

Disability Action Plan for the School of Geography November 2007

Contents

Part A	2
1. School Policy Strategy and Procedures	2
2. Learning Teaching and Assessment	4
3. Information Flow	5
4. Staff awareness / Info for staff	6
5. Admissions Tutors	7
6. DLO Appointment by Head of School	7
7. Funding	8
8. Information for Students	8
9. Opportunities for Students and Prospective Students to Disclose	9
10. Complaints Procedure	10
11. Physical Environment, Facilities and Equipment.	11
Part B	12



Disability Action Plan, November 2007

Part A

1. School Policy Strategy and Procedures		
Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
1.1 School Policies are inclusive of students who have a disability	3. We do this School policies are inclusive. All planning is inclusive and most documents have now been checked and updated for inclusivity, though not all of the updated documents have yet been published or submitted. Students with disabilities have only made positive comments about their treatment in the School of Geography, and we have had no complaints.	School policies are regularly reviewed. All those responsible for policy-making must consider disabilities when reviewing policies.
<i>Admissions Policy</i>	4: We do this very well Our admissions policy follows central University policy – see http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/quality-manual/recruitment-admissions/disability.htm and considerable attention is paid to inclusivity by the Admissions tutors in the School.	All admissions tutors should consult the DLO annually to review disability issues in admissions.
<i>Assessment Policy</i>	3. We do this We use the various centralised systems for students with disabilities: extra time in examinations, the dyslexia sticker system for examination scripts and the guidelines for marking these scripts, etc. See http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/academicsupport/adjustments/markingguidelines.html . In line with University policy, we do not have a notification system for coursework because we expect the coursework of students with disabilities to be of the same quality as that of other students. See http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/quality-manual/disability/disassess.htm . To help students with disabilities to achieve this quality, there is good liaison between the School and Academic Support. We have a very flexible approach to particular students' circumstances for individual pieces of coursework, working on a case-by-case basis. This includes flexibility in extensions for students with disabilities. We are reviewing the issue of deadline bunching for all students, but have not fully resolved this yet.	The School's Teaching Committee to review annually the assessment policies in the light of disabilities. Staff awareness of marking guidelines to be checked regularly. Teaching Committee to review assessment deadlines regularly, to try to reduce bunching.
<i>Confidentiality and disclosure</i>	3. We do this We offer regular opportunities for disclosure, starting with the admissions process and then the introductory sessions in the students' first week at university. The academic tutorials allow students to get to know their personal tutors well, and the personal	Documentation on disabilities within the School to be reviewed regularly. A 'topic' to be

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	tutorial system in particular gives regular opportunities for disclosure – this can be used to greater effect. In addition, both the Director of Studies and the DLO are available for students to disclose disabilities at any time. We usually advise students to go directly to Student Services, when they disclose disabilities. We also usually advise students not to request complete confidentiality, but if they wish to then this confidentiality is strictly observed. Documentation about disabilities is kept confidential. The writing-up of this documentation has room for improvement. In line with the level of confidentiality requested by the student, staff teaching them are informed of the recommendations for reasonable adjustments suggested by Academic Support.	written into ePAR meeting agenda to remind students and staff about disclosing disabilities.
<i>Other?</i> <i>Fieldwork (see also 2.4)</i>	3. We do this We have a written policy on ensuring inclusivity in placements (e.g. U21, Erasmus). Fieldwork is an important element of the School's teaching and research. The inclusivity of fieldwork is very dependent on both the nature of the fieldwork and the nature of the disability. We have a flexible approach in which the needs of individual students are addressed on a case-by-case basis. If it appears that adjustments need to be made then the students with disabilities are consulted and appropriate adjustments formulated by discussion between the academic staff, the DLO and the student(s) concerned.	All staff responsible for placements for the first time to be briefed by the DLO on inclusivity. Teaching Committee to review regularly the fieldwork done in the School, in the light of the known disabilities within the School.
1.2 Proposals in the School Operational Plan make reference to disability	2. We are working on this Although disabilities have been taken into account when formulating the School Plan, the resulting document does not make reference to disability. This has now been addressed, with direct reference added to the working document, but the next submission of a School Plan is not until towards the end of 2007.	DLO to be consulted about the School Plan before it is submitted.
1.3 Disability issues are a standing item on the agenda of an appropriate committee e.g. L&T, SSCC or one responsible for equality and diversity.	3. We do this "Disability issues" is an agenda item on all School committees. The DLO is a member of Teaching Committee, Safety Committee, IT Committee and planning committees for degree programmes.	DLO to review the effectiveness of these measures and amend as necessary

