

## Considering Students With Disabilities

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The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, commonly known as SENDA, brings new challenges and opportunities to Higher Education. Some key areas of learning, such as field trips, work experience and work placements, practical work and some areas of physical training and laboratory work will need to become more inclusive.

The reaction of many to the SENDA initially is likely to be to propose *alternative* learning activities for students with disabilities. While this may be acceptable or even essential in the short term, it is, in itself, discriminatory in the long term and leads to continued isolation of students with special needs. The curriculum and learning outcomes must be reviewed and revised to become inclusive, with all students being able to take part in the same activities and enjoy much the same higher education experience.

Higher Education institutions will need to plan and resource developments to meet the requirements of SENDA generally and in the contexts of different subject areas, for example through staff development and the sharing of good practice. This edition of LINK raises some of the issues that need to be addressed in our subject areas.

### The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

*Provided by Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities*

On 11 May 2001, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill became an Act finally introducing legal rights for disabled students. This new legislation is an extension of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and is likely to affect all those working within the education field. Below, *Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities* explains the main provisions of the Act and their likely consequences for post-16 education with particular reference to those working in hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism.

#### **What does the Act cover?**

The Act introduces the right for disabled students not to be discriminated against in education, training and any services provided wholly or mainly for students or those enrolled on courses when this is provided by certain 'responsible bodies' as detailed below.

The student services covered by the Act may cover a range of things, for example, teaching, examinations, libraries, accommodation etc. Members of the LTSN for Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism should particularly be aware that services covered will also include field trips, outings, arranging work placements and leisure, recreation, entertainment and sports facilities. Providers of unpaid work experience do not have to meet any DDA requirements. However, responsible bodies who make arrangements for work experience must comply with the legislation in the arrangements they make. The Department for Education and Skills is due to publish guidance on work experience for students with disabilities.

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The responsible bodies covered by the Act are:

- Further and higher education institutions including sixth form colleges.
- All education authorities or local education authorities when they secure further, adult or community education including youth services (but not voluntary sector youth organisations).
- Specialist residential colleges for disabled people (the Department for Education and Skills has provided a list of the colleges in question in draft regulations).

### What will service providers and institutions have to do?

It will be unlawful for providers or institutions to treat a disabled person 'less favourably' than they treat, or would treat non-disabled people for a reason which relates to the person's disability.

*For example, a student with an artificial limb is told that she cannot train on the college sports track because of this although other students are allowed to train there. This is likely to be unlawful.*

Part of not discriminating is making 'adjustments'. If a disabled person is at a 'substantial disadvantage', the provider or institution is required to take such steps as are reasonable to prevent that disadvantage. This might include:

- changes to policies and practices
- changes to course requirements or work placements
- changes to physical features of a building
- the provision of interpreters or other support workers
- the delivery of courses in alternative ways
- the provision of materials in other formats.

*For example, a student with depression is on a hospitality course run by a further education college. Part of the course is to spend one full day a week on a work placement. However, because of the effects of her medication she is unable to attend in the mornings. A reasonable adjustment might be for the college to arrange for this student's work placement to take place in the afternoons only.*

The duty to make reasonable adjustments is a duty to disabled people generally, not just to particular individuals. This 'anticipatory' aspect effectively means that providers must consider what sort of adjustments may be necessary for disabled people in the future, and where appropriate, make adjustments in advance.

*For example, lecturers at an institution produce their hand-outs in electronic form, thus ensuring that they can easily be converted into large print or put into other alternative formats. The staff are anticipating reasonable adjustments that might need to be made.*

### Considering what is reasonable

What steps are reasonable for a particular responsible body to take depends on all the circumstances of the case. They will vary according to:

- the type of services being provided
- the nature of the institution or service and its size and resources
- the effect of the disability on the individual disabled person or student.

The following are some factors that might be taken into account when considering what is reasonable:

- the need to maintain academic or other prescribed standards
- the financial resources available to the responsible body
- grants or loans likely to be available to disabled students (and only disabled students) for the purpose of enabling them to receive student services, such as Disabled Students' Allowances
- the cost of taking a particular step
- the extent to which it is practicable to take a particular step
- the extent to which aids or services will otherwise be provided to disabled people or students
- health and safety requirements
- the relevant interests of other people including other students.

*For example, a man with a medical condition applies to take a course in Sport and Leisure Management. While much of the equipment can be adapted for him there are aspects of the course that he cannot complete. For example, one compulsory part of the course is to obtain a lifeguard certificate. Because of his condition it is not safe for him to get into the pool and so he cannot complete the certificate. Because he is unable to complete a mandatory part of the course the college is likely to be justified in not accepting his application.*

Responsible bodies should be careful not to use spurious arguments to avoid making a reasonable adjustment.

### Redress

The Disability Rights Commission is being asked to set up a conciliation service, which it is hoped will deal with most complaints in a speedy and effective way. If both parties do not agree to conciliation, or if conciliation fails, disabled people may take cases to court (the county court in England and Wales and the Sheriff court in Scotland). Courts will have the power not only to determine the rights of the case, but also to award compensation and impose injunctions or interdicts to ensure discriminatory practices are reviewed.

### Timetable

With two exceptions, the new legislation will be in force by 1 September 2002. The first exception is reasonable adjustments involving the provision of auxiliary aids and services (such as interpreters etc) which comes into force on 1 September 2003. The other exception is the requirement to make physical adjustments which is to be implemented on 1 September 2005.

### Further information

Skill has drafted the Statutory Code of Practice, which will provide guidance to providers on the implementation of the new law, for the post-16 sections of the Act on behalf of the Disability Rights Commission. It will be published in final form in March 2002. Skill's policy team is also available to visit institutions to provide briefing sessions on the legislation for staff. These sessions are practical, full of examples, soundly grounded in the law and can be adapted to your requirements. For further information about training sessions, the Act and post-16 education, contact Skill.

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### Introduction

The Teachability Project is a current project funded by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) to support academic institutions in the development of an accessible curriculum for students with disabilities. The project and tools for its implementation have been designed by a team from the University of Strathclyde, the University of Paisley, the University of Glasgow, the Glasgow School of Art and Glasgow Caledonian University. The project manager is Anne Simpson from the Special Needs Service, University of Strathclyde.

The mission of the project is to produce materials that encourage academic staff to reflect on curriculum delivery, and to consider possible changes to meet the learning and teaching needs of students with a range of impairments. The project has been piloted in selected departments in every higher education institution (HEI) in Scotland. Within Queen Margaret University College (QMUC), the Department of Hospitality and Tourism was selected to be one of the pilot departments. The programme will be progressively cascaded out throughout all departments within Scottish HEIs. One member of staff from each participating department received direct training from the project team, and then led the project implementation within their own department.

In the Department of Hospitality and Tourism at QMUC, implementation of the project involved all the academic, technical and administrative staff concerned in any way with the delivery of the degree programme. The debates about the key philosophical and practical issues that underpin the core requirements of the degree programme involved all staff. However, for expediency, discussions about specific issues involved only those staff who had relevant experience or expertise: for example, placements, field trips and study abroad.

### The Teachability Project

What then is the Teachability Project? It consists of a programme of resource materials for staff that begins with a self-assessment of current practices and procedures, and concludes with a process for the development of improved accessibility for the future. The programme involves four key steps.

Step 1 requires staff to identify the core requirements of the subject or programme that is taught. This can be seen as the most important step in the whole process as it raises fundamental questions about what we do and why, which has implications for everything else. In practice this led to a stimulating debate about the philosophy and principles underpinning the curriculum for all students, and raised awareness about the ideological roots of a great many of our assumptions and expectations.

The implementation of the Teachability Project began, therefore, with a debate about the precise requirements of the core curriculum. These were distilled down into two key areas: generic graduate skills and those specifically subject-related. Issues such as essay writing, for example, were controversial. Is an essay a core requirement in itself, or is it the elements of the process of essay writing that are the important core requirements, elements that can be practised and assessed in alternative formats? It was argued that the development of the key skills of 'graduateness' could almost always be developed with a mixed range of activities and formats in module delivery and assessment. The increasing introduction of technological adaptations allowed students with almost every disability to be able to participate in key activities such as the production of oral and/or written texts, time management, effective communication, problem solving, and team working. However it was concluded, reluctantly, that for some students, those with mental illness for example, there will be difficulties with certain activities such as personal interaction, which may not be easily resolved, and which may impact detrimentally on other students.

