographic trend in UK Higher Education: the dramatic and sustained rise in the number of students disclosing a disability. Data shows that the rate of disability disclosure in UK HE has nearly tripled over the past two decades, rising from 5.9% in 2003/04 to 15.7% in 2021/22.[8] In the 2018/19 academic year alone, 58,600 students in England received Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs), a key funding mechanism for support.[9] The most common disclosures are for specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) such as dyslexia and dyspraxia, which accounted for 32% of disclosures in 2021/22, followed by a notable and exponential increase in students reporting mental health conditions and social communication impairments like autism.[8]

This trend can be viewed as a double-edged sword. On one hand, the increasing willingness of students to disclose their status is a positive indicator. It suggests a reduction in stigma and a growing confidence that institutions will provide meaningful support, representing a success for the sector's widening participation and inclusion agendas. On the other hand, this success places immense administrative and pedagogical pressure on institutional systems that are already struggling to cope. Research from the Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) organisation reports that even with established legal duties, disabled students

face profound and significant challenges in receiving timely and effective reasonable adjustments.[10] The system of creating, disseminating, and acting upon individualised support plans is being strained by this growth in demand.

This confluence of factors creates a scalability crisis. The traditional model, which relies on individualised, reactive adjustments communicated via static documents to a workforce that often reports feeling anxious and under-trained [11], is proving to be unsustainable. The very success of disclosure initiatives is exposing the limitations of the support infrastructure. This situation creates an urgent strategic imperative for HEIs to move beyond simply managing a growing volume of individual support plans and towards developing more systemic, scalable, and pre-emptively inclusive approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment. The challenge is no longer just about accommodating individual students, but about redesigning the educational environment itself.

1.4 The Foundational Paradigm Shift: From Medical to Social Models

Underpinning the entire discourse on student disability support is a crucial and ongoing philosophical shift in how disability itself is conceptualised. This evolution from a 'medical model' to a 'social model' is fundamental to understanding the purpose and potential of tools like the Tutor Awareness Sheet.

The **medical model of disability**, which was historically dominant, views disability as an individual problem or deficit residing within the person.[13] It frames disability as a medical condition that needs to be treated, cured, or contained, focusing on the individual's impairment as the source of their disadvantage.[8] Within this paradigm, a TAS would be interpreted as a list of a student's problems and limitations, and the purpose of adjustments would be to 'fix' the student's inability to cope with a standard educational environment. This model can inadvertently pathologise students, framing them as the issue to be addressed.[9]

In direct opposition to this, the **social model of disability** was developed by disabled people to reframe the issue.[14] This model posits that individuals with impairments are 'disabled' not by their bodies, but by the physical, attitudinal, and systemic barriers present in society that exclude and discriminate against them.[13] From this perspective, disability is a form of social oppression, and the solution lies not in fixing the individual, but in restructuring educational environments to be inclusive and

accessible.[13] This paradigm shift places the responsibility for change squarely on the institution. A TAS, when viewed through a social model lens, is not a list of a student's deficits; it is a guide for academics and staff on how to identify and dismantle the barriers present in their own teaching, curriculum, and assessment practices.

More recently, this thinking has evolved further towards an **affirmative model**, which challenges deficit-based language altogether and highlights positive personal identities associated with disability and neurodiversity.[8] This aligns with the concept of celebrating human diversity as a strength, a core tenet of the most advanced inclusive frameworks.[15]

The tension between these models is not merely theoretical; it has profound practical implications. An institution and its staff may claim to embrace a social model, yet their processes can remain rooted in medical model thinking. For example, the reliance on a formal medical diagnosis to trigger support, a common feature of the DSA system, can be seen as undermining the social model's focus on environmental barriers.[9] The way an academic interprets and acts upon a TAS is a direct reflection of which model, consciously or unconsciously, informs their practice. A truly inclusive approach requires a conscious and consistent application of the social model, where the TAS serves as a catalyst for reflective practice and environmental change, rather than as a label for an individual student.

1.5 The Legal and Policy Framework

The philosophical shift towards a social model of disability is firmly anchored in a robust legal and policy framework in the United Kingdom. The cornerstone of this framework is the **Equality Act 2010**, which consolidated previous anti-discrimination legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995.[11] A key provision of the Equality Act is the legal obligation it places on HE institutions to make

'reasonable adjustments' for students with disabilities.[11]

This duty is both reactive and proactive. Institutions must respond to the needs of individual students who have disclosed a disability, but crucially, they also have an **anticipatory duty**.[5] This means they are expected to consider the needs of disabled students in advance and proactively remove barriers in their policies, practices, and physical environments, so that the need for individual, case-by-case adjustments

becomes "the exception, not the rule".[14] This legal requirement provides a powerful impetus for institutions to move towards more inclusive design in their curriculum and assessment, aligning with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Failure to make a reasonable adjustment is considered an act of discrimination under the law.[11]

The Tutor Awareness Sheet is a primary mechanism through which institutions like the University of Wolverhampton attempt to fulfil this legal duty. It serves as the formal communication channel for the specific reasonable adjustments that have been deemed necessary for an individual student, providing evidence that the institution is taking steps to prevent disadvantage.[1]

However, despite this clear legal mandate, the practical implementation remains a significant challenge across the sector. A 2024 report from TASO, based on surveys and focus groups with students and staff, found that while 81% of registered disabled students receive reasonable adjustments, they still report "significant challenges related to receiving timely reasonable adjustments".[10] The report highlights that adjustments can sometimes take up to a year to be implemented, often due to fragmented approaches across the provider and outdated information-sharing systems that require students to repeatedly share their personal information.[10] This indicates a critical gap between legal compliance on paper and the lived reality of students. The existence of a TAS does not guarantee its effective or timely implementation, pointing to deep-seated systemic issues related to communication, staff training, and institutional processes that continue to create barriers for disabled students, even within a strong legal framework designed to protect them.

Section 2: From Reasonable Adjustments to Radical Inclusion: A Critical Review of Assessment Paradigms

While the legal framework mandates 'reasonable adjustments', this model represents only the baseline for inclusive practice. A truly comprehensive approach to supporting diverse learners requires a deeper engagement with pedagogical theory. This section provides a robust scholarly review of the key assessment paradigms that inform contemporary inclusive practice, moving from the reactive model of individual adjustments towards more proactive and systemic frameworks. It traces the evolution of thought from Constructive Alignment, through Universal Design for Learning (UDL), to the cutting-edge, socio-political framework of Assessment for Inclusion (AfI). This analysis demonstrates that to leverage tools like the TAS effectively, institutions must move beyond a compliance mindset and embrace a more radical, principled, and pedagogically-grounded vision of inclusion.