2. Learning Teaching and Assessment

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
2.1 Teaching Staff use inclusive teaching strategies.	<p>2: We're working on this Teaching practice in the School is very variable. One of the strengths of our teaching programme is the considerable diversity of teaching techniques. Some of the practices are more inclusive than others and as yet we have no formal system specifically designed to monitor inclusivity of all our teaching. This has recently been raised in Teaching Committee and we are beginning to address it. Material on inclusive teaching practice is made available to all teaching staff and the DLO emails some of this material to all academic staff every so often. We are now working on formalising this system more.</p>	Teaching Committee and HoS to consider introducing peer review of teaching. If so, this will include evaluation of inclusiveness of teaching practice. More formal systems of advising on and assessing inclusivity of teaching practice will be developed.
2.2 Teaching staff act on recommendations from Academic Referral Forms or agree alternative with student (or Academic Support), if necessary.	<p>3: We do this The teaching staff are given and act upon this information / these recommendations. However, we can improve in terms of our monitoring of the extent to which the recommendations are acted upon. Few problems have come to light so far, but more rigorous evaluation is needed. Issues include ensuring that information is passed on to all staff involved in each module (including occasional staff) and cascading information when referral forms arrive mid-semester.</p>	Annual feedback from students with disabilities to be obtained to help evaluate this. Post-evaluation discussion to include this, if peer observation is adopted. In Staff Meetings, the DLO will remind staff to act on the recommendations
2.3 Arrangements to ensure accessibility are in place with work placement providers and international partner institutions.	<p>3: We do this University-level placements (e.g. U21) are subject to a MOA with partner institutions; this ensures that disability provision is included. At the School level, a Placement form has recently been produced, for use in all placements connected with the School. Again this includes a section on disability and provision for it.</p>	DLO to assess the audit trail and thereafter monitor it regularly.
2.4 Fieldwork and field courses are designed with accessibility in mind.	<p>3: We do this Our fieldcourses vary considerably in the aims and activities. They are designed with accessibility in mind, but may require alternative arrangements to be put in place for some disabilities. These arrangements are discussed with the students concerned beforehand on a case-by-case basis, and if needed are put in place flexibly. Other fieldwork done in our courses is chosen and designed by the students themselves, including their completing risk assessment and ethics forms.</p>	Dissertation advice notes to be reviewed, with a specific statement on disabilities to be added. Also a statement to be added to the front sheet of these notes to say that they are available in alternative format on request.

2. Learning Teaching and Assessment

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
2.5 Staff are aware of ways to make reasonable adjustments to assessment without compromising academic standards	3: We do this Some of this is administered centrally by the University. For example, adjustments to examinations are handled by the Courses Office. Similar procedures are put in place for internal examinations. Depending on the disabilities known within the School at any one time, we have training and updates on specific disabilities. Academic referrals contain recommendations, which are largely acted on by staff (see 2.2 above). Staff who are unsure often seek advice from the DLO in the first instance.	More monitoring of the information flow to be put in place: the flow from information made available to staff from training and referral forms, to staff awareness of the methods of making reasonable adjustments.
2.6 Marking Criteria are clear and relevant to the core course requirements	3: We do this The marking criteria for all assessed work are published in the student handbook. For all undergraduate work, these have recently been revised and expanded to account for more types of assessment. Similar revision is needed for Masters work.	Revised marking guidelines to be drawn up for masters courses. Teaching Committee regularly monitors the clarity, relevance and effectiveness of all the marking criteria.
2.7 Staff take account of AS guidelines for marking the exam work of dyslexic students, or offer other reasonable adjustments.	3: We do this Advice on dyslexic stickers on exam scripts is followed. Our policy for coursework means that this does not apply for coursework. Other reasonable adjustments are considered when appropriate.	Staff awareness of dyslexia-related marking guidelines to be monitored regularly. The guidelines to be put in the School Office, and staff to be reminded regularly that it is there.