Perhaps the most controversial issues related to the core requirements of the subject area were found to be in the needs of the industry. It was recognised that there is a tension between accessibility to lifelong learning and self-fulfilment via degree programmes on the one hand, and the specific requirements of the industry with a vocational degree such as Hospitality and Tourism Management on the other. Although there are many alternative jobs within the industry, it is known that industry employers will often be expecting a set of prescribed practical skills of a graduate.

It was agreed that knowledge of these skill-based areas could be acquired within the curriculum by a variety of alternative methods, but it was a concern that many industry employers might not wish to accept prospective employees who could not implement these skills in practice. The question of the role and responsibility of higher education in influencing industry attitudes in these matters was also raised.

Step 2 requires staff to audit and reflect upon their existing practice in every aspect of the curriculum delivery, in relation to how well (or not) the needs of students with disabilities are met. To guide this reflection, a series of thought provoking questions are provided covering the full range of curriculum activities. The topics covered are:

- Information about the course;
  - Features of the programme of study;
  - Induction procedures;
  - Learning and teaching formats and delivery styles;
  - Practical classes, labs and workshops;
  - Placements, study abroad, and field trips;
  - Information and communication;
  - Assessment.
- (Simpson, 2000)

On the basis of Steps 1 and 2, the resources in Step 3 assist staff in the identification of practices and procedures that are likely to meet the needs of most students, and are seen to be good inclusive provision. In addition, the programme supports the search for specific solutions for students with particular impairments. For example, placing all lecture overheads on the website would be considered inclusive practice from which all students will benefit. However, provision of such materials in Braille or in large size font is a possible provision for some students who have sight impairment.

Finally Step 4 is the point when a strategy for inclusiveness and accessibility is developed. To assist in this strategy development, another series of questions are provided to guide the progress:

- How accessible is the curriculum for students with a range of impairments?
  - How might the curriculum be made more accessible for students with a range of impairments?
  - What steps would need to be taken to implement the ways identified to enhance access to the curriculum?
  - What barriers are there to achieving the changes you have identified and what can be done about them?
  - How can the ways in which the curriculum is particularly accessible or inaccessible be made known to potential students with a range of impairments?
- (Simpson, 2000: 4)

### Conclusions

Implementing the Teachability Project has successfully focussed attention on the curriculum and issues of accessibility for students with disabilities. It was concluded that although special provisions must be incorporated for students with disabilities when required, changes should be made to lead to increased accessibility for everyone whenever possible. An important outcome of the audit process was recognised to be the identification of exactly what barriers do still exist, so that potential students can be made aware of the restraints in ways that allow them to make more informed choices about their programme of studies.

The implementation of the Teachability Project has had some additional impacts on the debates surrounding widening access and learning and teaching. The requirements of the project, with its reappraisal of curriculum provision, highlight the positive and exciting aspects of working towards social inclusiveness, rather than dwelling upon the potentially negative associations of disability. Moreover, the project has raised awareness of the need for a changed approach to curriculum design and delivery, so that accessibility and inclusiveness are a starting point rather than an afterthought. In addition, all the staff involved in the project have been obliged, to a greater or lesser extent, to question and re-evaluate the rationale and validity of many principles and activities in learning and teaching that may often be taken for granted.

### References

Simpson, Anne (ed) (2000) *Teachability Project: Creating an Accessible Curriculum for Students with Disabilities*; Glasgow: University of Strathclyde.

#### Workshop

**“QAA Subject Benchmarks, National Qualification Frameworks, Programme Specifications & Progress Files - Where is the Link?”**

19 April 2002, Woburn House, London. For more information email: [ltsn@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:ltsn@brookes.ac.uk)

## Including Disabled Students on Sport & Physical Education Degree Programmes - The Imperative is Consultation

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### Introduction

Since the shift towards inclusive education following the Warnock Report in 1978, the wider acceptance of more disabled people within mainstream schools has naturally facilitated more opportunities for disabled people to access further and higher education.

In 1999, the Centre for Physical Education, Sport and Dance at Liverpool John Moores University introduced a BA (Hons) in Sport Development with Physical Education. One of the primary aims was to attract students from a diverse range of backgrounds.

This article discusses some of the issues faced by the course team, and the positive outcomes of including disabled students on courses whether they have learning and/or physical disabilities.

Whilst some specific forms of adaptive physical activity that may be appropriate to disabled individuals are offered, it is not the intention to discuss these in any detail. Rather, key principles of facilitating inclusion and the creation of full entitlement to sports courses for disabled people through positive and proactive strategies are considered, as well as the need for open-minded academic and administrative staff, and a desire to want inclusion to work.

### Context

During the last twenty years, legislation has certainly moved towards a more inclusive education system, which recognises individual diversity and responds in proactive ways to create access to mainstream courses. This has particularly come to the fore with the introduction of the Special Education Needs and Disability Act (2001) that states disabled people's rights to access inclusive education.

The key point to note is that the critical success factor in facilitating inclusive education comes through positive and open-minded lecturing staff, sound student welfare support services and consultation with the disabled individual. It is not solely about increased costs, or adaptations to buildings and facilities. Whilst in some cases this may be necessary, more often than not, it is about creative thinking of solutions to potential issues of access.

The term inclusion needs to be recognised as a concept, that encompasses philosophy, process and practice, and as such needs thorough consideration prior to delivery. Thus departments need to appreciate general principles of inclusive physical activity, but then move on to the development of systematic strategies that work to enable disabled students to access sports courses.

### Facilitating Inclusion

The 1992 Physical Education National Curriculum identified four key principles in relation to equality of opportunity. They still hold true today as general principles that should be worked towards within sports degree programmes. These are entitlement, accessibility, integration and integrity and they have been further acknowledged and updated in the 2000 National Curriculum for Physical Education

In relation to *entitlement*, the premise is to initially acknowledge the fundamental rights of disabled people to be able to access sports degree programmes. This is further underpinned by recent legislation such as SENDA (2001). This aspect recognises the philosophy of positive attitudes and open minds, and the commitment to a process that works towards inclusive education, where lecturers and departments are committed to overcome any potential barriers.

In terms of *accessibility*, the responsibility of lecturers and the University to make the degree programme accessible and relevant to the individual is the key to successful inclusion. It is important to recognise that as part of an inclusive approach, the responsibility for creating an accessible sports activity lies with the lecturer to modify their teaching and learning approaches.

It is our experience that in some isolated cases there may be a need for central support services to work on the accessibility of facilities alongside the lecturing staff. However a great deal of modification can be achieved within existing resources that focus upon adaptation of teaching and learning strategies and equipment, rather than modification of actual facilities.

Thus the critical success factor is the recognition that the greatest disabling factor to inclusive activity is not the individual's medical condition,

but the need for lecturers to respond in a positive and proactive manner to adapt and/or modify teaching and learning approaches. This has worked particularly well within the Centre for Physical Education, Sport and Dance, where lecturers have discussed with disabled students their accessibility needs and then planned accordingly for these.

An example of such an approach may be the need to consider alternative learning objectives that may not focus solely on the skill development of the disabled individual. Thus planning for differentiated learning outcomes and a recognition of the wider social objectives gained by inclusive physical activity, such as interaction with non-disabled people may be more appropriate.

The third principle of *integration*, recognises the benefits of disabled and non-disabled students working together on sports degree programmes. This is particularly relevant within sport development, which has as one of its key objectives a commitment to facilitate wider participation for currently underrepresented and marginalised groups. In addition this gives both disabled and non-disabled students an opportunity to discuss and debate these issues in the relative safety of a University environment, prior to working in the field of sport or physical education.

In relation to *integrity*, lecturers need to underpin their teaching and learning practice with a recognition that they value and believe in the adaptations and changes that are made to the activities they teach. Thus as part of this personal commitment, they should ensure that inclusive sports activities for disabled students must be of equal worth, challenging, and in no way patronising.

### **Critical success factors**

The Sport Development with Physical Education degree at John Moores University has a diverse range of disabled people within its programme. This includes people with learning difficulties (eg dyslexia) and physical disabilities such as lack of mobility, visual impairment, cerebral palsy and epilepsy.

The critical success factor of including these students comes through an early and proactive identification of students needs even before they come to the University. One of the first steps is to look at the UCAS forms and telephone students at an early stage to discuss their potential access needs in order to plan effectively for their full involvement within the degree programme.

The sport development programme receives over 1000 applications a year for 75 available places. However, following an initial screening and reading of forms, all potential students are invited to an interview day, when it is possible to discuss in more detail any particular access requirements. Then, if an offer of a place is made, welfare services can be contacted to discuss with the students and the degree team individual access needs. For example, students who may require a laptop computer or additional study support, can be identified early in order to ensure that when they arrive at University the necessary structures and facilities are in place.