2.1 The Limitations of the 'Reasonable Adjustment' Model

The model of providing individualised, reactive 'reasonable adjustments' is the default and legally mandated approach to disability support in UK HE.[11] However, as a primary strategy, it is fraught with limitations that affect students, staff, and the institution as a whole.

From the student's perspective, the model places a significant and often stressful burden on the individual. To access adjustments, students must first navigate the process of formal disclosure, which can be fraught with anxiety about stigma.[4] They must then self-advocate, often repeatedly, to ensure their needs are met.[16] The process can involve obtaining costly and time-consuming diagnostic evidence, and then sharing this deeply personal information across multiple departments and with various members of staff.[16] Students report having to constantly justify their needs and chase up the implementation of their support plans, a process that takes time and energy away from their primary focus: their studies.[10] This experience can be

disempowering and can reinforce a sense of being 'othered'. Furthermore, because this model is rooted in a medicalised approach that requires a diagnosis to unlock support, it can inadvertently pathologise students, framing them as individuals with deficits that need to be accommodated, rather than as diverse learners navigating an environment with barriers.[9]

From an institutional and staff perspective, the model is inefficient and unsustainable. As the number of students disclosing disabilities continues to rise, a system that relies on making ad-hoc, individual adjustments becomes increasingly overwhelmed.[16] It is a time-consuming process for both support services and academic staff, leading to the significant delays in implementation reported by students.[10] This inefficiency points to a fundamental flaw in its design: it is a reactive solution to a systemic issue. Rather than addressing the root causes of exclusion within curriculum and assessment design, it attempts to apply individual patches after the fact. This approach is not only resource-intensive but also fails to fulfil the anticipatory duty required by the Equality Act 2010, which calls for a more proactive stance.

2.2 Proactive Design 1: Constructive Alignment

A foundational principle of effective and inclusive pedagogy is the concept of **Constructive Alignment**, developed by John Biggs.[18] This framework moves beyond simply covering content and focuses on what students are intended to

do as a result of their learning. It is based on two key ideas: first, that learners 'construct' their own meaning through relevant learning activities; and second, that the educator's role is to 'align' all components of the educational system to support this construction.[1]

The core of Constructive Alignment is the deliberate linkage between three key elements [19]:

1. **Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):** These are clear statements, using active verbs, that define what a student should know or be able to do at the end of a module or programme.
2. **Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs):** These are the tasks and experiences (lectures, seminars, labs, projects) designed by the educator to help students achieve the ILOs.
3. **Assessment Tasks (ATs):** These are the methods used to measure how well

students have achieved the ILOs.

In a constructively aligned course, the assessment tasks directly reflect the verbs used in the learning outcomes. If an ILO states that students will be able to "critically analyse a theory," the assessment must be a task that requires critical analysis, not mere description.[20]

The link between Constructive Alignment and inclusive practice is powerful, albeit sometimes implicit. As Oxford Brookes University's principles state, a well-designed course aligns teaching and assessment to the learning outcomes, and within that alignment, "teaching and assessment methods should be as flexible as possible to best meet the individual learning needs of the student".[21] This means that an institution can offer a variety of assessment methods to cater to diverse learners without compromising academic standards, as long as each alternative method is still aligned with, and capable of measuring, the same core ILOs.[19]

The case study of "Student1" in the provided research material offers a clear example of this principle in practice.[1] The assessment for the module included a group demonstration video where students were required to talk about their contribution. For Student1, who had disclosed needs related to Asperger's and communication, this presented a potential barrier. The tutor made a reasonable adjustment by allowing the student to submit a written report about their contribution instead. This adjustment was inclusively and constructively aligned:

- The **Learning Outcome** was to demonstrate one's contribution to the group project.
- The **Teaching Activity** was the collaborative development work.
- The **Assessment Task** was adjusted from an oral/visual format (video) to a written format (report).

The core learning outcome was preserved, but the *method* of demonstrating it was made flexible to remove a barrier for the student. A TAS, in this context, becomes a vital tool for the practitioner, signalling where the standard, aligned assessment task might present a barrier and prompting the design of an alternative, but equally aligned, pathway for a student to demonstrate their learning.

2.3 Proactive Design 2: Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

While Constructive Alignment provides a robust framework for all good pedagogy, **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** offers a more explicit and targeted approach to building inclusion into the curriculum from the very beginning. Originating from the architectural concept of universal design (e.g., designing buildings with ramps and automatic doors that benefit everyone, not just wheelchair users), UDL is an educational framework that aims to improve and optimise teaching and learning for all students by anticipating learner diversity.[22] The central goal of UDL is to proactively remove barriers in the curriculum design phase, thereby reducing the need for individual, retrofitted accommodations later on.[14]

The UDL framework is structured around three core principles, based on neuroscientific insights into how humans learn [22]:

1. **Provide Multiple Means of Engagement (the 'why' of learning):** This principle focuses on stimulating student interest and motivation. It involves offering choice and autonomy, ensuring relevance and value, and fostering collaboration and community. This taps into learners' affective networks.
2. **Provide Multiple Means of Representation (the 'what' of learning):** This addresses how information is presented to learners. It involves offering information in multiple formats (e.g., text, audio, video, diagrams), clarifying vocabulary and symbols, and activating background knowledge. This supports learners' recognition networks.
3. **Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression (the 'how' of learning):** This relates to how students demonstrate what they have learned. It involves providing options for physical action, varied methods for communication, and support for executive functions like goal-setting and planning. This engages learners' strategic networks.

UDL represents a significant step beyond the reactive reasonable adjustment model. It shifts the focus from the 'disabled student' to the 'disabling curriculum' and asks educators to build in flexibility and choice from the outset. For example, instead of only offering a written essay as an assessment, a UDL-informed approach might allow students to choose between writing an essay, creating a podcast, or producing a short documentary to demonstrate their understanding of a topic—provided all options are aligned with the same learning outcomes and marking criteria. This proactive design benefits not only students with disclosed disabilities but all learners, who may have different learning preferences and strengths.[22]

A TAS can function as a powerful data source for implementing UDL. By analysing the common types of adjustments recommended across multiple TAS documents (e.g.,

requests for materials in alternative formats, need for quiet environments, preference for non-verbal communication), an academic department can identify systemic barriers in its curriculum. This data can then inform a UDL-based redesign of modules to proactively embed the necessary flexibility and choice, reducing the future need for so many individual adjustments.