3. Information Flow

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
3.1 Staff aware of action to take if student discloses a disability	3: We do this The policy is for staff to refer the student to the DLO, who refers on as appropriate. Staff are generally aware of this, though new staff taking up their posts may not know immediately. We have a confidentiality and disclosure form for signing by both the student and the staff member to whom the disability is disclosed.	DLO to remind staff of the policy at the start of each academic year. DLO to make a handout of dos and don'ts for inclusion in induction packs for new staff. Staff training in disclosure of disabilities (and the DAP more generally) to be organised.

3. Information Flow		
3.2 staff aware of what to do if student asks for confidentiality to be preserved.	3: We do this Staff are asked to explain to the student that it may be difficult to put in place appropriate reasonable adjustments if there is a high level of confidentiality. The confidentiality and disclosure form (as above) needs to be signed.	As above in 3.1.
3.3 Mechanisms are in place to gather information about the student perspective.	2: We're working on this At the moment this is only really done via SET, SEM, SEC and the personal tutorial system.	As in 2.2 above, annual feedback from students with disabilities is to be obtained.

4. Staff awareness / Info for staff		
Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
4.1 DLO meets / introduces themselves to new staff and gives them relevant information.	2: We're working on this New staff know who the DLO is and are introduced to him early on. We are working on producing a document with a more formal statement of the DLO's role and what is expected from academic staff.	DLO to make a handout for new staff, which will also be circulated to existing staff annually, as a reminder.
4.2 School staff handbook publicise disability support, especially Academic Support	2: We're working on this From October 2007 this will happen: a page will be included in the School's staff handbook, which is well used, with all this information.	DLO to draft and update. School Manager to include in handbook every year.
4.3 Information about disability is available on the staff intranet	3: We do this The School's homepage, "Staff intranet" section links directly to the University's staff pages, which include material on disability. The School does not have a staff intranet other than this.	Web Support Officer checks for broken links regularly.
4.4 Staff attend relevant disability related courses / meetings.	2: We're working on this In the School of Geography the DLO is supported by a member of support/secretarial staff who also has a disabilities role. She circulates information about relevant courses and meetings to staff. The DLO regularly attends these events. However, uptake by other staff is low.	Staff training records to be monitored by Head of School. Encouragement to be given to staff to attend disability training.
4.5 Disability sessions within the School at least every 3 years	3: We do this – sort of! Formal training within the School has been provided when we find out that we have a student with a particular disability about which many staff are unlikely to know much. In the last 4 years this has included training in Asperger's Syndrome and epilepsy. Training about more common disabilities such as dyslexia is less formal, often comprising	DLO to organise more formal training in dyslexia and other common disabilities, on a regular cycle.

4. Staff awareness / Info for staff

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
	circulation of advice by email; it should also be more regular.	
4.6 Staff aware of Academic Support's role in conducting assessments to determine any reasonable adjustments required	<p>3: We do this</p> <p>Most staff are aware of this, not least because of the cascading of information from academic referrals to teaching staff, as appropriate. The role of AS is sometimes explained in Staff and committee meetings. However, this can be made more rigorous and regular.</p>	Explanation of the role of AS to be built into the system of cascading information to teaching staff.

5. Admissions Tutors

The School of Geography bases admissions solely on a student's academic ability.

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
5.1 Admissions Tutors are aware of Admissions Policy for students who have a disability, and of advice from the Disability Policy Advisory Unit	<p>4) We do this very well</p> <p>Our admissions tutors are very dedicated to admissions and fully aware of both the policy and the advice from DPAU. The School's admissions policy mirrors Quality Manual policy (http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/quality-manual/recruitment-admissions/disability.htm). The "Tips for Admissions Tutors" are also consulted regularly (http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/student-support/disability/admissionstutors.doc).</p>	Any new admissions tutors to be briefed by outgoing ones and to liaise with DLO, in order to maintain our standards.
5.2 Admissions tutors are aware of updates to disability legislation and how it relates to their course.	<p>3: We do this</p> <p>DLO regularly discusses disability legislation with admissions tutors. Information is also sent to the admissions tutors by central University Admissions on occasion. Admissions tutors are careful to consult DLO if there is any doubt; DLO refers them on to DPAU, if appropriate.</p>	Regular discussions between DLO and admissions tutors.