### **Practical Examples of Inclusive Physical Activity**

It is important when planning for inclusive physical activity to start from the premise of full inclusion within the activity, and where this may not be possible, to consider adaptation and/or modification of teaching and learning strategies.

The central success factor for lecturers within the Centre for Physical Education, Sport and Dance has been to initially consult with the student. This has enabled the students and lecturer to discuss at the planning stage any adaptations that may be necessary. This further supports the principle of equality of opportunity that recognises individual diversity, and responds accordingly to individual need.

At the first meeting with the students issues are raised in terms of how the whole group can work together throughout their time at university. One of the current first year students for example, who has cerebral palsy chose to tell students in his group about his needs, and the issues that he may be faced with. This has set a positive tone in relation to all students working towards the principle of fully inclusive activities. For example, in games activities such as hockey, students may initially require lighter, larger or different coloured balls in order to access the activity. Adaptations to rules may need to be considered such as allowing a player with movement restrictions (eg cerebral palsy) five seconds to receive and play the ball. In addition, if utilising such a strategy it is vital that all members of the group understand the need for such an adaptation in order that they can play to this rule during a game.

In dance, activities can be adapted through consultation with the disabled student. For example a student in a wheelchair can use the chair as an extension of their body to move around a particular area.

If group tasks are to be performed, then the group can work together on themes for inclusion in which disabled people's movement patterns can be incorporated into the overall group piece being performed.

Examples of inclusive activities for physically disabled students in athletics may involve one push of their wheelchair, rather than a jump into the sand pit, or reducing distances to run. Alternatively, if there are students with visual impairments in a 100 metre race, then a guide can stand at the finish line and shout out the lane number that the student is in.

### Conclusion

This article has not set out to offer a series of adapted inclusive practical activities. The fundamental focus of facilitating inclusion comes through consultation with the disabled students. They are the experts on their disability and have many methods of their own for modifying activities. The important point for lecturers to consider is a commitment to create entitlement to their practical activities, through positive attitudes, flexibility and recognition of differentiated teaching and learning approaches. If we recognise these general principles we are well on the way to ensuring that all of our students are suitably challenged through the physical activities in which they can all participate, learn and perform.

### References

Department for Education and Employment, (2000), *SEN and Disability Rights in Education Bill: Consultation Document*; Suffolk: DfEE Publications

Department for Education and the Welsh Office, (1992), *Physical Education for ages 5 to 16, Final Report of the National Curriculum Physical Education Working Group*; London: HMSO

Qualification Curriculum Authority, (1999) *The National Curriculum for England: Physical Education Key stages 1 to 4*; London: QCA

## Promoting Understanding of Disability Through Subject-Based Teaching

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Given that there are approximately 6.2 million disabled people in the UK, it is vitally important to address issues of equal access to opportunities. But this does not just mean for the disabled. It also means examining how people in education can take the responsibility of developing more open attitudes amongst our students. Very often, discrimination against disabled people is a result of ignorance and a lack of understanding.

Disability can strike anyone at any time and there are many issues about the principle of mainstreaming disabled people into sport and physical education. But it is difficult to provide support systems to make sport and Physical Education (PE) inclusive. Horror stories about young people being marginalised through PE and sport still abound, even today. Only recently I was told the story of a PE lesson this year. The class went off and did the lesson, and the only disabled child was left to read a book. It was that child who told me the story.

At the University of Brighton's Chelsea School of Physical Education, Sport Science, Leisure and Dance, a new module was recently introduced entitled 'Sport and Recreation for Participants with Disabilities'. The first consideration was that modules which tackle issues around disability are resource intensive if they are to be inclusive. Three members of staff were required. The module leader has a background in sport policy and development and had been involved in the provision of many activities for disabled children previously. A second member of staff works in Physical Education and also teaches a module on 'Special Needs in Education'.

More interestingly, the third member of the module team was the Regional Development Manager for the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS). The University hosts a Sport Development unit, in which many sporting agencies including Sport England and National Governing Bodies have regional or sub-regional offices. As part of their contribution to the University, each agency gives up a small period of time to university life. The EFDS decided to be involved in this module as its contribution, providing the technical expertise and vocational relevance, which are so important to a module of this nature. The practical element involved a partnership with a local special school. The children who ranged from 6-15 years old and were grouped according to disability classification, provided students with a real life situation in which they had to lead practical sport/recreational activities. The EFDS provided 'Sportsability' training to all students prior to the children coming to the University. The school provided transport to and from the University and also had teachers and support leaders on hand, but they enjoyed sitting and watching for the most part! The students had one practice session with the children and then had three weeks to prepare their assessed activities.

The module was designed to be a balance of knowledge and practical experience. The former covered a series of disability issues (such as policy frameworks, social psychology of disability etc) in order to promote an introductory understanding. This also included a 'Question Time' style panel discussion where representatives of disability organisations (not just sports clubs) were 'put to the sword' by the students. Hence, students developed a baseline level of knowledge through which they could begin to address issues of disability in their future careers. The students quickly learned about a variety of issues such as:

- Assessing levels of physical ability
- Developing strategies to communicate with young disabled people who could not concentrate for more than four or five seconds
- Adapting activities
- Using different equipment – (such as balloons for volleyball)
- Building the childrens' self-esteem and confidence
- Dealing with behavioural issues

Between the two sessions, teachers from the school and the module tutors provided a series of feedback tutorials to the students to ensure that they were aware of the issues they had to consider for their practical assessment. Examples of this included:

- Don't repeat the practices/activities that happened the first time around (possibly apart from Boccia - a sport similar to short-mat bowls, designed for people of all abilities), as there needed to be variation to retain the children's interest.
- Consider how leadership of activities can adopt differentiation strategies.
- Always demonstrate – some of the children have attentional difficulties – so make it short and snappy. Don't talk slowly but talk clearly.
- Everyone should have the confidence to consider how to adapt activities – but don't always expect a certain level of performance.
- Some children are not spatially aware – so think very carefully about some of the practices in basketball, volleyball, tennis (safety considerations with racquets) and when the children are running close together. Keep children away from the nets too!
- Realise instructions could be taken literally – i.e. "put your racquet down" could mean to the children to put it on the floor, whereas to the leader it might mean to keep it by their side. Think carefully about instructions and always show / demonstrate what to do. At all times keep it simple.

In the practical sessions, the looks on the children's faces encouraged our students even more. The students ensured that the children were participating and some were involved in activities that they refused to do in their own PE lessons at school. It allowed them to actively take part and develop confidence, co-ordination, interpersonal skills and this is just as important for adults with a disability as it also enables them to avoid isolation.

The outcomes were very positive. First, a number of the children rediscovered the fun of physical activity and returned to PE lessons at the school. Second, the partnership between Chelsea School and the EFDS managed to provide a degree of technical and vocational relevance. Third, the broader aims of the module provided students with a measure of added value through the hands-on experience and their 'Sportsability' certificate. Fourth, the student feedback was unstinting in its praise:

“The learning outcomes promote ‘an awareness of issues concerning sport for the disabled’ and also ‘issues of disability more generally.’ They enable the students to ‘develop a practical approach to delivering activities.’ All students stated that the learning outcomes were met/achieved and that awareness increased weekly with practical examples throughout.”

This module has been very well received. The intentions of the lecturers to involve the EFDS were innovative and have proved highly beneficial to the students, enhancing the quality of the module. The involvement of the panel discussants, all of whom brought different experiences, was highly appreciated, as was the challenge of teaching disabled children as a ‘live’ module assessment. The teaching team is now considering how to further enhance the module prior to its next run in semester 2, 2001-2002. One key issue is to enhance the sustainability of opportunity to both the school children and the University students. This will happen through the participation of both the children and some of the students in the East Sussex Inclusion Festival, a two day sporting event for special schools organised by the East Sussex Sport Development Partnership.

### National Disability Team

The National Disability Team (NDT) provides support on behalf of the Higher Education for Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI), *for Improving provision for disabled students (1999-2000 and 2000-2002)*. The programme funds forty-nine projects within three broad strands. There are:

- Twenty-nine projects where the institutions have self-identified themselves as having very little services for, or experience of, disabled students and are developing ‘baseline’ provision.
- Seven projects working to transfer and promote good practice, products or programmes to a wide range of staff (academic, estates, library and careers) in other institutions.
- Thirteen projects developing collaborative resources, expertise and practice in an area, region or between neighbouring institutions, frequently with partners in further education.

