

Slide 1

The DDA Part IV: a seminar for academic leaders and heads

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Slide 2

The DDA Part IV: a seminar for academic leaders and heads

- Recap on legislation
- Identify challenges posed by the Act for academic leaders
- Explore challenges and possible solutions through case studies
- Indicate resources which may provide guidance
- Develop strategy

Slide 3

DDA (Part IV) ... in brief

- Institutions have a duty not to discriminate against a disabled person for a reason related to his/her disability and without justification

- Discrimination can occur through –
 - Less favourable treatment
 - Failure to make reasonable adjustment

Slide 4

Who is responsible?

- The institution is the responsible body. Academic leaders such as Deans and Heads of Departments are probably expected to ensure that their Faculty/School/ Department complies with any legislation.
- Individuals also have a responsibility not to aid an unlawful act
- It is a criminal offence to knowingly give false information about the Act

Slide 5

What Services?

- All aspects of teaching and learning, including –
 - Lectures/Tutorials/Practicals/Fieldwork
 - Curriculum Design
 - E-learning
 - Distance learning
 - Information technology and other resources
 - Libraries & information centres
 - Examination & assessment procedures

Code of Practice 3.14

Slide 6

Focusing in ...

- Discrimination by unjustifiably refusing admission or by admitting on less favourable terms
- Discrimination by accepting followed by failure to make reasonable adjustment

Slide 7

The academic standards reason should not be used spuriously. Where elements are not central or core to a course, they are unlikely to provide a reason to justify discrimination based on academic standards.

Nor can they be used as reasons for barring whole groups of disabled people. Any justification has to be relevant to the academic standards of a particular course and the abilities of an individual person.

Code of Practice 4.27

Slide 8

'Reasonable Adjustments'

- Alleviate substantial disadvantage by
 - Changing procedures
 - Adapting curriculum
 - Providing additional services
 - Training staff
 - Altering the physical environment

Slide 9

Criteria for 'Reasonableness'

- Academic and prescribed standards
 - Financial resources
 - Grants/loans
 - Cost
 - Practicality
 - Other available aids and services
 - Health and safety
 - 'Interests' of other students
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- Must not be used spuriously
 - Must be material and substantial

Slide 10

Course leaders need to be precise as to what is and is not a core element of a programme so that they can assess where adjustments to teaching practices can be introduced. Where possible, courses and teaching practices should be accessible by design so that only minimal adaptations need to be made for individuals.

DRC Good Practice Guide

Slide 11

Looking towards a strategy

- As academic leaders, your responsibilities will probably include-
 - Promoting a culture of inclusivity
 - Ensuring all staff are clear on the core requirements of their courses and on areas where adjustments may be possible or impossible
 - Ensuring that course descriptions are accurate and informative with respect to accessibility
 - Managing areas of conflict
 - Having a policy for dealing with non-compliance

Slide 12

Case Studies

- Explore how, as academic leaders, you can guide your staff in identifying possible and impossible, or reasonable and unreasonable adjustments
- Consider –
 - Course descriptions,
 - Identification of barriers
 - Possible areas of conflict
 - Which can be removed, which are irreducible
 - How will these be justified
 - Can course descriptions be made more accurate/informative

Slide 13

Teachability

Creating an accessible curriculum for students with disabilities

A departmental self-audit tool providing a framework for a 'supported' academic departmental review of curricular provision for disabled students.

Slide 14

Teachability - **a response**

- Identify core requirements of your course
- Consider how well current practices and procedures meet the needs of disabled students
- Consider practices and procedures which would result in good, inclusive provision
- Formulate a strategy for progress

Slide 15

Teachability: Sector overview to SHEFC

Areas identified as requiring attention:

- Communication systems
- Staffing and staff development
- Enabling technology
- Consensus on provision within and across departments
- ALL aspects of ALL courses
- Physical access
- Monitoring of progress of disabled students

Slide 16

Reasonable adjustments need to be:

- Identified
- Agreed
- Communicated
- Resourced
- Developed and reviewed
- Anticipated
- Publicised

Slide 17

As academic leaders and heads...

- What do departments and individuals need to support them in avoiding discrimination by failing to make reasonable adjustments?
- What strategies or systems will be effective in ensuring that these needs are met?

Slide 18

Teachability

'Adapting the Geology/Geoscience curriculum, with its traditional image of physical challenge, to make it accessible to the whole range of potential students, is far from straightforward. Nevertheless, the experience gained on the Teachability project suggests that much progress has been made and with some thought and modest resources a lot more is achievable.'