2.4 A New Frontier: Assessment for Inclusion (AfI)

While UDL provides an essential framework for accessible design, recent scholarship has pushed the boundaries of inclusive pedagogy even further. The most critical and advanced of these new paradigms is **Assessment for Inclusion (AfI)**, a concept formulated by Juuso H. Nieminen.[1] AfI is presented not merely as a set of design principles, but as a radical, socio-political approach that reconceptualises the very purpose of assessment in relation to student diversity.[15]

AfI's core argument is that traditional approaches to inclusive assessment, including both individual accommodations and UDL, have been limited by a procedural understanding of 'inclusion' as simply 'enhanced academic outcomes'.[15] In contrast, AfI aims to harness assessment to promote the inclusion of marginalised students as "fully accepted, agentic members of academic communities".[15] It is about fostering belonging, agency, and equity, not just improving grades. This approach is explicitly political, recognising that assessment practices are not neutral but are sites where ableism and other forms of exclusion can be perpetuated or challenged.[15]

The AfI framework is built upon five practical principles that challenge conventional practice [15]:

1. **Rethinking the Assessment Accommodation System:** AfI acknowledges the necessity of accommodations but critiques the current rigid, diagnosis-driven system. It advocates for a more flexible, diversified, and proactive menu of accommodations that can be offered to a wider range of marginalised students, moving beyond fixed categories.
2. **Anti-Ableist Work:** This principle demands that institutions and educators actively work to make ableism in assessment visible and to challenge it. This includes systematic training for staff, destigmatising accommodations by normalising conversations about them, and ensuring representation of disability and neurodiversity in the curriculum.

3. **Student Partnership:** This is a cornerstone of AfI. It reframes students from passive recipients of support to active, meaningful collaborators in the design of their own assessment experiences. It calls for genuine dialogue and co-design of both accommodations and assessment tasks, disrupting traditional power structures.
4. **Celebrating Human Diversity in Assessment:** AfI moves beyond seeing disabilities as problems to be 'tackled'. It advocates for designing assessments that value diverse human capabilities and ways of knowing, such as embodied or cultural knowledge, which may not be captured by traditional written assessments. It positions diversity as a strength that enriches the academic community.
5. **Interdependence:** This principle emphasises the communal nature of inclusion. It frames anti-ableist work as a shared responsibility of the entire learning community, not just the individual disabled student. It promotes collaborative assessment practices like peer assessment and group projects that leverage the diverse skills within a group.

The AfI framework provides a powerful lens through which to re-evaluate the role of a Tutor Awareness Sheet. From an AfI perspective, a TAS is not just a list of adjustments (the UDL view) or a guide for aligning tasks (the Constructive Alignment view). It becomes the mandated starting point for a **dialogue** (Student Partnership) about how to dismantle specific barriers (Anti-Ableist Work) in a way that respects the student's agency and fosters a sense of belonging within the academic community.

2.5 Synthesizing the Paradigms

The progression from Reasonable Adjustments to Constructive Alignment, UDL, and finally AfI represents an evolution from a reactive, individualised model to a proactive, systemic, and ultimately political understanding of inclusion. These paradigms are not mutually exclusive but can be seen as nested layers of increasingly sophisticated practice.

- **Reasonable Adjustments** form the legally required, reactive base layer.
- **Constructive Alignment** provides the fundamental pedagogical structure, ensuring that any adjustments or choices maintain academic rigour by remaining aligned with core learning outcomes.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** builds upon this by advocating for

proactive design that embeds flexibility and choice into the aligned structure, reducing the need for reactive adjustments.

- **Assessment for Inclusion (AfI)** provides the critical, ethical, and political lens that animates the entire structure. It infuses the 'how' of UDL and Constructive Alignment with a powerful 'why': to foster agency, belonging, and social justice for all students.

A significant chasm exists between the pedagogical aspirations of frameworks like UDL and AfI and the bureaucratic reality of how disability support is often managed in HEIs. The former advocate for a holistic, proactive approach led by academic staff, while the latter often manifests as a system of centralised support services providing documents like the TAS to academics who feel anxious and untrained.[11] This siloing of responsibility—inclusion in one department, assessment in another—creates a structural weakness. The TAS becomes a flimsy bridge over this chasm, attempting to translate a complex pedagogical need into a simple bureaucratic instruction, a translation that frequently fails, as evidenced by student reports of "generic" support.[4] Achieving genuine inclusion therefore requires more than just better documents; it necessitates a systemic cultural shift where the principles of UDL and AfI are embedded within the core practices of academic departments, supported by mandatory and continuous professional development.

The AfI principle of "Student Partnership" offers the most direct and potent antidote to the problem of "generic" support plans. The reason plans feel impersonal is that they are often created in a vacuum, separate from the specific academic context of a module. A disability adviser can recommend "extra time," but they cannot know the unique demands and dynamics of a specific group project in a computer science module.[1] The principle of Student Partnership, however, demands a dialogue between the student and the academic about how to implement support within that specific context. The case of "Student1" is a perfect illustration of this principle in action.[1] The TAS was the starting point, but the truly effective adjustments—remote work options and the use of the Basecamp platform—were co-created through a conversation between the tutor and the student. The tutor did not just passively receive the TAS; they actively engaged in a partnership. This demonstrates that the solution to the "generic" problem is to reframe the TAS not as the final word on support, but as the mandated beginning of a pedagogical dialogue.

Section 3: The Practitioner's Crucible: Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing TAS-Informed Practices

The transition from pedagogical theory to classroom practice is where the complexities, challenges, and profound opportunities of inclusive assessment are most keenly felt. This section grounds the report in the lived experiences of practitioners and students, using the detailed case study from the University of Wolverhampton as a central, positive exemplar. By contrasting this successful implementation with broader research findings on staff anxiety, student burdens, and the tensions around academic standards, a nuanced picture of the practitioner's crucible emerges. It reveals that while individual excellence can create pockets of outstanding support, systemic change is required to make this the norm across the sector.

3.1 Case Study Exemplar: The "Student1" Narrative

The provided case study detailing the support for "Student1" in module 5CS024, "Collaborative Development," serves as a powerful exemplar of effective, TAS-informed practice.[1] A close analysis reveals several key actions taken by the tutor that align directly with the most advanced principles of inclusive pedagogy.

First, the engagement was **proactive and empathetic**. Upon learning from the Disability and Inclusion Advisor that the student was considering dropping the module due to concerns about its group-based structure, the tutor did not wait for a problem to escalate. Instead, they immediately initiated contact and proposed a conversation via a Teams meeting.[1] This proactive step shifted the dynamic from a potential withdrawal to a collaborative problem-solving exercise.