The team is committed to addressing the wider challenge of extending good practice in relation to disability to all HEIs and encouraging the inclusion of disability issues in the mainstream activities of all higher education institutions. The major aims of the NDT are:

- To provide advice, guidance and practical support to all funded projects to ensure that aims and objectives are met and project outcomes maximised.
- To provide a focal point of information about the funding programme and undertake a central role in the dissemination of project outcomes across the higher education sector.
- To work closely with the council’s other national teams and key organisations to provide clearly defined specialist expertise.

The team has extensive experience including the wider context of disability issues and higher education developments, managing disability-related change in higher education both within and between institutions, national co-ordination work, advising national higher education committees, dissemination activities across the sector and disability-related curriculum development.

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## THE STUDENTS' VIEW

*We asked students with disabilities to give their views of the issues that need to be addressed to ensure inclusive teaching and learning in higher education. These are their reflections. We would like to thank all of the students and staff who assisted in the production of this section.*

### A Disabled Student Looking for a Hospitality Work Placement

Simon\* was studying for an HND in Hotel, Catering & Institutional Management at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) and looking for a 48-week placement in a corporate hotel. Simon was profoundly deaf, but reluctant to declare his disability in his initial applications and covering letters.

The placement staff at SHU contacted the Students Union and the institutional Disability Officer, but in the end, it was through personal contacts that two interviews were secured for Simon. Although he had been keen to find a placement near his parents' home, he applied for a position at a five-star hotel in Scotland, as the hotel had actively promoted its equal opportunities policy and practice. The reality of this interview, however, was very different and Simon was particularly alarmed, given that he had disclosed his disability on the application form:

*"I remember there was a talk for about an hour, talking about the hotel. I tried to explain many times beforehand that I was deaf, but they failed to make any reasonable adjustments. There was no interpreter – they could have got someone from the hotel to write down what was being said. Nothing, they just left me there... I was thankful there were four others from Sheffield Hallam University that day."*

*"As for the interview itself there were four interviews going on in one big room, all I could hear was background noise. The interviewer had a broad Scottish accent, so I had no chance. She made no effort to find an alternative room. It is no wonder that I was rejected."*

Fortunately, following conversations between the placement staff and the hotel's Human Resource Managers, Simon was able to pursue a far more rewarding placement at the Hilton Warwick. Here he was able to work in various departments, including housekeeping, kitchen, accounts and conference & banqueting. The only slight problem occurred in meetings, where he had to rely on a colleague to interpret for him, rather than a dedicated interpreter being offered.

All in all, Simon says he believes that it is essential that the disability is acknowledged by the potential employer from the very start – this is the only way that a fair and equal interview can be achieved and the only way that the employer can know what the employee needs in order to do their job to a professional standard. Simon went on to complete his HND and a top-up year to obtain a BSc (Hons) Hotel & Catering Management.

(\*not his real name)

*With thanks to Helene Chambers, School of Sport & Leisure, Sheffield Hallam University, for providing the above information.*

## A Dyslexic Student in Higher Education

An interview was undertaken with a dyslexic student in the final year of a degree in the leisure subject area. He had been diagnosed as dyslexic at the age of nine and had this verified in his first year at university. However, it was the first term of Year 3 before the Local Education Authority recognised that extra resources were required as a result of his disability and now, six months before graduation, he is yet to receive the laptop, software and printer to which he is entitled.

The student acknowledged that adjustments had been made in the learning, teaching and assessment practices that he had experienced since starting university. Examples of this were a blue slip of paper attached to his coursework to identify it as having been written by a dyslexic student; free photocopying credits; extra time in exams and support with his dissertation. However, it was clear that certain issues continued to present problems:

*“People say it is better for dyslexic people to do coursework but I always do better in exams because I can memorise notes and then just regurgitate them. I write scatter diagrams and visualise them when I get into the exam – I don’t actually know it but I know where it is in the diagram”.*

*“Some classes are too big at University. I was in a class of three for most of my A levels at school. A lot of times we would be watching videos or adverts and other visual stuff. It wouldn’t be like learning here because you would be discussing and having opinions.”*

*“Checking coursework is really hard – I read what I think is there. Other people say that it doesn’t make sense, but when I read it again it does.”*

The student’s main criticisms of his experience in higher education were:

- The attitudes of lecturers – “you tell lecturers ‘I’m dyslexic’ and they say they know, but they don’t make themselves approachable. If they could just say ‘I know you are dyslexic, if you need help come and ask me after class’. Lecturers say ‘think for yourself’, but I find that so hard.”
- Use of jargon – “lecturers use language like ‘key concepts’ and ‘objectives’. What I really need is examples.”
- Taking of notes – “Notetaking in classes is very difficult. I can’t keep up and at the end my notes are full of gaps and mean nothing. I need spaces in handouts to act as prompts.”

## Disability - A Student Perspective

Much has been written about students with disabilities and the differing needs they may have. Often this focuses on facilities and materials that can be provided in order to ameliorate difficulties, and does not really consider the ‘whole’ experience of a student with disabilities studying at university.

This article summarises an interview with a student who is deaf and has some mobility difficulties, and tries to capture some of the key elements of that experience. The student had also recently spent a term in an American university and it is useful to reflect on some of the differences she noticed, and the effect these had on her experience of studying at university.

Nicola\* felt the most important things for her, as a student at university, was to have the opportunity to try things out. She felt that university was a time when she wanted to experiment and to exercise some freedom of choice.

We discussed her experience of classroom situations and in particular what happened in groupwork. Nicola’s experiences had been varied, and she felt that one of the key influences on how other students behaved toward her was the relationship that the member of staff had with those students. Where staff had a good relationship with the student group, and particularly one of trust, students tended to respond more positively to the staff member requesting that students should be helpful and sympathetic towards her.

While she was in America, she also undertook groupwork and she felt that the pressure was taken out of the situation for both her and other students, in that an individual mark as well as a group mark average was awarded.

Nicola felt that, for her, the differences in lecturers and their style of teaching, is more important than her contact with other students, and it can take time to 'tune in' to what is happening. She felt that this could be helped by lecturers discussing together the support she needs, and to 'even out' the level of help she receives.

In America she perceived a greater recognition of students' special needs and that these were better resourced, although she recognised that she chose the university in America based on their response to her letter asking if they would be able to provide what she needed. For example, she had asked for a note-taker, an interpreter and accommodation adapted for a deaf person with visual alerts for the doorbell, fire alarm and telephone. A room was specially adapted for her, and instead of a note-taker she had a stenographer who emailed her the lecture notes 24 hours after the lecture with a verbatim report of what was said, both by the lecturer and by the other students and with summary notes. She found this especially useful.

In addition the campus had been large, and Nicola became very tired getting herself around. Her parents bought her a tricycle that she was allowed to ride in the corridors to lectures as well as around the campus. When the tricycle was stolen from outside the library the Dean paid, out of his own money, for a replacement, and her fellow students then held events to raise money to pay him back. This made her feel valued and part of the community.

Nicola also stated that while she was in America she was taught by a Professor who was blind, and who was aided in the delivery of his lecture by an assistant who helped him use visual material, and he used a website to augment his face to face lectures. This was a novel experience for her as she had not knowingly had contact with a lecturer with a disability in the UK.

Nicola is enjoying being a student and feels that she is given opportunities to make the most of what she has, but that this is not enough to give her an experience equal to that of other students.

(\*Not her real name)

### Choosing a University - The View of a Sixth Form Student with Disabilities

#### James Robertson

Having recently passed eleven GCSEs, the majority of which at A\* or A, I have embarked on my A level studies and, if all goes well, I hope to go to university. I feel now is a good time to reflect on my success, identify what worked well, and decide upon an appropriate action plan for my future studies.

I should explain first that I am disabled, and rely on a wheelchair for much of my mobility. This brings about an added complication when it comes to looking at suitable universities. Not only do I need to consider the course being offered, but also choose the university according to its provision for students with disabilities.

In my case, having Cerebral Palsy means that, as well as having limited use of my legs, my fine motor skills are also affected because the movement in my upper arms is impaired. This impairment makes it difficult for me to write at speed. The importance of this had never really occurred to me until I reached the stage in my schooling when I was required to sit exams, or write to dictation in class. I used to get extremely frustrated because my brain was thinking what to say faster than my hands were able to write it, and so by the time my hand was ready to write I would have forgotten what it was that I wanted to say in the first place!

After what seemed like hours of consultation with the Local Education Authority and the Head of Special Needs at my school, we were able to find a viable solution to my problem, which would enable me to reach my full potential. In the end it was decided that I should be allowed twenty five per cent extra time, as well as an amanuensis who would type as I dictated.

This method was so effective that I have decided to use it again in the next set of exams I do. A similar system implemented at university level would be invaluable to me, because it would mean that I would be able to cope more easily with the level of work that is expected. Having a note-taker in lectures and seminars would mean that I could participate and would not miss out on valuable notes. I have used a Dictaphone at school to record what teachers say, but it has been a slow process converting the tapes into useable notes. I also used a Dictaphone to record my notes for exam revision. It goes without saying that the lecture theatres themselves should be fully accessible for wheelchairs, and have enough space so the user can manoeuvre in and out of position!

Of course, I have come to rely on the benefits that Information Communication Technology brings, including using a laptop, email, and voice recognition. It will be essential that the university I choose is able to support me in this important area.

Until recently I found it very difficult to achieve fully independent mobility because I was reliant on a manual wheelchair, which I found difficult to push. Now, however, I have a powered chair which makes things easier. That said, I still think it is important that the university I choose has a campus that is relatively flat and compact to make getting about less of a struggle for everyone. Where possible, I feel universities should ensure that all their buildings are made accessible for wheelchair users. This does not just mean putting any old ramp in any old place, ramps should be at the right gradient so they can be managed independently – and also in the right place!

As far as possible, students with disabilities want to be independent, but we have to accept that there are some things we are unable to do. I am unable to cook, because I do not have the strength in my arms to carry pots and pans full with food, or to chop vegetables. I also find some aspects of dressing difficult. A good university in my opinion will recognise these needs, and work with me to find a way of overcoming them. A solution offered by a number of universities is the “buddy system”. Each disabled student is allocated a buddy, often a postgraduate student, to look after their personal care needs - help with aspects of dressing, cookery, note taking and the like. The disabled student is able to claim a grant to pay their buddy and is also entitled to ask for a change of buddy if necessary.

I think the buddy system is an invaluable resource for students with disabilities, because it provides them with the means to be more independent, and also a friend with similar interests and background who can help if they get into difficulty. Someone who is perhaps more approachable than a tutor, because they are nearer the students’ age.

Also important is that students with disabilities don’t feel they are being segregated. I personally would like the accommodation designed for the special needs of the disabled student to be integrated into the normal accommodation, rather than being kept separate. Nearly all my friends now are able-bodied and it would be a shame if I was just able to mix with disabled people as I have worked hard to be integrated up until now.

As you can see I have a lot to consider before I apply for a university place. Luckily though help is at hand in the form of my local careers service. They offer personal advisors, specifically dedicated to the needs of disabled people, who can give personal consultations to help me make my final decision, by providing an objective, unbiased account of the different institutions and courses available. They can also provide me with useful literature in order to help me make an informed decision.

My final decision will be based on a number of different criteria. Obviously two extremely important factors are whether the university is geared up for, and aware of the needs of disabled people; and whether they offer the right course. Equally important is the location of the university, far enough away from home so I feel independent, but close enough to allow me to come home if I run into difficulties.

Obviously, I need to spend more time than most in making my choice of university and course. It is a big decision and there is a lot to consider, but I’m looking forward to enjoying the student life and to getting a degree as an important stage towards building myself a career.

**Dr Simon Ball**  
TechDis

E-Learning is a broad ranging term describing any aspect of education utilising online materials. It encompasses such disparate uses as, for example, students using the internet for research, teachers using intranets to post reading lists, inter-institution discussion fora, and interactive tutorials enabling students to directly affect outcomes of given scenarios online. E-Learning is an area of education which has received a great deal of attention in recent years, particularly regarding Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs). VLEs are software packages that enable teachers to create a framework for course management, such as WebCT, Blackboard or the Nathan Boddington system. VLEs provide a structure within which can be placed a wide array of resources for learners, from lecture notes to bulletin boards, practical demonstrations to 'virtual field trips'. As well as being a means of presenting course information and materials to students, they may also create a focal point of reference for many sources and formats of information, a 'first port of call' for students requiring assistance. Additionally some VLEs may offer the opportunity for teachers to monitor progress and assess learners online. The opportunities for expanding the current approaches to education and the means of enhancing accessibility are numerous if VLEs are used wisely. The VLE often forms part of a Managed Learning Environment (MLE), a wider term describing how various other elements within an institution interact, such as computer-aided assessment, VLEs, student records and module information. However, new legislation will mean that staff using these systems will need to ensure they are not disadvantaging some students.

From September 2002 all higher and further education institutions are obliged under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (1) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 to ensure accessibility for all at every level of consideration, from course content to the provision of leisure services. This means that VLEs, and within them all web pages, online resources, course materials, discussion fora and administration services, must be fully accessible to people with disabilities, such that those people are not denied full access and therefore treated 'less favourably' by nature of their disability.

It also means that the usage of VLEs from the teacher perspective must be fully accessible, such

that disabled teachers do not find themselves at a disadvantage in creating course material compared to other teachers. In order to meet the minimum level of accessibility, there is a general consensus that web pages and course materials need to satisfy the criteria of the W3C guidelines (2). These guidelines outline areas where online content can often be inaccessible and suggest ways in which to avoid them. For example, regarding the provision of text equivalents for all non-text content, not only does each non-text item require a text equivalent (alt-text for images, text transcripts for multimedia and so on), but that text equivalent must fulfil the same function and convey the same information as the non-text content. Active content must be fully removable by the viewer, in that blinking or flashing text can trigger seizures or distract people with cognitive disabilities. The removal of these functions should not detract in any way from the quality of the information provided to the viewer.

One of the principal facts to remember is that if the initial portal or gateway to the VLE is not accessible, by definition it renders the remainder of the information within inaccessible. It is therefore essential that, for instance, existing faculty home pages, student login pages and indices are made as accessible as possible at the earliest opportunity. Anyone using a VLE from the teaching side should be fully aware of the accessibility guidelines produced by W3C (2), and students themselves should be made aware of the relevant issues in the case of their input to 'communal' areas of the VLE.

For subject areas such as Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism it is essential that any VLE or managed E-Learning environment must fit as seamlessly as possible into any existing teaching framework while providing scope for expanding any pedagogic models currently in use. A hiatus for transfer is as impractical as it is, in some instances, impossible.

There is currently a study being undertaken by Professor David Botterill at UWIC entitled 'Virtual Learning Environments in Hospitality, Leisure, Tourism and Sport – A Review', that will attempt to scope the existing and potential exploitation of VLEs in this subject area. It incorporates a survey of partner institutions and benchmarking exercise to compare with good practice in other subject areas. The project is due for completion in August 2002.

TechDis are currently undertaking a research project to comparatively evaluate six VLE packages with regard to their accessibility policies and practices. The resulting report will identify comparatively the accessibility commitment to each of the VLE vendors currently involved in the JISC interoperability projects.

Additionally, work has also been commissioned to provide information about how VLE content can be developed in ways that meet accessibility guidelines. This work will be presented in an online training module for staff and should be ready in April 2002.

## References

- (1) Human Rights Act 1998 and Disability Discrimination Act 1995 <http://www.hmso.gov.uk/acts>
- (2) W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative) <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

## Further Resources

TechDis: Technology for Disabilities Information Service

The JISC TechDis Service aims to support institutions in providing access for those with physical, cognitive or learning disabilities to learning and teaching, research and administration across FE and HE, through the use of ICT.

Tel 01904 434027; email: [helpdesk@techdis.ac.uk](mailto:helpdesk@techdis.ac.uk); <http://www.techdis.ac.uk>

National Disability Team (see page 10)

W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative)

WAI pursues accessibility of the World Wide Web through five primary areas of work: technology, guidelines, tools, education and outreach, and research and development

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

## Exploratory Research of Dyslexic Students' Learning

**Lyn Bibbings**

**Liaison Officer for Tourism**

**LTSN for Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism**

Students with dyslexia currently make up 25.5% of UK undergraduates (self-assessed disabilities by UK undergraduates 1998/9, HESA, 2000). Dyslexic students can experience a range of difficulties while they are studying which may severely disadvantage them compared to non-dyslexic students. West (1997) outlines aspects of dyslexia which, when used in the learning process, can benefit the dyslexic student and their peers in groupwork or shared presentations: good powers of visualisation; creative thinking skills; visuo-spatial skills; a holistic rather than analytical approach; good practical problem solving skills. West goes on to say that "after some four hundred to five hundred years of growth in a highly verbally oriented system of education and knowledge, we may be seeing the beginning of a new phase in which, in reverse fashion, certain kinds of complex information will be increasingly handled visually rather than verbally."

Feedback from students on a module, Interactive Business Skills, (offered in the Business School, and taken by some Tourism students) suggests that videos or video clips, used in plenary sessions to show theory in a business setting, were instrumental in helping students to achieve deep learning. Dyslexic students found the use of videos especially helpful in aiding memory and understanding.

Waterfield (2001) suggests that mechanisms put in place to try and redress the balance for dyslexic students during examinations may exacerbate their problems – the dyslexic student may have difficulty maintaining concentration and become stressed and exhausted. So giving extra time in examinations may not, therefore, enhance their performance, and could actually make it worse.

This exploratory piece of research investigated whether: (i) using more visual material in a module allowed students to build on strengths which are not usually part of the assessment process and (ii) recognising that coursework and examinations can take alternative formats may benefit all students.

The module – Innovation and Design Management - chosen for this research lent itself to this process. It is a second stage non-compulsory module with a high proportion of international students. The module was designed to address the investigation given above in several ways:

- During lecture and workshop sessions the module made strong use of video case study material. This illustrated practical examples of how theory, to which students had been introduced during lectures, could be applied in a number of contexts.
- The group coursework asked the students to produce a portfolio of work and to make a presentation using any means they chose to get their ideas across to the viewer or assessor, rather than within the usual limitations of writing a report or an essay.
- The examination was reduced to one hour from two hours. Students were shown a video case study, and given a written version which they were allowed to take into the examination room. They were not permitted to write on this case study but they were allowed to highlight the text. The examination was one essay question based on the case study. The students had been given clear guidelines on the learning outcomes to be tested through the examination and the assessment criteria several weeks in advance of the exam.

The aim of this investigation was to test students' perceptions of how the use of visual material contributed to their learning, and the achievement of the learning outcomes for all students. Student views were sought on two occasions:

- At the end of the teaching period, but before the exam, students were asked to complete a questionnaire which asked them to state three things which were effective in helping them achieve the learning outcomes and three things which should be improved in order to help them achieve the learning outcomes.
- Immediately following the examination students were given a questionnaire to complete which asked them questions specifically about the exam and their preparation. They were asked to rate, on a Likert scale of 1-5, how helpful a series of aspects were in helping them to achieve understanding of the case study, and during the examination how helpful a range of aspects were in helping them to apply theory to the case study.

### Findings

Replies were received from twelve international students, twelve UK students and three dyslexic students, two of which came from the UK and one from Hong Kong. In the first unprompted evaluation twenty students (74%) mentioned the use of videos as being effective in helping them to achieve the learning outcomes. Many of them elaborated by saying that the videos helped them understand how theory was applied and used in the real world; provoked discussion among students after the lectures which contributed to learning; contributed to shared understanding; made a lasting and deep impression; the visual memories prompted memories of theory; was a friendly and accessible media.

Other key areas which aided achievement of the learning outcomes were perceived to be: discussions in class; discussions in their coursework groups; group presentations which allowed them to be creative; being able to choose their own ideas for the coursework; being able to choose a format for the portfolio and not having to write a report. There was no discernable difference in the feedback between dyslexic students and other students, nor between international and UK students.

In the second questionnaire, specifically about the exam, the strongest aspects that helped students achieve understanding of the case study were; viewing the case study video two weeks in advance of the exam; having a detailed written case study in advance; being able to highlight text on the written case study; being able to take the case study into the exam; knowing the learning outcomes to be assessed and the assessment criteria for the exam in advance; having done the coursework. Again the scores were very similar across all student groups, although two out of three dyslexic students did not rate being able to highlight text or taking the case study into the exam as highly as the whole student group.

During the examination, students felt the most helpful aspects to their achievement were; being able to prepare in advance; recall of the video; recall of the coursework activities and recall of workshop discussions. Again there was little discernible difference between the scores of dyslexic and other students. Most students felt the examination, at an hour, was too short and that about an hour and a half would be right.

### Conclusions

The use of videos throughout the lectures was perceived to be a strong contributory factor to all students achieving the learning outcomes in the module. In addition, the videos prompted further discussion amongst students, both in workshops and outside of the module, and led to shared understanding. The videos allowed students to understand theory by seeing examples of how it is applied in the real world and this was highly valued by students.

The group coursework portfolio allowed students to be creative and develop ideas of their own. This sense of ownership led to a real sense of achievement. The examination process was aided by the students seeing a video of the case study as well as having a written case study, although the most useful element was having the case study in advance in order to prepare. Even with only one question to answer a one hour exam this was not sufficient time for the students to write as much as they felt they needed to in order to demonstrate they had achieved the learning outcomes.

While this study aimed to provide ways to improve learning for dyslexic students, the use of video, discussions, groupwork and encouraging creativity in the presentation of students' work were the key elements for all the students in their achievement of the learning outcomes.

### References

West T. G., *In the Mind's Eye - Visual Thinkers, Gifted People With Learning Difficulties, Computer Images and the Ironies of Creativity*, 1997

Waterfield, J., "Dyslexia in the Context of Higher Education", LTSN-GEES S.E.N. Conference, 19/10/2001

## Undiagnosed Dyslexia: A Case Study

**Roberta Smyth with Agnes Murray & Caroline McMullan**  
University of Ulster

The University of Ulster has in place a very structured and supportive system for all students who have been diagnosed with a disability or a special need. Students are asked to declare their disability either on the UCAS form prior to being offered a place on a course or after they have enrolled on a course. Some students neither wish to declare their disability, nor have academic staff or peers made aware of their disability and the problems which they encounter (as they think they will be disadvantaged) and are therefore unable to make full use of the help and support available. The range of special needs catered for in the University of Ulster is very diverse. It includes the student who requires wheelchair facilities and a carer; the blind student with a guide dog; the student with minor hearing or visual difficulties, dyslexia, and learning difficulties to the student with a short term need, for example, as a result of a minor accident. The university also has a studies advice system in place within each course.

This provides advice and guidance for the student on a one-to-one basis with lecturers, regarding anything likely to affect the student's academic performance.

Student services have, on the University server, a relatively new computerised screening test for dyslexia called 'Quickscan'. The test can be used by individual students, but also by staff with groups of their students, in order to discover if there are any hitherto unknown literacy problems or learning difficulties. The test is in a simple question and answer format, user friendly and takes 10-15 minutes to run through. At the end of the session an analysis of the student's learning style is provided with the suggestion that the individual should contact the university psychologist, for more detailed assessment and assistance if necessary.

However with this range of help available it is still possible for students with learning difficulties to go undiagnosed. During the academic year 2000-2001 a final year student on the BA Honours Hospitality Management degree programme in the School of Hospitality, Tourism and Consumer Studies, proceeded to the end of semester one before she was diagnosed as having severe dyslexia. Throughout her time at university the student studied and successfully completed a wide range of modules. The academic profile of her overall results in year one and two indicated a low 2.2/ 3rd rate student, but with her coursework marked in the 2.1/ 1st class band. After the successful completion of her placement year in America she transferred to the final year of the degree programme. During the first semester of the final year she was able to use the experience she gained on placement to illustrate theories to practice of real industrial situations in her assignments. This combined with diligence and hard work resulted in high scores in assignments. However she continued to underachieve in examinations.

Blind marking of examination scripts is the norm in the University and student identity is withheld until marks are collated on the broad sheet for examination meetings. In one particular module the lecturers were very concerned that a good student who attended regularly and participated very well in class achieved a very low mark. After having discussions with several other lecturers they concluded that the low performance of such a hard-working, interested and able student was most likely due to learning difficulties.

The issue was initially discussed with the studies advisor. Then the student was approached; she acknowledged the problems she had experienced for many years. She revealed her earlier worries during primary and secondary level education when she had on numerous occasions approached her teachers indicating that she was having difficulties with learning. She worked extremely long hours, yet, this was not reflected in her results and often her teachers would accuse her of being lazy. The student herself had often wondered why “her younger brother who worked a minimum of hours was able to achieve much higher grades’. The student was, unbelievably, delighted that her problems were at last recognised and were being taken seriously.

After this discussion a meeting with the university psychologist was arranged and the student was diagnosed with dyslexia. This diagnosis put in motion the support system available to all students. The help and support that she was given immediately included :-

- A viva with the external examiner regarding her work in semester one.
- In the second semester she was given copies of overheads or the notes used by lecturers
- Computer facilities and a special spellchecker were made available through the University and an Education and Library Board Grant (the student was able to purchase the spellchecker)
- Additional time was given for the completion of assignments and dissertation
- During the final examinations the student was given additional time and a separate examination room
- Immediately following the written examination the student and lecturer met, the student read through her examination script and additional notes were made by the lecturer to highlight the areas that were unclear to the marker.

