

**Title                    Accessibility**

Author:                    Glenis Lambert – Learning Technologist - LTEU

Date:                      September 2003

Revision:                1

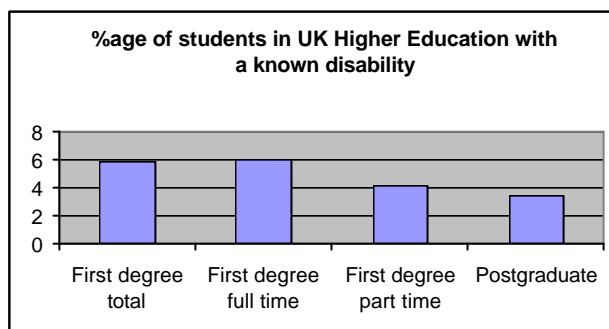
***Aim Of This Briefing Note***

Section 4 of the Disability Act which came into force on September 1st 2002 makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people, including students, by treating them less favourably than people without a disability. From this date HEIs are expected to make “reasonable adjustments” to comply with this legislation. Students are not obliged to request adaptations to materials as adjustments are required to be “anticipatory”, and to have been made before a student with a specific requirement arrives on a course.

This paper draws on information and good practice from a number of sources referenced in the “References and Resources” section.

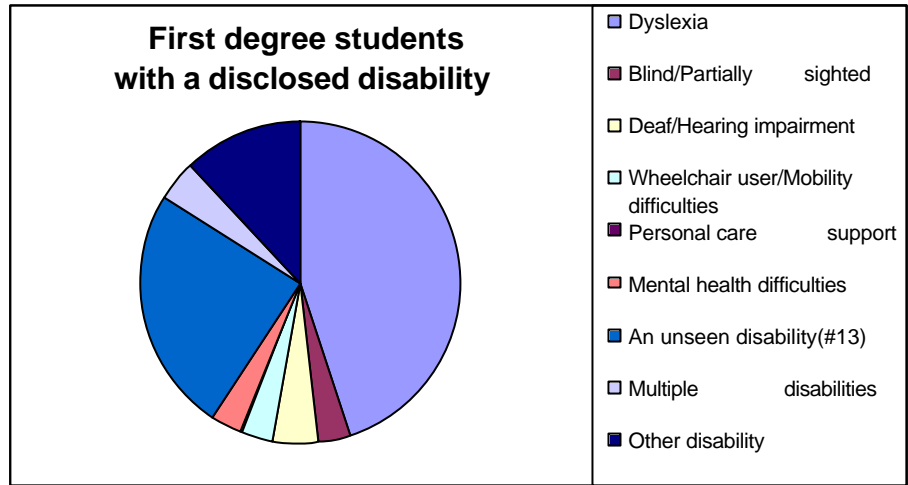
HESA statistics for 2001 – 2002 show that nearly 6% of First Degree students will have disclosed some kind of disability; others, for whatever reason, will not have informed the University and are not included in the statistics.

First degree total	5.81
First degree full time	6.01
First degree part time	4.16
Postgraduate	3.47



Of these, over 45% will have dyslexia or a visual disability. (Older students with deteriorating vision, those who are colour-blind and those with illnesses such as diabetes which affect vision are not considered to have a disability and are therefore not included.)

It is probable that for every 100 students in a cohort, 3 will have a visual disability severe enough to disclose, 3 others will have some other form of functional disability. Although many of these will have aids to enable them to perform to their ability, most will not.



**The Act applies to:**

- o learning resources, including computer facilities libraries, etc
- o all aspects of teaching and learning, including lectures, lab work, practicals, field trips, work placements etc
- o online and distance learning
- o assessment
- o the physical environment such as buildings, landscaping and equipment
- o student support services, counselling and other advice services
- o catering, residential and leisure facilities

**Applications in Learning & Teaching**

**Accessibility vs. Usability**

The term “usability” usually refers to web sites but is relevant to any product. Material which is “usable” will

- o reduce the number of mistakes made
- o reduce learning time
- o improve satisfaction with the materials given
- o shorten the time taken to complete tasks
- o make learning more efficient and pleasurable

By making materials and the learning environment usable, all students benefit. y making learning and teaching materials accessible to all students, lecturers will enable those with special needs to take responsibility for their own learning. Accessible materials should be the norm rather than the exception requested by an individual student.

The use of electronic material can assist students with disabilities, but care must be taken over the design of such materials and delivery methods. This applies to materials produced specifically for use on the web, but especially to other file formats such as Power Point and Acrobat files.

Becta have produced guidelines for the production of learning and teaching materials <http://becta.org.uk>

The accessibility legislation applies to ALL learning and teaching materials, including those presented by the lecturer in classrooms and lecture theatres when visual, hearing and mobility constraints may put some students at a disadvantage. These situations can also impact upon the learning ability of some students with mental health problems, who may find certain circumstances so stressful at times that their learning is impaired.

### **Constraints**

Producing accessible materials is often seen as a constraint on design and a limitation of the usefulness of information. This need not be so unless an alternative format has to be adopted, e.g. audio tape instead of video. Usable materials usually have a high level of compatibility with accessibility aids. These include assistive technology such as screen readers and magnification aids, and adaptive technology such as Braille printers.

- It may be difficult to adapt existing materials. (An A3 photocopy is not as satisfactory as a print out using a large font size, but may be adequate.)
- Information may be lost when providing an alternative format
- It may take time to learn how to produce accessible electronic files
- Students may have to be trained to use specialist aids

### **Getting Started**

Please contact your Learning Technologist if you need advice on producing accessible learning and teaching materials.

For other advice on the needs of students, contact Margaret Scott, Disability Office [mas14@cant.ac.uk](mailto:mas14@cant.ac.uk)

Guides on accessibility on online materials can be found on "<http://lteu.cant.ac.uk/accessibility.htm>"

### **Case Studies**

University of Washington Guides to accessibility:

Accessible Field Study

<http://www.washington.edu/doit/Faculty/Strategies/Academic/Fieldwork/>

Presentation detailing very brief case studies of students with special requirements

Shirley Evans and Lawrie Phipps, Techdis

[http://www.alt.ac.uk/docs/Shirley\\_Evans\\_and\\_Lawrie\\_Phipps.ppt](http://www.alt.ac.uk/docs/Shirley_Evans_and_Lawrie_Phipps.ppt)

### **References & Resources**

Carol Doyle and Karen Robson (edited by Simon Ball and David Campy) Good Practice For All University of Wales 2000

[http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/application.asp?app=resources.asp&process=full\\_record&section=generic&id=128](http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/application.asp?app=resources.asp&process=full_record&section=generic&id=128)

The Quality Assurance Agency Code Of Practice: Quality And Standards in HE (2000).

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/cop/copswd/contents.htm>

HESA Statistics on Higher Education

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/access/statistics/statsintro.htm>

A brief guide to the DDA Legislation:

Dave McCarthy *Accessibility and Legislation in Higher Education 2001*, TechDis

Techdis information for staff and students, including a database of disability aids

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

JISC Forums

Forum on disabilities and technology –

<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/tech-dis.html>

The Teachability Project has directed information on producing teaching materials with a high level of usability

Strathclyde University - Teachability Project – <http://www.ispn.gcal.ac.uk/teachability/>

Advice on producing learning and teaching materials for dyslexic students:

<http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/print/information/adults/a08fehe.asp>

Creating online learning materials: A good practice guide for colleges produced by the NLN materials development team at Becta

<http://nlm.ac.uk>

Overview of services provided for disabled students by the OU

<http://www3.open.ac.uk>