Second, the approach was fundamentally **dialogic**, embodying the AfI principle of "Student Partnership".[15] The tutor did not simply impose a pre-determined solution based on the TAS. They engaged the student in a discussion to understand their

specific concerns: discomfort with group work, anxiety about AI pair-programming, and a preference to avoid face-to-face communication.[1] The resulting support package was co-created. The student was offered the option to be placed in a group rather than finding one themselves, the choice to work remotely, and reassurance about the role of AI in the module. This dialogue respected the student's agency and empowered them to accept the support offered.

Third, the adjustments were **contextualised and digitally enabled**. The solutions went beyond the generic recommendations that might appear on a standard support plan. They were tailored specifically to the demands of a collaborative software development module. The introduction of Basecamp, a collaborative project management platform, was a particularly insightful adjustment. It directly addressed the student's preference for non-verbal communication while simultaneously providing a tool that enhanced the group's workflow and promoted equitable engagement for all members.[1] This demonstrates a sophisticated application of technology to solve a specific pedagogical and accessibility challenge.

Finally, the ongoing feedback was **developmental and supportive**. The email sent to the student when they took on the stressful Project Manager role is a model of what the case study author terms "suggestive and epistemic feedback".[1] Rather than issuing a directive, the tutor framed the situation supportively ("I commend your great skills") and offered a suggestion as a question for reflection ("maybe we should let someone else deal with the group oversight... Let me know please if you need me to do anything"). This approach empowered the student to evaluate their own situation and make the choice to step back, fostering self-regulation and resilience without undermining their confidence.[1]

This narrative demonstrates that when a TAS is used not as a static instruction sheet but as the starting point for a proactive, dialogic, and context-sensitive process, it can be profoundly effective in fostering inclusion and enabling student success.

3.2 The Reality for Many: Staff Anxiety and Lack of Training

The exemplary practice demonstrated in the "Student1" case must be contrasted with the challenging reality faced by many academic staff across the HE sector. Widespread research indicates that the implementation of reasonable adjustments is often accompanied by high levels of staff anxiety, a lack of confidence, and a desire

for more substantial training and support.[11]

A small-scale survey of 38 staff members at one HE provider found that while staff were committed to helping students, there were "high levels of staff anxiety around reasonable adjustments and a desire for further training and support".[11] This anxiety stems from multiple sources. Staff worry about getting the adjustments wrong, about the potential for being perceived as unfair by other students, and about navigating the complex relationship between adjustments and the maintenance of professional or competence standards, particularly in accredited programmes.[11] These findings echo earlier work which identified anxiety as the most common feeling teachers had towards teaching students with disabilities, particularly anxieties around deviating from established norms and having to rely on specialist services they may not fully understand.[11]

Furthermore, there appears to be a significant gap in understanding the legal and philosophical underpinnings of this work. The same study revealed a "lack of understanding of the requirement to make reasonable adjustments as a legal obligation and duty as a means of combatting discrimination and exclusion".[11] Some staff members can even view requests for adjustments with suspicion, perceiving them as attempts by students to gain an unfair advantage over their peers.[11] This perspective is deeply rooted in a medical model of disability and runs counter to the social model that underpins the Equality Act 2010.

This evidence paints a starkly different picture from the "Student1" narrative. It suggests that the tutor in that case is an exception, not the rule. The success of the support system for Student1 hinged almost entirely on the actions of a single, well-informed, empathetic, and confident academic. This reveals a critical systemic fragility. A student's access to an equitable education should not depend on the good fortune of being assigned a particularly diligent tutor. The prevalence of staff anxiety and lack of training indicates that the system itself is not robust. It relies on individual heroics rather than reliable, repeatable processes. This points to an urgent and compelling need for systemic change, including mandatory, high-quality, and continuous professional development for all academic staff to ensure that the exemplary practice seen in the case study becomes the institutional standard.

3.3 The Student Experience: Barriers and Burdens

From the student's perspective, the process of accessing and utilising support is often fraught with barriers and burdens that can undermine their academic experience and well-being. While a TAS or LSP is intended to smooth the path to inclusion, the journey to obtaining and activating it can be an obstacle course.

A primary barrier is the sheer bureaucracy and the emotional labour of repeated disclosure. As research from TASO highlights, students often face fragmented systems that require them to share sensitive personal information multiple times with different departments and individuals.[10] One qualitative study found that a key barrier was simply that academic staff were unaware of a student's disability or their LSP, even when the student had gone through the official disclosure process with central support services.[4] This breakdown in internal communication forces the student into the stressful position of having to explain and justify their needs anew in each context, such as in the library or before an exam.[5] This is not only inefficient but can also be deeply invalidating for the student.

Another significant barrier is the unwillingness of some staff to make the recommended adjustments.[4] This resistance, often stemming from the anxiety or lack of understanding discussed previously, places the student in a difficult power dynamic where they must advocate for a right that should be automatically afforded to them. The additional time and energy students must invest in navigating these bureaucratic hurdles and advocating for their support takes away from the time they can spend on their academic work, placing them at a further disadvantage.[17]

This reveals that "feedback" in the context of inclusion is not merely an academic activity related to an assignment; it is a continuous, dialogic process that is central to a student's entire experience. The initial conversation with "Student1" was a form of "feed up"—clarifying expectations and co-designing the terms of engagement before any major assessment was due.[1] The ongoing support via Basecamp and the sensitive email about the Project Manager role were forms of "feedback" and "feed forward," supporting the student's immediate well-being and future self-regulation. The TAS, in this light, is fundamentally a "feed up" document. It sets the stage and provides the essential information for how all subsequent feedback and support should be tailored. To be effective, institutions must therefore reconceptualise feedback not as a series of discrete, post-assessment events, but as an ongoing, inclusive dialogue that the TAS is designed to initiate and inform. The following table provides a practical framework for translating TAS information into specific, inclusive feedback strategies.

Table 2: A Practical Framework for TAS-Informed Inclusive Feedback

Common TAS-Indicated Need	Potential Impact on Assessment/Feedback	Inclusive Feedback Strategy	Specific Technological Enabler
Anxiety / Stress (e.g., social anxiety, performance anxiety)	Difficulty with in-class presentations, group work, or timed exams. May struggle to process critical feedback delivered face-to-face.	Provide clear structure, rubrics, and exemplars in advance to reduce uncertainty. Offer choice in assessment format (e.g., recorded presentation vs. live). Deliver feedback in a calm, non-judgmental tone and offer it in written or asynchronous formats.	LMS for posting rubrics and exemplars. Panopto or other video recording software. Written feedback via LMS/email.
Asperger's / Autism Spectrum (e.g., difficulty with social cues, preference for literal communication)	Challenges with unstructured group work or interpreting ambiguous feedback. May prefer asynchronous or text-based communication.	Use clear, direct, and unambiguous language in all instructions and feedback. Avoid idioms and sarcasm. Provide explicit expectations for group collaboration. Offer asynchronous communication channels for questions and feedback.	Asynchronous text chat (e.g., Teams, Basecamp [1]). Detailed, written instructions and feedback provided via LMS.
Dyslexia / SpLDs	Difficulty with large volumes of text, timed writing tasks, and processing dense written feedback.	Use concise language and bullet points in feedback. Offer feedback in alternative formats, such as audio or video, to supplement written comments. Allow use of assistive technology. Provide	Audio/video feedback tools (e.g., built into Canvas/Moodle). Text-to-speech software (e.g., Natural Reader). Grammarly for writing support.

		exemplars.	
Auditory Processing Issues	Difficulty following fast-paced verbal instructions or feedback in a noisy environment (e.g., a busy seminar room).	Supplement all verbal feedback with written summaries. Use subtitled videos for instruction. Ensure a quiet environment for one-to-one feedback sessions.	Lecture capture with automated subtitles (e.g., Panopto [1]). Email or LMS message to confirm key points discussed verbally.

3.4 The Challenge of Assessment Choice and Academic Standards

A central tension for practitioners in implementing TAS-informed practices is the need to balance inclusive adjustments and assessment flexibility with the non-negotiable requirement to maintain academic standards and assess core programme competencies.[1] This is particularly acute in professionally accredited courses where specific skills must be demonstrated in a prescribed manner. The University of Wolverhampton's policy, quoted in the user's case study, captures this tension perfectly: "The University... will comply with its duty to make reasonable adjustments... However, academic standards should not be compromised".[1]

Research confirms that providing students with a choice of assessment methods is a powerful and effective inclusive practice.[25] A study exploring staff and student opinions on assessment choice found strong support for the idea, with students noting it would allow them to "play to their strengths" and choose modules based on subject interest rather than fear of a particular assessment format.[25] This aligns with the principles of UDL and AfI, which advocate for multiple means of action and expression.

However, practitioners and students also raise valid reservations. A key concern is ensuring parity between different assessment modes; a presentation must be as rigorous and be marked to the same standard as an essay assessing the same learning outcomes.[25] There is also a pedagogical concern that if students always choose the method they are most comfortable with, they may not develop a necessary range of communication and employability skills.[25] An over-reliance on presentations, for example, might leave a student with underdeveloped academic writing skills.

Effectively managing this tension requires careful and deliberate curriculum design, rooted in the principles of Constructive Alignment.[21] The key is to distinguish between the core

learning outcome and the **method** of assessing it. As demonstrated with "Student1," the outcome was to "demonstrate contribution," and the method was flexibly adjusted from video to text.[1] The academic standard was maintained. The challenge for practitioners and programme designers is to:

1. Clearly define the core, non-negotiable learning outcomes for a module or programme.
2. Identify which of these outcomes are tied to a specific professional skill that must be assessed in a particular way (a "competence standard").
3. For all other outcomes, design a range of varied but equivalently rigorous assessment tasks that are all constructively aligned to those outcomes.
4. Use the TAS to guide students towards the most appropriate assessment pathway for them, ensuring they have opportunities across their programme to develop a full suite of skills.

This approach ensures that inclusivity does not lead to a lowering of standards but rather to a more robust and equitable demonstration of learning.

Section 4: The Digital Nexus: Technology as Architect of Inclusive Feedback

In the 21st-century university, technology is not an adjunct to pedagogy; it is the fundamental architecture within which learning, assessment, and feedback take place. For inclusive practice, digital tools offer unprecedented opportunities to personalise support, enhance accessibility, and deliver feedback in ways that cater to diverse learners. However, this digital nexus is also fraught with complexity and significant ethical risks, particularly with the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This section provides a critical and nuanced evaluation of technology's dual role, moving from the foundational Learning Management System (LMS) to the cutting edge of AI, arguing that the ethical and pedagogical choices in how technology is deployed are paramount.

4.1 The Foundational Role of the LMS

The Learning Management System (LMS)—platforms such as Canvas, Moodle, and Blackboard—has become the central nervous system of the modern university. For inclusive practice, the LMS serves two foundational roles.

First, it is the primary platform for the secure management and dissemination of sensitive student support information. As seen with the University of Wolverhampton's use of its e:Vision system to host the Tutor Awareness Sheet, an LMS can provide a confidential, 'need to know' channel to ensure that relevant academic staff have access to the adjustments required for their students.[1] This centralised system, when it works effectively, is a significant improvement on older, paper-based methods, offering the potential for more timely and consistent information sharing.

Second, and more importantly from a pedagogical perspective, the LMS is the primary vehicle for delivering feedback in multiple formats, a cornerstone of inclusive practice.[27] While traditional feedback was almost exclusively text-based, an LMS

allows educators to easily provide feedback as written comments, audio files, or short video recordings.[28] This multi-modality is crucial for accessibility. A student with dyslexia may find it far easier to process spoken feedback than to read dense written comments. A student with auditory processing issues may benefit from a written summary of verbal points. By making these options readily available, the LMS empowers educators to tailor their feedback delivery to the specific needs identified in a student's TAS. It transforms the feedback process from a one-size-fits-all monologue into a potentially more personalised and accessible dialogue.

4.2 Enhancing Accessibility and Engagement

Beyond the core functions of the LMS, a rich ecosystem of digital tools has emerged that can operationalise the principles of inclusive design and support the specific adjustments recommended in a TAS. The effective use of these technologies can transform the learning environment from one with inherent barriers to one that is more flexible and engaging for all students.

The case study of "Student1" provides concrete examples of this in action.[1] The use of Panopto for lecture capture, which automatically generates subtitles and transcripts, is a prime example of a UDL principle being put into practice. This single technological choice provides multiple means of representation, benefiting not only students with hearing impairments or auditory processing issues, but also international students, visual learners, and any student who wishes to review the material at their own pace. Similarly, the use of Basecamp as a collaborative platform directly addressed Student1's need for non-verbal communication, reducing the pressure of face-to-face interaction while fostering their full participation in the group project.[1]

This approach can be expanded to a wider suite of tools. Text-to-speech software like Natural Reader or Microsoft's Immersive Reader can make vast amounts of digital text accessible to students with visual impairments or reading difficulties like dyslexia.[29] Digital polling and backchannel chat tools can allow students with social anxiety to participate in class discussions without having to speak publicly. The ability to offer feedback in diverse formats, as discussed, is another key strategy.[30] When an educator uses a TAS not just as a list of problems but as a guide to selecting the right digital tools, technology becomes a powerful enabler of inclusion, allowing for the creation of a more personalised and supportive learning ecosystem.

However, a critical issue is emerging in this space: a "digital adjustment" gap. The rapid shift to online and blended learning has made digital proficiency and access a prerequisite for educational success.[16] A TAS might recommend "extra time on exams," but this is meaningless if the university's online assessment platform is incompatible with the student's screen reader software. The success of "Student1" was partly due to the tutor's tech-savviness in selecting Basecamp [1]; a less digitally confident tutor might not have been able to provide such an effective solution. This indicates that the concept of "reasonable adjustments" must be urgently updated to explicitly include the digital domain. Disability support assessments must now incorporate a thorough evaluation of a student's digital access needs and assistive technology requirements. Subsequently, TAS documents must contain specific, actionable recommendations for digital tools and platform accessibility, and staff professional development must include digital accessibility as a core, non-negotiable competency.

4.3 The Promise of AI-Powered Personalization

The most recent and potentially transformative development in educational technology is the application of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) to teaching and learning. For inclusive feedback, AI presents a tantalising promise: the ability to provide highly personalised, instantaneous, and scalable support that was previously impossible to deliver in large cohorts.[32]

AI-driven systems can offer a range of sophisticated feedback functions. They can analyse student writing and provide instant, action-oriented feedback aligned with a specific rubric, even suggesting next steps for improvement.[29] They can create adaptive learning pathways, adjusting the difficulty of content in real-time based on a student's performance to keep them in their zone of proximal development.[32] For diverse learners, AI tools can generate personalised reading passages on any topic at an appropriate reading level, or adapt maths word problems to reflect a student's cultural background, enhancing relevance and engagement.[29]

In theory, this capability could revolutionise how information from a TAS is used. An AI system could be primed with a student's learning profile and automatically tailor all feedback and learning materials accordingly. This could significantly reduce instructor workload in routine grading and feedback tasks, freeing up educators to focus on more complex, high-level teaching and mentoring.[33] The potential to provide every

student with a personalised learning companion that offers immediate, supportive, and non-judgmental feedback represents a significant opportunity to realise the goals of individualised support at an unprecedented scale.

4.4 The Ethical Minefield of AI in Student Support

The promise of AI is matched, and potentially outweighed, by a minefield of profound ethical risks. These risks are particularly acute for students with disabilities, who are often the most vulnerable to the unintended consequences of poorly designed or biased technological systems. The uncritical adoption of AI in education could lead not to greater inclusion, but to new and insidious forms of discrimination.

The most significant danger is **algorithmic bias**. A scoping review on the topic warns that AI systems, typically trained on vast datasets reflecting a majority population, could treat people with disabilities as "outliers in the data and end up discriminating against them".[1] For example, a Natural Language Processing (NLP) tool trained on neurotypical writing may struggle to analyse text from a student with dyslexia, potentially misinterpreting their writing style as a lack of knowledge and providing inaccurate, unhelpful, or even penalising feedback.[34] Similarly, an AI system designed to monitor student interaction logs might flag the non-linear engagement patterns of a student with ADHD as evidence of being "at-risk," leading to stigmatisation.[34]

This is compounded by major concerns around **data privacy and surveillance**. The use of AI requires the collection and processing of vast amounts of student data, raising serious questions about consent, security, and compliance with regulations like GDPR.[1] The use of technologies that monitor students' faces or eye movements to assess attention is particularly problematic. Such systems constitute a form of continuous surveillance that can increase anxiety and may systematically discriminate against neurodivergent students or those with visual impairments.[34]

Critically, the research reveals a systemic **lack of ethical reflection and inclusive design** in the development of these tools. The scoping review found that less than half of the academic papers presenting new AI educational applications mentioned any ethical aspects at all, and only four out of 72 even mentioned students with disabilities.[34] This indicates that these technologies are largely being designed without considering the needs, perspectives, or potential negative impacts on disabled students. This failure to engage in co-design with disabled people risks creating a new

generation of educational tools that are inherently exclusionary.

4.5 Towards Ethical Integration

The evidence suggests that technology is not a neutral force; it serves to reify and amplify the underlying pedagogical model of the institution that deploys it. An institution operating on a reactive, medical model will likely use technology to simply automate its flawed processes—using an LMS as a digital filing cabinet for static TAS documents or adopting a biased AI to "flag" at-risk students, thereby reinforcing stigma. In contrast, an institution genuinely committed to a social model and the principles of UDL and AfI will use technology differently. It will leverage the LMS to foster dialogue and offer multi-modal feedback, use collaborative platforms to build community, and approach AI with extreme caution, prioritising tools that empower student agency (like AI writing assistants) over those that monitor and judge. The debate about technology in inclusion is therefore a proxy for the deeper debate about pedagogical philosophy.

Given the profound risks, the integration of AI into student support must be approached with extreme caution and guided by robust ethical principles. Human oversight must remain non-negotiable. The goal should not be to replace the crucial human-to-human relationship that is so central to effective support, as exemplified in the "Student1" case, but to use AI to *augment* the tutor's ability to provide timely and personalised feedback within an ethically sound framework. Any institutional strategy for adopting educational technology must be co-led by experts in inclusive pedagogy, disability studies, and data ethics, and must involve disabled students as key partners in the design and evaluation process. The following table outlines a framework for assessing and mitigating the ethical risks of AI applications in student support.

Table 3: Ethical Risk and Mitigation Matrix for AI in Student Support

AI Application	Potential Ethical Risk	Impact on Disabled Students	Proposed Mitigation Strategy
Automated Feedback on Essays	**Bias against neurodivergent writing styles:** AI trained on "standard"	Inaccurate feedback, lower grades, discouragement, reinforcing the idea	**Human-in-the-loop validation:** AI suggestions are reviewed and

	text may penalise or misunderstand writing from students with dyslexia or dyspraxia.[34]	that their way of thinking is "wrong".	approved/edited by the human tutor before being sent to the student. **Co-design:** Train and test models on diverse writing samples, including those from neurodivergent students.
"At-Risk" Student Prediction	**Stigmatisation through labelling:** AI may flag students based on interaction patterns (e.g., from ADHD) or background data associated with disability, leading to a deficit-based label.[34]	Increased anxiety, stereotype threat, being subjected to unwanted interventions without context or dialogue.	**Transparency and explainability:** The system must explain *why* a student is flagged, providing actionable insights for tutors, not just a label. **Focus on support, not risk:** Reframe the tool as a "support opportunity identifier" rather than a risk predictor.
AI Tutoring Chatbots	**Inaccessibility and lack of empathy:** Chatbots may not be compatible with assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers) and may lack the ability to respond empathetically to student frustration or anxiety.[34]	Exclusion from a key support tool. Frustration with unhelpful, literal responses. Lack of the human connection vital for building confidence.	**Multi-modal design:** Ensure chatbots support text-to-speech, speech-to-text, and are fully keyboard navigable. **Clear escalation pathways:** The chatbot must have a clear, easy-to-use function to connect the student with a human tutor immediately.
Facial/Attention Monitoring	**Inherent bias and surveillance:** Systems may penalise neurodivergent	Systematic misclassification as "inattentive". Increased anxiety and pressure to	**Prohibition:** Given the high risk of discrimination and the questionable pedagogical value,

	behaviours (e.g., lack of eye contact) or fail to work for students with visual impairments. Creates a culture of surveillance.[34]	perform "normal" behaviour. Fundamental violation of privacy.	institutions should prohibit the use of AI-powered surveillance technologies for assessment purposes. Focus on creating engaging content instead of monitoring attention.
Personalised Learning Pathways	**Creation of segregated "disability tracks":** AI could inadvertently funnel students with disabilities into simplified or remedial pathways, limiting their academic horizons based on their learning profile.	Lowered expectations, reduced access to challenging material, creation of a digital "special needs" classroom that limits potential.	**Student agency and data ownership:** Students must have control over their data and the ability to see, understand, and override the AI's recommendations. **Human oversight:** All pathway recommendations must be reviewed and discussed with an academic advisor.

Section 5: Synthesis and Vision: A Proposed Framework for Integrated Inclusive Practice

The preceding analysis has revealed a UK Higher Education sector grappling with a fundamental paradox: while commitment to inclusion has never been stronger in principle, the systems designed to deliver it are strained, fragmented, and often fail to meet the needs of a diverse student body. The reliance on static documents like the Tutor Awareness Sheet, disseminated to an often-anxious and under-trained academic workforce, represents a 20th-century, compliance-driven solution struggling to address the complex, scaled-up challenges of 21st-century massified HE. This concluding section synthesises the report's findings to critique this status quo and propose a new, integrated conceptual model—the D3 Framework—as a forward-looking vision for the future of student support.

5.1 Critiquing the Status Quo: The Static Document Model

The core problem identified throughout this report is the sector's over-reliance on what can be termed the **Static Document Model**. In this model, a student's complex, nuanced, and dynamic needs are assessed, translated into a set of recommendations, and codified into a fixed document—the TAS or LSP. This document is then disseminated, often through a one-way digital channel, to academic staff who are expected to interpret and implement it. This model is fundamentally flawed for several reasons:

- **It is Insufficient:** As evidenced by widespread student reports of "generic" support, the static document often fails to convey the specific, contextualised information needed for effective implementation.[4] It lacks the richness of dialogue and shared understanding.
- **It is Unsustainable:** The model is not scalable. As student disclosure rates rise, the administrative burden of creating and managing an ever-increasing volume of individual documents, and the pedagogical burden on staff to react to them, becomes overwhelming, leading to the reported delays and inconsistencies.[10]
- **It is Fragmented:** The model perpetuates a siloed approach, with responsibility

for inclusion often seen as belonging to a central support service, while responsibility for teaching and assessment remains with the academic department. The TAS becomes a weak bridge across this organisational chasm.

This systemic weakness can be understood through the sociological concept of a **"boundary object."** A boundary object is an artefact that is used by different communities, each with its own understanding of it, yet is robust enough to maintain a common identity across them. The TAS functions precisely as a boundary object. For Disability Services, it is a professional recommendation based on a needs assessment. For the student, it is a record of their needs and a key to support, but also a potential source of stigma. For the academic, it is another administrative task, a source of anxiety, and a set of instructions to follow.[11] For the institution's legal department, it is evidence of compliance with the Equality Act 2010.[10] The persistent failures in the system arise because these different communities are all "using" the object differently, with no structured process for negotiating a shared understanding of its meaning and application in a specific context. The Static Document Model fails because it does not facilitate this crucial negotiation.

5.2 Introducing the D3 Framework: Dynamic, Dialogic, and Digitally-Mediated Support

To move beyond the limitations of the current model, this report proposes a new conceptual framework for student support: the **D3 Framework**. This model reframes the goal from producing a better document to fostering a better process. It is built on three core, interconnected principles:

1. **Dynamic:** Support is not a one-time event codified in a PDF; it is an ongoing, evolving process. The student's support plan is a 'living document' housed in a central digital space. It is reviewed and updated regularly—perhaps at the start of each academic year or even each module—through conversations between the student, their academic advisor or personal tutor, and relevant support staff. This dynamism acknowledges that a student's needs can change over time, that different modules present different challenges, and that the support itself needs to be flexible. This principle directly addresses the "generic" problem by ensuring support is always relevant to the current context, and it reflects the fluid nature of disability as described in advanced frameworks like AfI.[15]
2. **Dialogic:** The support process is fundamentally based on dialogue, not

monologue. The TAS or equivalent document is explicitly positioned as the **start of a conversation**, not the end of one. This principle operationalises the core tenet of AfI's "Student Partnership" [15] and reflects the best practice observed in the "Student1" case study.[1] It mandates a structured, yet supportive, conversation between the student and the key academic(s) for a module to co-design how adjustments will be implemented in that specific learning environment. This transforms the process from passive compliance with a directive to active, collaborative problem-solving. It forces the different communities using the TAS as a boundary object to negotiate a shared understanding, building trust and ensuring adjustments are both meaningful and practical.

3. **Digitally-Mediated:** Technology is used strategically and ethically to facilitate the dynamic and dialogic elements of the framework. A central, secure digital hub—which could be an advanced function of an LMS or a dedicated platform—is the nexus of the D3 model. This hub:
    - Houses the 'living' support document, allowing for version control and tracked updates.
    - Provides a dedicated, private space for the ongoing conversation between student and staff, creating a record of agreed actions.
    - Integrates with a curated library of pre-vetted, accessible digital tools that staff can draw upon to implement adjustments.
    - Facilitates the delivery of feedback in multiple, accessible formats.
    This principle leverages technology to augment and enable human connection and collaboration, rather than attempting to replace it.