This student graduated with a 2.1 degree and a Certificate in Industrial Studies (CIS) with commendation. This was a result she could not have envisaged a few months earlier. This all came about by the vigilance of lecturing staff, who were able to identify the competencies of the individual student, and become alerted to the possible problem of learning difficulties. By being aware of the backup facilities available for students within the University and taking the time to advise the student on what could have been a very sensitive issue, the lecturing staff were able to provide the student with the means to understand her disability and develop the confidence to deal with it.

As result of this case our present students have again been made aware of the ‘Quickscan’ screening test. While responsibility is ultimately with the student to ask for assistance, tutors must be vigilant to pick up on potential problems of students who are obviously very capable, hard working and yet not able to demonstrate their full potential. Students need to be encouraged to use the help and support which is currently provided.

Alan Jenkins and Jonathan Leach, Oxford Brookes University  
Mick Healey and Carolyn Roberts, University of Gloucestershire

*"Inclusive field trip design will envisage a variety of potential participants, and accommodate as many varied needs as possible without compromising the educational objectives"* (University of Strathclyde, 2000, p.2)

### Introduction: 'Challenging' and Good News

The 'challenging' news is that those of us teaching fieldwork now have to ensure that such courses are accessible to disabled students. The good news is that there is a website that supports course teams in meeting that challenge; and some of the changes to meet the particular needs of disabled students can benefit many or all students.

### The Centrality of Fieldwork

For staff (and students!) in leisure, recreation and tourism (and also perhaps in hospitality and sport), fieldwork is central to our view of an effective curriculum. With colleagues in fieldwork disciplines from art history to zoology, we have devised curricula and pedagogic strategies that ensure that students graduate with the knowledge of environments and skills of analysis and teamwork etc, that fieldwork is so effective in supporting (Jenkins 1997). We have recognised this centrality in benchmarking statements such as that for Hospitality et al; "graduates being able to...undertake fieldwork with due regard for safety and risk assessment." (QAA a, 2000, 6). Now the challenge is to ensure that this is available for students with disabilities.

### National Disability Requirements for Higher Education

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA, 2000 b) has recently published a suite of inter-related documents forming a full Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in Higher Education. The objective of Section 3: Students with Disabilities is "to assist institutions in ensuring that students with disabilities have access to a learning experience comparable to that of their peers". Departments must then assume that internal and external reviews of courses will require them to demonstrate that they have adhered to these principles; and specifically regarding fieldwork and placements:

*'Institutions should ensure that, wherever possible, disabled students have access to academic and vocational placements including field trips and study abroad'* (QAA b, 2000, Precept 11)

This code of practice in effect reinforces the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) which begins to come into force in September 2002. SENDA 2001 establishes that "an educational provider would discriminate against a disabled student if it failed to make reasonable adjustment to any arrangements, including physical features of premises, for services that place the disabled student at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to persons who are not disabled" (DfEE, 2000). The key phrase 'reasonable adjustment' has yet to be tested in law, but the DfES (as the DfEE is now known) provides clear guidance that academic and other standards should not be compromised by the adjustments. They also suggest that 'reasonableness' is a function of practicality, cost, effectiveness, disruption, the significance of the element of course or service being accessed and the needs of other students. However, field course providers should be aware that the social aspects of fieldwork, including domestic arrangements such as sleeping, eating, washing and recreation or relaxation, will also need accommodating.

Higher Education institutions will now need to treat disability issues in a more structured and transparent way. And those of us with limited awareness of such issues, need to shift our mental schema of disability from an exclusive focus on wheelchair users, to recognising that these moral imperatives and legislative requirements focus on large numbers of our students (and staff) and a range of disabilities (Hall et al, 2001). The Disability and Discrimination Act (1995) defines a person's disability as "a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". More than 4% of undergraduates in the UK (22,500) self-assessed themselves as having a disability in 1998/9; given that there is no obligation to divulge, the actual number may be closer to 10%. Less than 5% of those reporting were wheelchair users or had mobility difficulties, disabilities often regarded as providing the greatest challenges to would-be field class organisers. The most common category was unseen disabilities such as epilepsy, diabetes or asthma (39%), followed by dyslexia (26%) (HESA, 2000).

But there is an opportunity here as well as a challenge. As we become more sensitive to the diversity of student needs we can adjust how we teach and facilitate learning in ways which may benefit all or many of our students.

### Some modifications and additions to fieldwork that benefit many students

- Providing written details about the main features to be seen in the field and the activities and projects to be undertaken, to benefit a deaf student, also clarifies the learning to be experienced by all the students on the field trip.
- Making a video of a classic tourist location that is not accessible to a student in a wheelchair, may also be used in other classes and as part of the pre-fieldwork introduction for students visiting the site in subsequent years.
- Investigating an alternative local-non-residential field course venue for a student needing daily dialysis treatment, may lead to the alternative location also being offered to other students, particularly benefiting those with family responsibilities and those who cannot afford the cost of a residential field course.

### Models of Disability

In meeting this challenge one step forward is to consider our models and conceptions of disability. *Medical models* of disability tend to individualise the problems experienced by disabled people, and assume that they are subjects for treatment and cure. By comparison *social models* shift the focus from what is 'wrong' with an individual, to "society's failure to accept disabled people for who they are and to provide adequate facilities for them" (Kitchen, 2000, p.7). The emphasis thus moves from pity or sympathy, on to generic barriers to participation in mainstream activities which need to be identified and overcome through strategic planning.

### A Supporting Web Site

<http://www.chelt.ac.uk/el/philg/gdn/disabil.htm>

The Geography Discipline Network (GDN) has recently undertaken a project, funded by HEFCE, to support departments in providing learning support for students with different disabilities. The guides available at this web site are:

- Issues in providing learning support for disabled students undertaking fieldwork
- Providing learning support for students with mobility problems undertaking fieldwork
- Providing learning support for blind or visually impaired students undertaking fieldwork
- Providing learning support for deaf or hard of hearing students undertaking fieldwork
- Providing learning support for students with mental health difficulties undertaking fieldwork
- Providing learning support for students with hidden disabilities and dyslexia undertaking field work

In addition a code of practice on the implementation of the Disability Act should be available early in 2002 from the Disability Rights Commission

<http://www.drc-gb.org/drc/InformationAndLegislation/InformationAndLegislationMenu.asp>

### References

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HESA (2000) *First Year UK Domiciled HE Students by Level of Study, Mode of Study, Gender and Disability 1998/99* (accessed 10 November 2000)

Jenkins A (1997) *Fieldwork with More Students*, Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development

Kitchen, R (2000) *Geography and Disability*, Sheffield: Geographical Association

QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) (2000a) *Subject Benchmarking Statements: Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism*, Gloucester: QAA

QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) (2000b) *Code of Practice - students with disabilities*, Gloucester: QAA

University of Strathclyde (2000) Resource 7: Placements, study abroad, and field trips, in *Teachability: Creating an accessible curriculum for students with disabilities*, Glasgow: University of Strathclyde

## Designing More Inclusive Forms of Assessment & Integrating Disability Issues Into the Curriculum

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In light of recent disability legislation, anticipating and providing reasonable adjustments for disabled students must become a priority for academic staff. One of the lessons of the Australian experience (Australia is 10 years ahead of the UK in terms of disability legislation in higher education) is that assessment, rather than access or admission procedures, is likely to be one of the key areas where disabled students will feel discriminated against, hence there is a need to start reviewing and adapting assessment strategies and techniques as soon as possible.

Building upon the articles regarding learning outcomes published in the previous issue of LINK (especially Keith Donne's on assessment criteria and Mike Lowe's on benchmarking), the first objective of this paper is to contextualise and illustrate the notion of inclusive assessment. A specific casestudy shows how it is possible to design non-discriminatory forms of assessment whilst integrating disability issues into the curriculum, thereby raising students' awareness and educating them both as accountable future managers and as responsible citizens.

The casestudy is that of a level two optional module offered at the University of Gloucestershire under the title 'Communications in Tourism' (referred to hereafter as TM202), mainly aimed at tourism students, but also popular with students of leisure and hospitality. Amongst the 60 students who chose that module in 2001, the proportion of disabled students was twice as high as the national average of 7%, and more than 10% were registered as having an unseen form of disability such as diabetes, epilepsy, or a heart condition. (It is unclear why TM202 is particularly popular with disabled students, but the flexibility and inclusiveness of the assessment strategy may well be part of the answer.)

