



Unit 5.1 – Support needs profiles

How do you ensure that all students with support needs are aware of the guidance and facilities available to them?

In practice, this is not always straightforward. Not every student recognises or identifies their own support needs in the same way. Some proactively reach out, while others are more reserved or prefer to find solutions themselves.

Students with support needs differ greatly in how they approach their studies, communication and requesting facilities. By taking these differences into account – set out in five needs profiles – educational institutions can better tailor their information provision and support. This makes studying truly accessible to everyone.

To help education professionals better tailor their communication and support to this diversity, five needs profiles have been developed. These profiles show how students differ in terms of openness, self-management and the way they seek help and information.

Why it is important to take this into account

Taking different needs profiles into account means reaching students more effectively, preventing misunderstandings and lowering barriers.

When information or support does not match the way a student searches, thinks or acts, it can lead to unnecessary frustration, study delays or even dropouts. By understanding why and *how* students differ in their behaviour and needs, an institution can:

- make communication and information provision more personalised and effective
- strengthen trust and ownership among students
- promote inclusion and equality within education.

Applying these profiles therefore not only helps students who need support, but ultimately benefits the entire student population: everyone benefits from clearer, more accessible and more people-oriented communication.

The profiles

The regulator

Characteristics: ownership | customisation | openness | equality

Regulators are independent, assertive and know what they need. They are open about their situation and actively seek ways to utilise their talents.

They expect recognition, clear information and cooperation based on equality.



Role of the education professional: *sparring partner* – contribute ideas, offer space, but leave the control with the student.

The organisers

Characteristics: clarity | efficiency | predictability | structure

Organisers seek clarity and want to know exactly what steps they need to take and what conditions they need to meet. They quickly become uncertain when faced with ambiguity or conflicting information.

Role of the education professional: *instructor* – offer fixed formats, structure and transparency in procedures.

The shielders (protectors)

Characteristics: privacy | trust | care | control

Protectors only share what is strictly necessary and attach great importance to confidentiality. They want to decide for themselves what is recorded about them and are sensitive to unclear or inaccurate communication.

Role of the education professional: *authority* – offer certainty, be transparent and carefully safeguard privacy.

The waiters

Characteristics: empathy | patience | personal attention | encouragement

Waiters do not readily ask for help and often solve problems themselves. They do not always recognise their need for support or think that support is not intended for them. They benefit from personal attention and repeated, accessible communication.

Role of the education professional: *guide* – show commitment, listen actively and offer gentle encouragement.

The recipients

Characteristics: help | guidance | monitoring | continuity

Recipients take little initiative and need concrete guidance. They are open about their situation, but do not always know how to arrange provisions for themselves.

Role of the education professional: *doer* – take the lead temporarily, help with the start-up and continue to follow up.

Source: ECIO