



## **Guidance on providing “lecture notes” to disabled students**

### **Introduction**

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) places a responsibility upon Universities to provide reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled students do not experience discrimination. Many students who are disabled find that they encounter difficulties when trying to take notes in lectures, when compared to other non-disabled students. These difficulties are sometimes caused by a physical disability, such as arthritis or visual impairment and very often by problems with their working memory. Dyslexic students often find that they have a weak working memory and therefore experience difficulties when trying to take notes, listen to the lecturer and possibly look at a PowerPoint presentation at the same time.

### **Reasonable Adjustments**

Disabled students will often have an Assessment of Study Needs for Aids and Adaptations, or a psychological report compiled by a Chartered Psychologist. These reports will identify the barriers experienced by the particular student and will suggest remedies or reasonable adjustments. It would not be wise for University staff to ignore these suggestions, even if they disagree with either the assessment or the suggestion or both.

### **Recommendations regarding lecture notes**

Many psychologists or needs assessors will recommend that lecture notes should be provided in advance of lectures and preferably in electronic format. The term “lecture notes” is usually not clearly defined and this leaves academic staff with the problem of deciding what this means for their lectures, seminars and workshops. It is recommended that academic staff follow this strategy to ensure that they are able to comply with the legislation, support the student and undertake a realistic approach to providing this particular reasonable adjustment:

1. The programme handbook would be a means to communicate to all students on their programme, what lecturers would define as “lecture notes” and therefore what students can expect to receive, when and how (e.g. on Blackboard in advance, in handouts on the day etc).
2. Every lecturer should make it clear that they will not provide lecture notes that are a complete transcript of the lecture. If a student requires this due to the severity of their disability, they will either be provided with a scribe or an audio recorder via Student Support Services.
3. All lecturers are advised to draw up an outline, for example in bullet points, of the main themes of the lecture and the order in which they occur. This should especially include the names of relevant people and places and key terms and dates. Some staff may find that their current OHPs or PowerPoint slides will suit this without too much change. These do not need to be detailed. Dyslexic students can have difficulty in pulling out the main themes of the lecture so this is of most help to them.  
If this is too brief for some students, encourage them to email the lecturer or speak to them outside of the lecture, to discuss what they need.
4. Provide this outline or whatever else the tutor may have identified as “lecture notes” via Blackboard to all students ahead of the lecture, to make the provision inclusive.
5. Handouts provided on the day must be provided in advance electronically to any student who cannot access them without some adaptation. This applies particularly to visually impaired students, who may require the handout in Braille or large print. Putting the handouts onto Blackboard in advance would allow all students to access them in whatever format suits them best.

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07.08.09

With acknowledgements to Megan O’Neill, ESPaCH