Notions of disability and disability awareness are integrated into the curriculum in three complementary ways:

- Through the learning outcomes, which state explicitly that, by the end of the module students will be able to anticipate and respond to the needs of disabled tourists regarding communications;
- Through the weekly programme of lectures and independent work, which includes sessions about disability issues, readings from and about the Disability Discrimination Act and a video about the tourist experience of hearing-impaired visitors;
- Through the assessment of the module, designed to be inclusive and non-discriminatory, as developed below.

For the first piece of assessment, students have to work in teams to design a full promotional package (leaflets, posters, a brochure, a stand and a website) to advertise a destination of their choice, targeting a particular market segment. These packages are presented in a exhibition style where professional standards are expected, on the model of the World Travel Fair which takes place each year in London. Working in groups enables students to build upon their strengths: for example dyslexic students, often said to be more creative and particularly good in terms of lateral-thinking and problem-solving, can positively contribute to the work of their team. One of the assessment criteria specifically refers to the provision for disabled tourists and for disabled people visiting the exhibition. This aspect is marked out of 20, with the following breakdown:

Mark Range / 20	Provision for disabled people
16-20 (i.e. >80%)	Shows a professional understanding of the needs of disabled visitors, catering specifically for them through a coherent and strategic disability-friendly project
14-15 (i.e. 70-79%)	Shows a very good understanding of the difficulties that disabled tourists may have and makes specific provision for them
12-13(i.e. 60-69%)	Shows a clear understanding of the difficulties that many disabled tourists may encounter and makes some provision for them, but some aspects are forgotten (e.g. visual impairment)
10-11(i.e. 50-59%)	Shows some understanding of the difficulties that some disabled tourists may have and makes some partial provision for them, yet some other disabled visitors will remain excluded
8-9(i.e. 40-49%)	Shows a basic understanding of the difficulties that some disabled tourists may have, making some attempts to cater for them, yet many will remain excluded
6-7(i.e. 30-39%)	Shows a limited awareness of the difficulties that disabled tourists may encounter and makes limited provision for them
4-5(i.e. 20-29%)	Does not show any awareness of the difficulties that disabled tourists may have
0-3(i.e. 0-19%)	Is totally unfriendly and discriminating against disabled tourists

The experience of the disabled students definitely contributes to the teamwork, and all students are led to think and learn about disability issues, both achieving the learning outcomes but also developing a philanthropic view of the world and becoming aware that over 10% of the British population is registered as disabled. To give some concrete examples, for the exhibition students learn to use the most suitable colours and backgrounds for visually impaired visitors, record part of the text on tapes, design stands with easy access for wheelchairs and so forth. TM202 students therefore have a sound understanding of disability issues as well as an uncommon propensity to talk about the importance for the tourism industry to cater for disabled visitors.

For the second piece of assessment, students have the choice between two assignments: either producing a report (as a discursive, traditional method of assessment) or producing a website (as a non-discursive, innovative method of assessment). The objective of any assignment is to give students the opportunity to show that they have achieved the learning outcomes; the website option enables dyslexic students to provide evidence of their skills and knowledge in a more suitable way. What will soon be a legal requirement (providing alternatives for disabled students) becomes good practice for all, as all students are given the choice. An alternative form of assessment appropriate for visually impaired students has also been designed, an adapted viva-voce type of oral examination.

The new legislation is anticipatory in principle, which means that tutors need to consider beforehand which adjustments they would make, with 'what if?' scenarios. What if one of the students enrolled on a course is blind or a wheelchair-user? Refusing that student because of their disability; for example, arguing that they could not complete the visual component of the assessment or that they could not take part in the field trip would be illegal. It will be tutors' responsibility to design non-discriminatory forms of assessment, notably by having recourse to the assessment methods which tend to be under-used in our fields, such as computer-based assessments, critical diaries, learning journals, design tasks, electronic presentations (CD or webpage), exhibitions, portfolios, simulation exercises and viva examinations. This need not be daunting (as a step away from comfortable, time-proven methods) or a burden (as the pressure to create more work), but should be regarded as a space for creativity and the opportunity to discover and use the support of the increasing number of practical guidelines available, such as:

- The guidelines to be published soon by the HEFCE-funded project SWANDS (South West Academic Network for Disability Support), a network of academics from higher education institutions working together to clarify and identify key issues in terms of learning, teaching and course assessment for disabled students;

*continued overleaf*

### Student Feedback - A National Survey

Would you like to be able to make a comparison of final year student views of your programmes of study with those of national provision within the UK, at no cost to your department?

The Student Course Experience Questionnaire (SCEQ) (Ramsden, 1991) has been used extensively within Australia to gather relevant information regarding the overall effectiveness of degree courses. For more information see <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/sceq>. We are now offering this approach to help you evaluate your student experience.

Following a pilot study last year, we are now able to offer the opportunity for you to join a national survey of final year students on degree courses in hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism. The survey will focus on student views in areas such as learning and teaching, the best aspects of their course, feedback received from staff, personal skills development etc.

To take part you will need to distribute the questionnaire for completion by your students during their final term/semester of study. You will then receive a confidential report on the responses of your students, and on completion of the survey, a summary of the national responses with which to compare them.

Would you like to find out more?

Please contact Nina Downie by 8th March 2002: [njdownie@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:njdownie@brookes.ac.uk) or 01865 484838

- The HEFCE-funded project 'Learning Support for Disabled Students Undertaking Fieldwork and Related Activities' directed by Mick Healey from the University of Gloucestershire ([www.glos.ac.uk/el/gemru](http://www.glos.ac.uk/el/gemru)) - see page 20.
- The Code of Practice of the DDA/SENDA for Post-16 education available through the website of the Disability Rights Commission ([www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)).

General information on disability issues in terms of teaching and learning abounds, both in printed form (such as Hall, J. & Tinklin, T. (1998) *Students First: The Experiences of Disabled Students in Higher Education*, Edinburgh: The Scottish Council for Research in Education) and online (where one of the major gateways is certainly SKILL, the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities: [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)).

Designing inclusive forms of assessment is not difficult, as long as one remains flexible and develops a sound understanding of the specific challenges faced by disabled students. The need to accommodate and adapt to students' abilities should not be covert: it should be discussed openly in the classroom, drawing a parallel between the experience of disabled students and that of disabled tourists.

Disabled people can be tourists, no matter whether they are blind, deaf or semi-paralysed; disabled students can study tourism, no matter whether they are dyslexic, arthritic or diabetic. Demystifying disability issues contributes to much-needed destigmatisation, and able-bodied students become more understanding, knowledgeable and proactive. The next step is to integrate disability issues directly into the curriculum, as taught, practised and assessed. The example from the University of Gloucestershire proves that it is not just feasible and desirable, but also successful and enriching – that example focused on travel and tourism, but the cognate fields of leisure, sport and hospitality can certainly offer similar, if not better, opportunities.

(When this article was written, Dr Lomine was an employee of the University of Gloucestershire, but has since moved to King Alfred's College, Winchester.)

### Useful Websites

<http://cando.lancs.ac.uk>

The Careers Advisory Network on Disabled Opportunities

<http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk>

Guidelines on including the dyslexic student

<http://www.chelt.ac.uk/el/philg/gdn/disabil/index.htm>

Geography Discipline Network Guides to Good Practice

<http://www.drc-gb.org>

Disability Rights Commission

<http://www.gees.ac.uk/acclCTrs.htm>

LTSN for Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences guide to resources on accessibility and ICT

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/tinits/slidd/>

HEFCE information relating to disabled students

<http://www.natdisteam.org.uk>

The National Disability Team

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/COP/COPswd/contents.htm>

QAA Code of Practice – Students with Disabilities

<http://www.rnid.org.uk>

Teaching strategies to use with deaf students in higher education

<http://www.skill.org.uk>

Skill – National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

<http://www.techdis.ac.uk>

Techdis – Technologies for Disabilities Information Service

<http://www.warwick.ac.uk/ETS/interactions/vol5no3/index.htm>

Interactions – the journal of the Warwick Educational Technology Service: special edition on web accessibility

### LINK Edition 4

The next issue of LINK will focus on Progression and Transition. Please contact us if you would like to write an article, provide a case study or offer some information on issues surrounding progression - for example, students moving from FE to HE; skills development across levels; employability issues; graduateness, or progress files etc.

### Making LINK Accessible

This issue of LINK is available in a larger font and without images on our website.

### JoHLSTE

The electronic Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education (JoHLSTE) will be available in April 2002. If you would like to receive an email prompt when it goes online, please let us know. Papers are now welcome for future issues.

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