

Access to Information and the Curriculum: Proactive Measures

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Higher Education Statistics Agency:

The number of VI students in UK HEIS for 1994 – 2001

Year;;Visual;

94/95;677;

95/96;;687;

96/97;;860;

97/98;;858;

98/99;;912;

99/00;930;

00/01;;1020;

%up;;50.7;

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Some useful questions to ask prospective visually impaired students

- Are you a braille user?
- Do you use large print?
- Are you computer literate?
- How do you work at present?
- What difficulties do you envisage regarding the course(s)?

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Personal reflections on being a student

How I worked

- Used PC with voice output for course work
- Used electronic note-taker in classes
- Had small team of personal readers
- Used books on tape from RNIB Cassette Library
- Set up longer loan and book retrieval arrangements with library

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Barriers

- Lack of communication between staff – had to explain my learning needs to each new lecturer
- Promised things by department that all staff had not been told about
- Given no information/warning about course requirements/content which might present difficulties

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Barriers cont'd

- Access to printed material – issue getting booklists early enough from lecturers
- Non-explanation of OHP's and/or writing on blackboard
- Not getting notes or OHP's in advance
- Tutorials being based around question sheets handed out at start of class – not given to me in advance to braille
- Poster culture

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Strategies for change

- Ensure course descriptions provide students with fair, accurate and appropriate information on which to make informed choices
- Provide opportunities for disclosure that lead to discussion of needs
- Ensure, with the students explicit permission, that all teaching staff with whom they come into contact know what they have to do to make their teaching and assessments accessible

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Strategies for change cont'd

- Hold copies of all teaching materials in electronic formats
- Read aloud what you are writing on the chalkboard/acetates
- Prepare reading lists/class materials in advance