6. DLO Appointment by Head of School

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
6.1 DLO appropriately appointed and supported	<p>4: We do this very well</p> <p>The School of Geography has maintained continuity by keeping the same DLO since the inception of the role. He is a member of academic staff and</p>	HoS to ensure that the DLO remains a member of academic staff, and that the

6. DLO Appointment by Head of School

	is supported by a member of support staff (in the School Office), who handles many of the more routine tasks involved and maintains a library of disability-related information in the School Office. Further, the School's Director of Studies chairs the University's Advisory Group on Disability, enhancing support and understanding of disability issues within the School.	secretarial support provided is maintained.
6.2 DLO is a member of, or able to report to, appropriate school committees	3. We do this The DLO currently chairs the School's Teaching Committee and is a member of Safety Committee, IT Committee and planning committees for degree programmes.	HoS to review regularly DLO committee membership, balancing need against workload

7. Funding

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
7.1 Staff aware of HEFCE Disability Premium fund to improve provision for projects that are innovative, sustainable and collaborative	2: We're working on this Information is circulated to staff, but awareness is limited.	DLO to liaise annually with Director of Studies and Head of School to explore possibilities for relevant funded projects and initiatives.

8. Information for Students

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
8.1 DLO posters advertising their role displayed on key notice boards	3. We do this Posters are displayed on relevant notice boards and remain there throughout the academic year.	DLO to check each semester that the posters are still in place.
8.2 'disability, dyslexia and long-term medical conditions' booklet is available at key locations, such as reception.	3. We do this The booklet is available at the School Office (Reception) and the DLO has copies available in addition.	DLO to check each semester that the School has not run out.
8.3 Support in Schools via DLOs and centrally via Student Services is mentioned in Week One induction talks	4: We do this very well The Director of Studies, who chairs the University's Advisory Group on Disability, clearly explains the support available both within the School and centrally in the University.	DLO and Director of Studies to co-ordinate the information annually.

8. Information for Students

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
8.4 Handbooks (student, course, module) have disability related information	3. We do this Most course handbooks have relevant information and an up-to-date disability statement following best practice (see http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/student-support/disability/DisabilityinfoforSchoolhandbooks.doc). All handbooks are available in alternative formats. However, some postgraduate course handbooks are missing this information.	DLO to work with course directors to include the disability information in all course handbooks.
8.5 School website has disability related information accessible to external visitors.	4: We do this very well The information is found under "General" on the School's home page. This is not restricted. See http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~lgzwww/general/disability/	DLO to liaise annually with the manager of the School's web-pages to ensure updates.
8.6 Provision of DLO contact details on School web site. These should be accessible externally.	4: We do this very well The information is included in the information detailed in point 8.5 above.	As above
8.7 Materials can be made available in alternative formats	3. We do this Most of the School's teaching material is placed on WebCT (a virtual learning environment), giving the students control over the format. Where information is not available electronically, materials can be made available in alternative formats on request. These include handbooks and other official documents.	DLO to remind module convenors annually of the importance of accessibility. DLO to monitor annually.

9. Opportunities for Students and Prospective Students to Disclose

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
9.1 Opportunities for students and prospective students to disclose.	3: We do this Students are encouraged to disclose at any time during application and study at the School. See details below.	
<i>Initial enquiries and visit days</i>	Staff are always available to discuss disability issues and to allow disclosure.	DLO to liaise with staff involved more actively to promote opportunities to disclose in enquiry process.
<i>Module registration</i>	Students may disclose when registering for modules, but we do not have procedures in place actively to encourage this.	DLO to review module registration procedures to explore setting up a formal procedure to encourage disclosure at this point

9. Opportunities for Students and Prospective Students to Disclose

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
<i>Week 1 induction</i>	The Director of Studies clearly explains the systems in place for disabilities both within the School and more generally across the university, and actively invites students both to disclose and to meet the DLO.	DLO and Director of Studies to liaise to ensure that this continues.
<i>PARs meetings</i>	Disability issues are a standing item on some of the scheduled PAR meetings.	DLO to monitor annually.
<i>Applications for field trips</i>	There are currently no barriers to participation in field trips and so application is not necessary. Convenors of modules that include fieldtrips liaise with students to identify any relevant disability issues and to plan reasonable adjustments; however, the extent to which this happens needs monitoring.	DLO to set up a monitoring scheme to check that this process happens regularly and effectively.
<i>Placements</i>	Placements are rare in the School. Students may disclose when applying for them, but we do not have procedures in place actively to encourage this.	DLO to gather more information about what placements exist and what disability procedures are in place, to determine whether further action is needed.
<i>Study abroad</i>	Students may disclose when applying for study abroad, but the School do not have procedures in place actively to encourage this. Applications are handled mainly by the International Office.	DLO to liaise with Study Abroad Officer to explore whether to set up a formal procedure in the School to encourage disclosure at this point.