5.3 The D3 Framework in Practice

To illustrate the difference, consider a hypothetical student journey under the D3 Framework versus the Static Document Model:

- **Static Model Journey:** A student discloses a need for "breaks during long sessions" due to chronic fatigue. A TAS is generated with this line item and made available to their tutors. In a two-hour lecture, the tutor, seeing the note, feels anxious. Should they stop the whole lecture? What if other students complain? They decide to just carry on, hoping the student will take a break if they need one. The student, not wanting to cause a disruption, sits through the session in discomfort. The adjustment has failed.
- **D3 Framework Journey:** The student's 'living' support plan notes the need for

breaks. At the start of the module, an automated prompt from the digital hub schedules a brief, optional check-in between the student and the tutor. In a five-minute **dialogic** conversation, the tutor says, "I see from your plan that breaks are helpful. In my two-hour lecture, I usually have a scheduled 10-minute break at the halfway point. Will that work for you, or would something else be more helpful?" The student confirms that this is perfect. The agreement is noted in the **digitally-mediated** hub. Later in the term, the student finds a new group project particularly draining. They use the hub to message the tutor. The plan is **dynamically** updated with a new note: "For intensive group work, student may need to participate remotely for part of the session." The adjustment succeeds because it is dynamic, dialogic, and context-specific.

5.4 Aligning with Institutional Goals

Adopting a D3-style framework is not merely an ethical or pedagogical enhancement; it is a strategic imperative that aligns with core institutional goals. By creating a more robust, reliable, and supportive environment, the framework directly addresses the legal duties of the **Equality Act 2010**, moving beyond simple compliance towards a system that genuinely prevents disadvantage.[10] By fostering a greater sense of belonging and providing more effective, tailored support, it can significantly improve

student retention, success, and attainment, particularly for under-represented groups—a key goal of the widening participation agenda.[31] Finally, by embedding principles of good pedagogy like dialogue, flexibility, and formative feedback into its core processes, the D3 framework enhances the

overall quality of teaching and learning for all students, not just those with disclosed disabilities. It transforms student support from a peripheral compliance activity into a central driver of academic excellence.

Section 6: Actionable Recommendations for Policy, Practice, and Future Research

The transition from the current Static Document Model to a more effective D3 (Dynamic, Dialogic, Digitally-Mediated) Framework requires a concerted, multi-stakeholder effort. The vision outlined in this report can only be realised through concrete changes in policy, shifts in everyday practice, and a focused agenda for future research. The following recommendations are targeted at the key actors who can drive this transformation: HE practitioners, institutional leaders, and the academic research community.

6.1 For HE Practitioners (Academics and Tutors)

The individual academic is at the heart of the student's learning experience and is the crucial agent in translating policy into practice.

- **Recommendation 1: Move from Passive Recipient to Active Partner.** Instead of viewing the Tutor Awareness Sheet as a passive instruction to be filed, practitioners should see it as an invitation to engage. Proactively initiate a brief, confidential, and supportive conversation with students who have a TAS at the very beginning of a module. A simple, welcoming email or a quiet word after the first class can open the door to a more effective partnership.
- **Recommendation 2: Co-design Contextualised Adjustments.** Use the TAS as a starting point for a dialogue, not as a definitive script. As demonstrated in the "Student1" case study, the most effective adjustments are those that are co-designed with the student and tailored to the specific context of the module's activities and assessments.[1] Ask the student: "Here are the main tasks for this module. Based on the recommendations in your TAS, what would be the most helpful way for us to approach them together?"
- **Recommendation 3: Diversify Assessment and Feedback as Standard Practice.** Proactively embed the principles of UDL into course design. Intentionally build choice and variety into assessment methods, ensuring all

options are rigorously and equitably aligned with the learning outcomes.[25] Utilise the multi-modal feedback options available in the institutional LMS (e.g., audio, video comments) as a default practice to enhance accessibility and cater to diverse learning preferences.[30]

6.2 For Institutional Leaders and Policymakers

Institutional leaders and policymakers hold the responsibility for creating the systems, culture, and resource environment that enables inclusive practice to flourish.

- **Recommendation 1: Invest in Mandatory, Continuous Professional Development.** The prevalence of staff anxiety and the gaps in understanding surrounding disability support are systemic issues that require a systemic solution.[11] Institutions must invest in mandatory, high-quality, and continuous professional development for all academic and student-facing staff. This training must go beyond legal compliance and focus on the practical application of the social model of disability, inclusive pedagogies like UDL and AfI, and the ethical and effective use of educational technology.[4]
- **Recommendation 2: Overhaul and Integrate Support Systems.** Institutional structures must be redesigned to break down the silos between academic departments and central support services. Leaders should champion the redesign of student support processes around a D3 (Dynamic, Dialogic, Digitally-Mediated) model. This requires investing in the necessary technology to create a central 'living' hub for support plans and fostering a culture where the personal tutor or academic advisor is empowered and trained to be the key facilitator of the dialogic process.
- **Recommendation 3: Establish Robust Ethical Governance for Educational Technology.** Before procuring or implementing any new educational technology, particularly AI-powered tools, institutions must establish a robust ethical governance framework. This framework must include a clear process for evaluating tools for accessibility and potential bias. Policies must mandate that any such technologies are co-designed with and rigorously tested for their impact on disabled and other marginalised student groups, ensuring that technology serves inclusion rather than undermining it.[34]

6.3 For the Research Community

The academic research community has a vital role to play in building the evidence base to guide the future development of inclusive practice.

- **Recommendation 1: Prioritise Qualitative Research on Lived Experiences.** While quantitative data on disclosure rates is valuable, there is a pressing need for more in-depth, qualitative research that explores the lived experiences of both students and staff as they navigate these support systems.[4] Future studies should focus specifically on the impact of dialogic practices, seeking to understand the mechanisms through which student-tutor partnerships build trust, agency, and a sense of belonging.
- **Recommendation 2: Conduct Longitudinal Studies on the Impact of Systemic Frameworks.** As institutions begin to adopt more systemic approaches like UDL and AfI, there is an opportunity to conduct longitudinal research tracking their impact. Studies should move beyond short-term grade improvement to measure the long-term effects on student attainment, continuation, well-being, and post-graduation outcomes.
- **Recommendation 3: Lead the Development of Ethical and Inclusive AI.** The research community, particularly in the fields of computer science and education, must take a leading role in addressing the ethical deficit in current AI EdTech. This requires a shift in research priorities towards the development of verifiably unbiased, genuinely accessible, and transparent AI-powered educational tools. A critical component of this work must be the inclusion of disabled researchers, scholars, and students as central partners and co-designers in the research and development process, ensuring that the next generation of technology is inclusive by design.

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