

# Special Needs in Vocational Education and Training Maintenance and support

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*Education Manager*

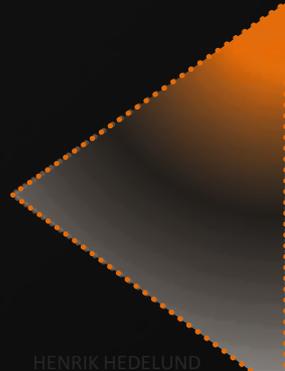
TECH COLLEGE AALBORG

# Agenda

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## *Vocational education and training*

How to support young people with special needs and make sure they accomplish the objectives of their educational programme?



# Educational support staff

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Teachers

The contact teacher

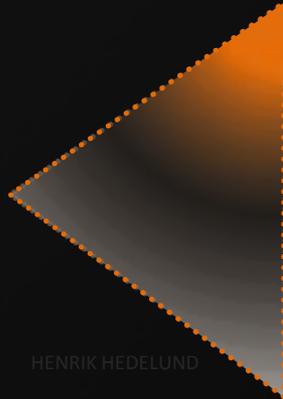
The educational supervisor and the vocational  
guidance counsellor

Mentor

Student's coach

Psychologist

Special needs educational assistance



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to students with physical or mental disabilities

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Special needs educational assistance is  
administered by:

*The Danish Education Support Agency*

Legislative framework:

Order no. 873 of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 containing provisions pertaining to special educational assistance to students enrolled in youth education and training.

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## Needs for support

In order to estimate the needs for support for the student, it is important to define the *functional disability* as well as the *handicap*.

*A functional disability* is an objectively proven difficulty.

E.g. rheumatism, slipped disc, mental difficulties, visual impairment, deafness , dyslexia etc.

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## Functional disability

A functional disability does not necessarily entail a need for special educational assistance!

For example not many wheel chair users apply for assistance. If accessibility to the educational institution is good, they will not feel there is a need for support.

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## Handicap

A handicap defines what you are not able to do because of a functional disability.

For instance, students who suffer from the consequences of a slipped disc are not able to sit in the same position for too long – they need to change position from time to time. Therefore, they can apply through their school for support, e.g. adaptable and ergonomic chairs and tables at the Education Support Agency.

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## Handicap

Thus, the handicap is not defined by e.g. a slipped disc, a visual impairment or dyslexia, but by the gap between what you should be able to do as a student, and what you are actually able to do.

The terms *functional disability* and *handicap* are used in the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. These were adopted in 1993 and also approved later on by the Danish Parliament (the Folketing).

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## Studying with a handicap

The departmental order on special educational assistance to students in vocational education and training does not pertain to functional disabilities or handicaps, but to people who have a handicap and are following a study course.

**No more repeats..**

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## Studying with a handicap

To provide special educational assistance it is crucial to define:

- **The functional disability** - documented by:  
a doctor, the educational-psychological advisory service or the like,  
and to:
- **Clarify the handicap** - find out what kind of difficulties the student faces in his or her every day life, what are the future tests and exams, which texts to read etc.

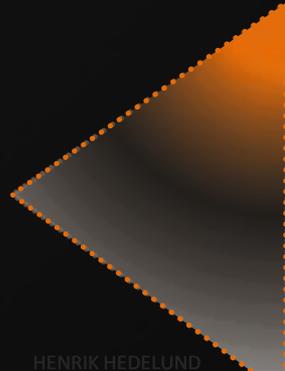
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## Studying with a handicap

It is also important to distinguish between *functional disabilities* and *handicaps* in terms of documentation, in order to estimate the needs for support.



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## Physical disabilities

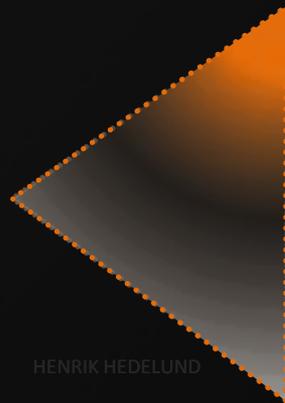
Requirements to prove a physical disability have been sharpened up, because documentation so far has been too weak. In future, schools must prove that documentation and referral to support are in line with the requirements described below.

### **The functional disability:**

#### **Permanent and progressive diseases:**

A doctor's note is required from the student's doctor to The Education Support Agency. Other documentation, such as papers from an occupational therapist, physiotherapist or other specialists might be needed as well. Students suffering from a permanent disability, e.g. cerebral palsy, do not need to provide recent documentation. Students with progressive diseases, such as sclerosis, must provide current documentation.

Students with muscular dystrophy, sclerosis, cerebral palsy etc. might be asked to also provide information from special institutions, the region and a disability association.



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## Physical disabilities

### **Other physical disabilities:**

Functional disabilities due to a slipped disc, an accident, a work place injury or the like must be proved by a doctor's statement. E.g. a copy of the medical chart or record from a specialist.

The statement should seek to clarify the diagnosis as well as the cause, duration and consequences of the disability. The documentation must describe the student's state of health at the time the application is sent. Additional documentation, such as statements from a physiotherapist, chiropractor or other recognized treatment providers should be submitted by the school as well.

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## Physical disabilities

### Support

The referral must contain a description of how the disability affects the every day life of the student, and in which way the support aids applied for are expected to help. This goes for both permanent, progressive and other physical disabilities.

The person responsible for providing special educational assistance or those responsible for defining the needs for support should discuss a number of questions with the student.

#### **The answers to these questions should be included in the referral from the school:**

- In which concrete situations does the student face or expects to face difficulties?
- How does the student expect the support to ease the problems?
- Is this underpinned by the documentation given?
- Is the student familiar with similar support measures?
- Is it necessary to apply for both a special table and a chair? Would it be enough to have just one of them to ease the problem?
- What features should the furniture have (tilt functions, armrests, head rest etc.)?

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## Blind and visually impaired students

The disability must be defined and documented

Documentation should be in the form of information from an eye doctor, an eye clinic, a special doctor or the National Eye Clinic, with a description of the diagnosis. In case of blindness, the documentation does not need to be new, as this is a permanent disability.

### Support

If the student has been assessed by the Danish Institute for the Blind and Partially Sighted, or if he or she has used the Institute's services before, or if information is available from an eye consultant, this should be enclosed as documentation.

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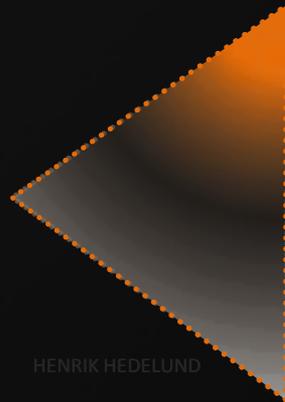
## Deaf and hearing impaired students

### The disability

Students with a hearing impairment need documentation in the form of recent control results from the deaf clinic or the hospital, showing the latest hearing curve measured.

Deaf students do not need to provide documentation.

The needs for support must be clarified and the difficulties caused by the disability should be described. If the student cannot participate in some activities on equal foot with other students because of the disability, this should be outlined as well. It is recommended that the hearing consultant – if the student has one – is invited to take part in defining the needs for support. Former support provisions should be clarified, the classrooms should be visited and the current needs for support should be discussed.



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## Reading and writing difficulties

### The disability

Existing documentation from the educational-psychological advisory service or other experts/institutions should most often be submitted. The student might go through a screening test, in some cases supplemented by a specific test to determine e.g. dyslexia.

If no documentation is available, or if the available documentation does not include relevant tests to determine dyslexia, an IT-based screening will be performed, and the results must be sent with the application.

**The need for support** should be clarified and the difficulties caused by the disability should be described. If the student cannot participate in some activities on equal foot with other students because of the disability, this should be outlined as well.

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## Mental disorders

### The disability

Documentation is needed when applying for support to students with mental disabilities.

E.g. written diagnosis, medical records, statements from specialists or the student's own doctor, if available. Documentation from the educational-psychological advisory service might be enclosed as well.

### Support

The referral should explain in brief the situation of the student. The following information is mandatory:

- description of the student's difficulties
- study requirements demanding support
- the needs for support as evaluated by the student and the person responsible for clarifying this at the institution
- the practical implementation of the support, i.e. contents and form of the special educational assistance

**Thank you and goodbye  
till next time**

**Henrik Hedelund**

Education Manager