10. Complaints Procedure

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
10.1 Easily accessible (i.e. on web, in, or referenced in, student handbook) and can be made available in alternative formats	2: We're working on this The complaints procedure is available at http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/quality-manual/appeals/complaints.htm . The extent to which this is referenced from student handbooks is somewhat variable.	DLO to liaise with other staff to include reference to this information more explicitly and consistently

11. Physical Environment, Facilities and Equipment.

Activity	1: We don't do this / 2: We're working on this / 3: We do this / 4: We do this very well + Supporting Evidence.	Action and Frequency
11.1 Web site is accessible	<p>4: We do this very well The School's website (http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/geography/) is fully accessible, with best practice followed. For example, text is without serifs, text size can be altered, the pages can be zoomed, alt tags accompany images, etc.</p>	Web pages maintained by the Web and E-learning Co-ordinator, who is well versed in disability issues. She liaises regularly with the DLO.
11.2 Key documents are available in alternative format on request	<p>4: We do this very well Key documents are available electronically in easily customised format. All documents are available in alternative format on request.</p>	All staff to maintain Word versions of relevant documents.
11.3 All materials follow 'Clear Print Guidelines'	<p>3: We do this The School's official documents and website follow the guidelines. Staff are aware of the guidelines and are encouraged to use the as much as possible for their teaching materials.</p>	DLO to circulate the guidelines regularly and ensure that new staff are aware of them.
11.4 During refit / redecoration anticipate the needs of disabled students, consider signage, colour contrasts, accessible equipment, adjustable height workspaces etc.	<p>3: We do this This is mostly handled by Estates, who follow appropriate recommendations. Some refurbishment of staff offices is done in-house and usually includes the input of an assessor of needs.</p>	DLO to work with Head of School to ensure that all refurbishment is carried out to high standards that include anticipation of the needs of disabled staff and students.
11.5 Individual orientation to labs, School IT labs, libraries etc available if necessary.	<p>3: We do this This is available on request.</p>	DLO to monitor annually.
11.6 Arrangements in place for students requiring emergency evacuation – in buildings, on placements, study abroad and field trips	<p>2: We're working on this This has not been necessary to date, to the best of our knowledge. The new academic referral forms highlight whether any students need evacuation plans. If one is identified as such then the School's Safety Officer will be informed, who will then draw up a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan with the student, in liaison with the University's Safety Office. Some staff are trained to use Evac Chairs.</p>	School Safety Officer and Safety Committee to ensure that enough staff are trained in the use of Evac Chairs and monitor this regularly.
11.7 Alternative arrangements made if location of an activity is not accessible	<p>3: We do this Much of this is dealt with by Student Services and the Timetable Office. Beyond that, the situation has only arisen once or twice, related to fieldwork; in such cases, alternative arrangements are made in consultation with the student.</p>	Student Services inform the Timetable Office of specific needs of individual students, to ensure appropriate teaching rooms. DLO to liaise with individual students and module convenors in other cases.

Part B

1) Please identify any school plans and projects with implications for students who have a disability, e.g. a project funded by the HEFCE disability premium:

None currently applicable.

2) Identify any barriers to improving provision:

The main barriers relate to information flow: both communicating necessary information and avoiding information overload – a difficult balance to achieve. This needs constant attention both within the School and in terms of communication between the School and other bodies in the University (e.g. Academic Support, DPAU, Estates, Timetable Office). Information flow between these other University bodies is also very important, and is beyond the control of the School.

3) Identify other current issues not identified by the checklist:

None identified currently.

4) Do you have any case studies which provide lessons for the future or examples of good practice in your School that you would like to share with other schools? (Via the PESL or DPAU website).

Some have already been fed into PESL and other relevant fora – such as the Communities@Nottingham and the new dyslexia website. These include podcast lectures, text messaging in-class and vodcasting GIS teaching.

Disability Liaison Officer:

Signed:

Date:

Head of School:

Signed:

Date: