

# National Disability Team

Improving provision for disabled students

Research report

## Reviewing provision and building capacity for disabled students: a summary of tools and audit processes

January 2005

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Aims of this report

This report is the first in a series of NDT publications that will focus on measuring and reviewing provision, and building capacity for disabled students in Higher Education (HE).

This report has three main aims:

1. To outline that there are a variety of different methods the HE sector can use to review provision for disabled students
2. To provide information that will assist individuals, departments or institutions decide on an appropriate method of reviewing provision for their needs
3. To encourage more individuals, departments and institutions to review their provision for disabled students

### 1.2 Who should read this report?

This report will inform:

- HE staff with responsibility for planning or delivering provision for disabled students
- HE staff responsible for progressing disability issues within an institution
- academic staff responsible for planning or delivering the curriculum

### 1.3 Why review provision for disabled students?

A review of provision is an advisable strategy for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for three main reasons. Firstly, the number of disabled students attending HEIs is increasing<sup>1</sup>; HEIs should therefore regularly review provision to ensure that they are offering an inclusive educational experience to the growing numbers of disabled students. Secondly, the UK Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Part 4 requires HEIs to not only provide reasonable adjustments for disabled students but to also anticipate their requirements. A review is a proactive approach which can highlight where any anticipatory adjustments are required and help plan for future considered action. Thirdly, the Disability Discrimination Bill (anticipated to be enforced in 2006) has a duty to promote the equality of disabled students and is likely to require the creation of performance measures that demonstrate HEIs are improving the provision for disabled students. A programme of regular reviews could inform these performance measures. The NDT suggest that HEIs should establish the level of provision they currently offer in advance of the Bill being enforced.

### 1.4 Definitions

Definitions of the key terms used in this report are provided below. It has been necessary to define the key terms as discussions with contributors to this report (see Appendix 5.1 for the names of those who assisted with this research) suggest that

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<sup>1</sup> The NDT has published Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited (HESA) data which shows an increase in the number of disabled students enrolled on HE programmes at UK HEIs (see [http://www.natdisteam.ac.uk/resources\\_statistics\\_oucourse.html](http://www.natdisteam.ac.uk/resources_statistics_oucourse.html)).

terms such as “audit” are used inconsistently in the sector leading to ambiguity and confusion.

## **Review/reviewing provision**

In the context of this report, “reviewing provision” is examining the practice, policy, procedures and facilities offered by HEIs for disabled students. The term “review” can also entail measuring provision against a standard benchmark or accepted practice<sup>2</sup>. Both audit processes and tools can be used to review provision.

## **Audit process**

An “audit process” is a systematic set of actions that enable auditors to gather information about the existing provision offered for disabled students. Actions that make up an audit process can include: one-to-one interviews with HE staff and students; reviews of HEI documentation; facilitated group meetings; or research using questionnaires.

As part of an audit process, existing provision is often compared with benchmarks or practice. Audit processes can also assess compliance with disability discrimination legislation or measure improvement in provision if the audit is conducted on a regular basis.

The findings from audit processes are generally presented in a report with recommendations that suggest how provision can be improved for disabled students.

Audit processes are often administered by external consultants or external organisations; however audits can also be conducted by internal institutional staff.

## **Tool**

A “tool” is a resource that can be used by individuals or groups of people to measure and review provision. Tools are generally based on a series of questions with the response to each question providing an indication of the current provision offered. Questions are primarily intended to raise awareness and stimulate action.

Some tools enable users to compare current provision against a standard benchmark or accepted practice, whilst other tools facilitate a review of provision without indicating how users compare to benchmarks or other practice. Tools also vary in the prompts and advice they offer to assist staff build capacity and improve their provision.

Tools can be administered by institutional staff, by external consultants, or external organisations and can be utilised within an audit process.

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<sup>2</sup> Examples of standard benchmarks and accepted practice include: HEFCE and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) (1999) Guidance on base-level provision for disabled students in higher education institutions, report 99/04; and Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (1999) Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 3: Students with disabilities.

## Self review

When an individual reviews the provision they offer for disabled students, the term “self review” has been used in this report. This process of self reflection can raise awareness of disability issues. It can also help those undertaking the review to identify whether the provision they offer meets current benchmarks or legislative requirements, and/or whether their provision meets the needs of disabled students.

There is usually no final report with recommendations produced in a self review as it is left to the individual to decide what, if any, action to take.

## Supported review

A “supported review” is a self review that is facilitated by a colleague(s) or an external consultant(s). In a supported review, the facilitator(s) assists the respondent to reflect on the provision they offer and provides advice where necessary.

## 1.5 What information is in this report?

This report presents factual information about tools and audit processes that can be used by individuals, departments, or whole HEIs to measure the level of HE provision they currently offer and/or review its appropriateness for disabled students.

The NDT has sought information about tools and audit processes that:

- measure and review provision for disabled students
- are applicable to HE
- review learning and teaching processes, and/or central HE services (ie they do not focus solely on the built environment and physical access); comprehensive advice and information on the built environment can be obtained from other organisations<sup>3</sup>
- are relevant to the UK; to ensure that all the legal information offered in the audits is applicable to UK HEIs the research has concentrated on UK developed audits
- have a defined methodology (ie tools or audit processes that usually follow a specific series of steps); although this report includes bespoke tools developed by consultants it does not include the generic services offered by consultants
- are available to the sector at the time of publication
- were discovered within the time frame of the research (between May 2004 and October 2004)

The tools and audit processes that fulfil this remit are summarised in the “Findings” section of this report. The “Findings” section also outlines tools that are under development and signposts readers to other potential tools and audit processes that may have applicability to HE.

The ways of reviewing provision that are outlined in the “Findings” section vary in their:

- target audience; eg from audit processes that are institution-wide to tools that are written for a particular cohort of staff

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<sup>3</sup> For example, the Centre for Accessible Environments (<http://www.cae.org.uk/>) administers a national register of access consultants and offers advice on how the built environment can be made or modified to be inclusive.

- topics covered; eg from audits that cover the curriculum to others that review specific functions such as admissions
- delivery method; eg there are tools that can be used by HE staff to review their own provision and audit processes offered by external consultants
- outputs; eg from audits that provide formal reports to tools that generate lists of completed questions rather than formal recommendations

This report is not promoting one method of review as a better model than another. Indeed, HE staff are encouraged to consider the full range of tools and audit processes available before selecting the most appropriate one. It may be that a hybrid of one or more tools or audit processes may be the best way forward for some HEIs or staff. The research team hope that the information provided in this report will enable staff to be better informed when choosing a suitable way to review their provision for disabled students.

## 2.0 Method

This section of the report describes how the research for this report was conducted.

### 2.1 Information sources

The research team has used their existing knowledge of the tools and audit processes available, and requests for information (published in newsletters or posted on relevant electronic mailbases and websites), to identify ways of reviewing provision.

Telephone interviews were conducted with developers of the tool or audit processes in order to obtain factual information about each review methodology. The interviews were conducted using semi-structured questionnaires to lead the discussion. Where possible, interviews were also held with HE staff who had experienced one of the audit processes or tools.

The research team has also sought and studied copies of the tools and/or documentation relating to the audit processes in order to learn more about each methodology.

## 3.0 Findings

This section of the report provides information about tools and audit processes that can be used by HEIs to review their provision and/or build capacity.

The findings have been split into three sections:

**3.1 Description of tool and audit processes:** This section contains information about the tools or audit processes that were investigated by the research team

**3.2 Tools in development:** This section describes tools that are not currently available to the sector as they are in development

**3.3 Other tools and audit processes:** This section lists additional review methods that may have applicability to disability issues and HE

### 3.1 Description of tool and audit processes

On the following pages are descriptions of eight tools/ audit processes that can be used to facilitate a review of HE provision for disabled students. These tools or audit processes are (in alphabetical order):

Name	On page:
Bond Pearce audit	8
Curriculum audit tool	10
Disability Action Plan (DAP) - Institutional	11
Disability Action Plans (DAPs) - Thematic	14
Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID): Headstart	16
Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB): Teaching and Learning audit	17
SENDA compliance in Higher Education (also known as SWANDS)	19
Teachability: Creating an accessible curriculum for students with disabilities	20

The information about these tools and audit processes was provided by the audit developers or users, or by the text of the tool itself. Where HE staff have been willing to discuss their personal experiences of a tool or audit process, these experiences have been summarised and are presented after the generic review information (ie after the initial information presented in a text box).

The research team recognise that the review descriptions (ie two/three pages of text for each review method) cannot capture every nuance of a tool or audit process. For example, the review descriptions do not include the time it takes to complete a review, whether the tool is more effectively used by an individual or by a group, or whether a certain level of institution disability awareness is needed or a certain level of user motivation required to complete the review. These details have not been included in this report because they depend on many variable factors, for example the time taken to complete a review can depend on: the size of HEI being reviewed; the experience of person conducting or facilitating the review; the number of staff consulted in the process, and outputs that are required.

Readers should also be aware that the review descriptions do not highlight the limitations of the tool or audit process. The reason for this is two-fold; firstly, this research has not sought the opinion of a large enough sample of people to enable a fair impression of limitations to be gained. Secondly, limitations can depend on the requirements of the tool user or the person who commissions the audit. Therefore, review descriptions presented in this section have been written to introduce readers to each review method by providing an overview of the coverage and methodology used. Additional information on each audit can be obtained by contacting the developer, speaking to an audit user or by looking at the audit tool.

## Review descriptions (in alphabetical order):

### Bond Pearce audit

#### Focus

An audit process that provides an institution-wide review of provision for disabled students; in particular, whether the institution's policies, procedures and practices comply with the post-16 provisions (Part 4) of the DDA.

#### What's involved?

The audit process is an external review of the institution's policies, procedures and practices and is conducted by a solicitor who:

- **clarifies the audit process with the main HEI contact** (often the Disability Officer or equivalent)
- **examines institutional policies, procedures and documentation** for compliance with the DDA and good practice (eg prospectuses; examination policies; recruitment documents; institutional action plans; outputs from any previous audits; offer letters and any other correspondence that is sent from the institution)
- **meets staff from across the HEI** to gauge their understanding of staff responsibilities and awareness of disability issues, and also to assess the provision made for disabled students (eg the Chancellor (or equivalent); Heads of Departments; academic staff; and administrative staff). Meetings may be in the form of one-to-one interviews or workshop sessions
- **meets disabled students** to learn about their HE experiences (both positive and negative), and to gather any recommendations the students would make to improve institutional practice. Meetings may be in the form of one-to-one interviews or workshop sessions
- **feeds back identified issues and practice** via a written report and presentation

#### Topics covered

The audit process covers the non-built environment and is focused on:

- compliance with the DDA (in particular Part 4 and sections of Part 3)
- meeting the QAA Code of Practice relating to disability
- compliance with other legislation (eg the Data Protection Act)

Specific topics examined can include: admissions, enrolment and registration; disclosure and confidentiality; course planning and delivery; student placements; examinations; monitoring and evaluation; data processing; staff development; and access to general facilities. However, each audit is a bespoke service and the specific topics covered, or what is involved in the audit process, can be adapted to meet the individual requirements of the HEI.

#### Outputs

The audit process output is a final report highlighting any legal issues and suggesting what could be done to improve practice. The report includes an executive summary of the issues.

#### Strengths

The audit process:

- establishes compliance with the DDA and the level of provision currently offered by an institution

- challenges people directly on their roles/responsibilities relating to disabled students
- uses an external observer with legal expertise to question policies and practices, and to raise issues
- gathers the views of disabled students
- raises the profile of disability provision across an institution

**Developed by:**

Melissa Godfray, Solicitor, Bond Pearce (email: [mgodfray@bondpearce.com](mailto:mgodfray@bondpearce.com)). Bond Pearce can also redraft policies/procedures or produce an institutional action plan.

**Cost**

Available on request (approximately £160 per hour consultancy rate).

**Information about the Bond Pearce audit process from:** Jean Jameson of the London School of Economics (LSE) and Melissa Godfray, auditor, Bond Pearce. The Bond Pearce LSE audit was completed in 2003.

**Phase 1: Pre-planning meeting**

Following an internal disability training session with Bond Pearce, the LSE approached Bond Pearce about conducting an audit of the non-built environment. Although they had not previously offered an audit service, Bond Pearce worked with the LSE to develop an appropriate audit process.

**Phase 2: Document review**

The consultant requested and reviewed all institutional documents. The gathering of documents was co-ordinated by the Disability Advisor with significant help from the Secretariat.

**Phase 3: Staff and student meetings**

One-to-one interviews were conducted by the consultant with an agreed list of HE staff and disabled students. Staff with a range of roles and responsibilities were interviewed. The interviews were conducted over approximately two days and examined peoples' understanding of their responsibilities and whether policies and practices made provision for disabled students.

**Phase 4: Delivery of outputs**

The consultant created a draft report which was sent to LSE for comment. Slight adaptations were made (predominately associated with institution-specific nomenclature). A final report was delivered; chapters focused on specific topics (eg admissions, course deliver, monitoring and evaluation, and others) with recommendations to ensure legal compliance or better practice.

**Phase 5: Post audit input**

In addition to undertaking the audit, the consultant was employed by the LSE to map the audit recommendations on to the School Action Plan.

**Outcomes**

LSE established a group of key HE staff to take forward the audit recommendations. This "implementation team" includes: the School Secretariat; the Deans of postgraduates and undergraduates; the Registrar; and the Head of IT and Communications. Members of the team are given actions to progress that are relevant to their remit within the HEI, with feedback being given at regular team meetings.

**For information about this audit experience contact:** Melissa Godfray ([mgodfray@bondpearce.com](mailto:mgodfray@bondpearce.com)).

## Curriculum audit tool

### Focus

A tool to assist staff responsible for learning and teaching to review the curricular provision for disabled students. Different sections of the tool are aimed at academic departments, degree teams and individual lecturers.

### What's involved?

The tool provides a resource to assist self review of provision. It can be conducted by an individual or as a supported self review. There is a hardcopy version of the tool (developed in 2000) and an online version (completed September 2004).

For the 2004 online version, tool users:

- **select which phase of the tool they would like to complete** (eg phase 1 for a department, phase 2 for a degree team or phase 3 for a lecturer)
- **specify the degree programme or module that is being reviewed** (if a prompt is given)
- **review current provision by answering the 40 – 55 questions in each phase** (eg “Are pre-requisites for the course in terms of prior experience assumed clearly stated?”). Users are given a choice of question answers (eg: “Yes for all”, “Yes for some”, or “Not at all”) and are then asked whether procedures are carried out formally or informally, and whether the information discussed in the question is available to students in alternative formats (again answers can be “Yes for all”, “Yes for some”, or “Not at all”)
- **obtain information specific to a particular topic** (if required) by clicking on the “Justification”, “How to achieve” and/or “Further details” buttons that are linked to each question
- **record any “Comments” or “Actions” that are prompted by each question** by typing notes into the free text boxes provided

The online tool offers a statistics and administrative area which provides data about the number of questions answered and the answers given. Tool users are able to edit the answers they gave to questions providing the edit is completed during the same academic year. After this time, answers are stored online for reference.

### Topics covered

The tool covers all aspects of the curriculum including:

- curriculum design and timetabling
- course delivery
- assessment
- policies and procedures
- communication and information provision
- accessible environments
- evaluation and monitoring
- health and safety
- staff development and CPD
- student support and development

The tool is presented in three sections:

- Phase 1: A departmental set of questions aimed at academic departments primarily

looking at complying with recent legislation (eg “Is there a system in place in the department to provide information in alternative formats?”)

- Phase 2: A degree team set of questions for all those concerned with design, assessment and other provision aspects of a particular degree course within a department (eg “Does information for this course clearly state requirements in terms of the use of field trips, visits, placements or industrial experience?”)
- Phase 3: An individual lecturer set of questions that can be used to check individual practice in regard to disabled students (eg “In all teaching and learning situations is the opportunity made available for all students to participate in question/answer sessions?”). Although phase 3 is intended for a lecturer to use on their own, there may be need for a facilitator to work through the questions with the lecturer.

### Outputs

For the 2004 online version, tool users obtain:

- a completed questionnaire that helps evaluate the respondent’s level of disability provision
- a set of answers that can be saved online and revisited to check progress
- personal development and training for staff

### Strengths

The tool:

- is structured for three different users (departmental, degree team, lecturer)
- focuses on the teaching aspects of HE
- could be used to audit provision for other under represented groups. Out of 141 questions, only 17 questions mentioned the word “disability”

### Developed by:

Gerard Conroy, Freelance Consultant (email: [consultant@gerardconroy.co.uk](mailto:consultant@gerardconroy.co.uk)).

The 2000 hardcopy version of the Curriculum audit tool was originally developed for the Access Summit Consortium of Universities in Greater Manchester.

### Cost

Available on request. The cost to gain access to the online version varies according to the usage, for instance a single department usage is around £150 whilst for a whole HEI usage the maximum cost is £2,000.

## Disability Action Plan (DAP) - Institutional

### Focus

A process that enables an institution-wide review of the provision for disabled students.

### What’s involved?

The process is a self review facilitated by institutional staff (the Disability Action Plan Steering Group) who:

- **form themed groups of institutional staff who identify disability issues** relating to a given theme
- **consolidate the issues identified** by the themed groups
- **produce one institution-wide DAP** that gives an institutional overview of provision

for disabled students

### **Topics covered**

The institutional DAP is bespoke, therefore the specific topics covered can reflect the individual requirements of the HEI. The process could cover:

- estates
- equipment and technology
- library and information services
- staff development
- curriculum
- information and communication
- student support
- policies and procedures
- monitoring and evaluation

### **Outputs**

The process creates one institutional DAP that identifies issues and records actions for the HEI/ individuals to progress.

### **Strengths**

The process:

- brings together key staff to discuss and progress disability issues
- creates staff and institutional ownership of the DAP
- enables a whole institutional look at policies and procedures
- creates a institutional forum, focused on disability, which can facilitate action on the identified issues
- provides an opportunity for staff to re-evaluate the way they view some of their activities. For example, looking at disability-related staff development raised generic issues about the way that all staff development was delivered
- raises awareness of disability issues

### **Developed by:**

This process has been used in a number of institutions in Australia.

One UK developer is Jill Hammond, Head of Student Counselling, Glasgow School of Art (email: [j.hammond@gsa.ac.uk](mailto:j.hammond@gsa.ac.uk)).

### **Cost**

Internally conducted therefore the costs are primarily in staff time.

**Further information about the Institutional DAP process from:** Jill Hammond of the Glasgow School of Art (GSA). The DAP process at GSA commenced in 2002 and is ongoing.

### **Phase 1: Convene Steering Group**

The Disability Action Plan Steering Group was established. It comprised key people from the school who were able to make sure that the plan was embedded and linked to all GSA policy developments and school initiatives. The group consisted of the:

- Director (chairs the group)
- Estates Manager
- Registrar

- Head of Information and Information Technology Services
- President of the Student Representative Council
- Head of Human Resources
- Representatives from the three schools
- Disability Co-ordinator

These staff ensured disability issues would be on the agenda when institutional developments were happening.

### **Phase 2: Choose themes**

GSA convened five groups of six-eight people (from all parts of the school, eg administrative, management, academic, support, and others) who were tasked with gathering any issues relating to disability provision in the following areas:

- physical environment
- staff and student support
- Registry function
- learning and teaching

Feedback was also sought from a group of disabled students and their representatives.

### **Phase 3: Consultation**

When gathering disability issues relating to their theme, the groups were encouraged to consult with as many people as possible and to refer to issues raised in previous GSA audits.

The groups were also encouraged to use the QAA (1999) Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 3: Students with disabilities as a benchmark and examine GSA provision against the precepts.

This reflective process helped GSA identify where there was a need to develop in the future.

### **Phase 4: Feedback**

Each themed group fed back to the steering group (via whichever delivery method was most appropriate; eg report or presentation) on their vision of where GSA needed to develop. This gave rise to a set of aims and objectives that were meaningful to each group.

### **Phase 5: Analysis and production of DAP**

The Disability Coordinator consolidated the feedback from the five themed groups and created the institutional DAP. The DAP is presented as a table with columns detailing the “action”, “update”, report back”, “next action”.

### **Outcomes**

To take the plan forward, the steering group meets each academic term. They set objectives for the next term, identify actions with delivery dates and report back on the action undertaken over the last term. People from the steering group are charged with progressing an action which sometimes they delegate to colleagues.

GSA see their institutional DAP as a continuous developing document which changes as issues are addressed and actions completed.

**For more information about this audit experience contact:** Jill Hammond (email: [j.hammond@gsa.ac.uk](mailto:j.hammond@gsa.ac.uk)).

## Disability Action Plans (DAPs) - Thematic

### Focus

An audit process that provides an institution-wide review of provision based on themed topics.

### What's involved?

Developing themed DAPs is an audit process conducted as a supported review. The audit process is aided by external consultants who:

- **gather staff and disabled student views on disability issues** via a bespoke questionnaire and facilitated thematic group meetings
- **agree a plan of action with each thematic group** for future implementation
- **review agreed institutional policies and procedures** for explicit inclusion of disability issues
- **feedback issues identified** via a final report and themed DAPs

### Topics covered

The DAPs cover learning and teaching (including research and assessments), and central/core service functions such as:

- residential accommodation and catering
- marketing and recruitment
- health and safety
- Student Services
- staff development
- information technology

Since DAPs are developed as a bespoke service, the specific topics covered can reflect the individual requirements of the HEI.

### Outputs

The audit process outputs are:

- one detailed DAP for each theme investigated. The DAPs are presented as tables with identified strategic objectives and methods of delivering the objectives
- a final report with data and recommendations for progress
- an analysis of the questionnaires with staff feedback summarised and statistical data provided
- an executive summary for senior management
- verbal feedback to the HEI (if required)

### Strengths

The audit process:

- brings together key identified stakeholders in thematic focus groups, often for the first time (eg marketing or health and safety) to discuss cross institutional strategies
- creates staff ownership of the DAPs; it is the HE staff who decide the issues to be captured on the DAPs
- enables staff to identify and share good practice
- raises awareness of disability issues and legislation from the ground level
- uses the experience of consultants to raise issues for discussion

**Developed by:**

Carol Wilson, Freelance Consultant, (tel: 0790 9809233) and Tina Elliott, Freelance Consultant, (tel: 0161 881 1105)<sup>4</sup>.

**Cost**

Available on request (£450 per day consultancy rate plus expenses).

**Further information about the DAP developmental process from:** Ellen Sanders of the University of Nottingham and Carol Wilson, lead consultant. The Nottingham DAPs were produced in 2003.

**Phase 1: Pre-planning meeting**

The consultants and the University defined the DAP process and explored the rationale for conducting an audit (at the University of Nottingham the aim was to raise awareness of responsibilities under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) across the University and to provide the basis for a published overarching University Disability Plan for Students). A DAP Steering Group of university staff was established to oversee the process.

**Phase 2: Agreement of the DAP process**

The consultants presented a plan for the process to the DAP Steering Group. The following was agreed: the responsibilities of each party; the resources needed to set up and prepare for the DAP process; the themes to be covered by the DAPs; the people invited to attend the themed group meetings; all practical issues involved in creating the DAPs, eg timing; and that the VC would provide a letter (to be sent to all staff) supporting the DAP process.

**Phase 3: Document review**

The consultants requested and reviewed all relevant documentation for each DAP theme. This included prospectuses, policies, subject guides, complaints procedures, strategy plans, vision statements, and other relevant documents.

**Phase 4: Survey**

The consultants and the University jointly devised bespoke questionnaires which were sent out to every person invited to the themed group meetings. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and encouraged to consult with colleagues on the responses. The survey results provided the consultants with key information and helped them to facilitate the group meetings.

**Phase 5: First group meeting**

There were 15 groups in all, representing 12 themes. Two of the 15 groups were made up of disabled students. Approximately 15 people were asked to attend each themed group meeting. Individuals in the other 13 groups were key operational staff representing senior management, learning and teaching, and central service functions. At the meetings the consultants gave a presentation about SENDA, discussed disability issues, discussed existing good practice, and identified where there might be gaps in provision or policy. The group was presented with draft objectives for possible inclusion in the DAPs.

**Phase 6: Draft DAPs**

The consultants consolidated stakeholders' comments and suggestions (including their own) into draft DAPs; one for each of the 12 themes. These draft DAPs were sent back

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<sup>4</sup> Although employed by the NDT part-time, Carol Wilson and Tina Elliott developed and delivered this audit process whilst working in a freelance capacity.

to all members of the themed groups for comment and agreement on strategic objectives.

### **Phase 7: Second group meeting**

A second round of group meetings (with the same participants) were used to discuss the DAP in more detail and agree activities to achieve objectives. Meetings were also used to agree on how to progress particular issues and make decisions about ownership of tasks. The DAP was circulated again for comment.

### **Phase 8: Delivery of outputs**

The final DAPS were delivered to the DAP Steering Group.

### **Outcomes**

The HEI took responsibility for actioning the DAPs and identifying resources, lead responsibilities and timescales for implementation of the DAPs.

**For more information about this audit experience contact:** Ellen Sanders (email: [Ellen.Sanders@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Ellen.Sanders@nottingham.ac.uk)).

## **Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID): Headstart**

### **Focus**

A tool for HE staff who wish to review the quality of learning opportunities and support services offered to deaf and hard of hearing students. Some sections of the tool are relevant for all managers and staff, some are for support staff, some are for senior managers, and some are for teaching staff.

### **What's involved?**

The tool provides a resource to assist self review of provision. It can be conducted by an individual or as a supported self review. It is presented as a book (the latest version is the edition published in 2002).

Tool users:

- **read the QAA Code of Practice for Students with Disabilities precept(s)** relevant to each topic (eg "Precept 8 Programme specifications should include no unnecessary barriers to access by disabled people")
- **read a themed quote about current practice** from a disabled student or a staff member (eg "My flat in the halls of residence has a flashing doorbell and fire alarm. Now I am aware just like a hearing student")
- **evaluate current practice by grading themselves or the HEI against a set of the themed best practice statements** (eg "Tutors are given guidelines on how to mark deaf students' work"). Staff are encouraged to grade from "fully implemented" to "no progress" and then record any comments prompted by the statements
- **consult any suggested reading given** (if required)
- **use a template provided to create an action plan** based on the grades achieved and comments given to the best practice statements

### **Topics covered**

The tool covers learning and teaching, and core student services. Specific sections of the tool focus on:

- information for applicants, students and staff

- selection and admission of students
- confidentiality and disclosure
- enrolment, registration and inductions of students
- learning and teaching
- examination, assessment and progression
- access to general facilities and support
- additional specialist support
- physical environment
- staff development
- quality assurance
- other additional information (eg DDA part 4; language, literacy and deaf students; marking deaf students' work; examinations and assessment; effective communication support; information leaflets for deaf students; and resources)

### **Outputs**

Tool users obtain:

- a series of actions to progress that have been prompted by grading the best practice statements
- personal development and training for staff

### **Strengths**

The tool:

- provides a resource that highlights institutional issues that relate to the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students
- is presented in discrete themed sections that let staff 'dip in and out' of the tool as required
- focuses on good practice by using: statements from disabled students and HE staff; the QAA precepts; and the themed best practice statements

### **Developed by:**

The RNID in collaboration with the Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Bristol, the University of Lancashire, and the University of Westminster. Authored by Rachel Wight, RNID and Lynne Barnes, University of Central Lancashire (email: [lbarnes@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:lbarnes@uclan.ac.uk)).

The tool was produced as part of the Innovations programme that was funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

### **Cost**

Free to download online from:

[http://www.rnid.org.uk/pdfs/headstart\\_pdfs/headstart.pdf](http://www.rnid.org.uk/pdfs/headstart_pdfs/headstart.pdf)

A hardcopy (cost and availability on request) may be obtained from the RNID (email: [informationline@rnid.org.uk](mailto:informationline@rnid.org.uk)).

## **Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB): teaching and learning audit**

### **Focus**

An audit process that provides an institution-wide review of the provision for disabled

students.

### What's involved?

The audit process is an externally conducted review of provision that involves:

- **clarifying the audit process by speaking with key personnel in the HEI** (eg the Head of Student Services (or equivalent) and/or the Disability Officer)
- **examining existing institutional policies and procedures** for inclusion of disability issues (eg equal opportunities policies, recruitment statements; induction programmes; and other documents)
- **gathering staff and disabled student views via a questionnaire** (eg for staff: "Who would you contact for advice in helping a disabled student?", eg for students: "Were all tutors made aware of your study needs?"). Staff from across the whole institution are canvassed (in small institutions all staff are sent a questionnaire). Approximately 200 – 250 disabled students are sent questionnaires (but the exact number will depend on the number of disabled students in the HEI)
- **analysing staff and student feedback using a statistical research package**
- **gathering staff and disabled student views via in-depth interviews** which investigate whether the policies and practices work for disabled students
- **feedback of any issues identified via the outputs** (a written and verbal report, and questionnaire/ interview analysis)

### Topics covered

The audit process covers learning and teaching, and access to the curriculum. Specific topics examined can include:

- admissions
- confidentiality
- examinations
- staff development
- Disability Service functions

However, the audit is flexible and can be adapted to meet the individual requirements of the HEI.

### Outputs

The audit process outputs are:

- a main report, specific to each institution, which contains the key issues identified and recommendations to resolve these issues. The report also contains an executive summary of the audit
- an analysis of the questionnaires where staff feedback is summarised and statistical feedback given (eg X% of staff chose answer "B")
- verbal feedback to the institution (if required)

### Strengths

The audit process:

- establishes the level of provision currently offered by an institution
- gathers the views of disabled students
- involves staff from across the whole institution hierarchy in the questionnaires and interviews
- has an academic approach to the analysis of student and staff feedback
- uses external observers to question policies and practices, and to raise issues

- raises the profile of disability provision across an institution

#### Developed by:

The RNIB Post-16 Education team circa 1995. Further developed and delivered (since 2002) by John Milligan and Lee Smith, Post-Compulsory Education and Training Officer, RNIB (email: [lee.smith@rnib.org.uk](mailto:lee.smith@rnib.org.uk)).

The RNIB offer a range of audits including this teaching and learning audit. To discuss other audit requirements contact the RNIB education department (tel: 020 73912151). The RNIB work with the Joint Mobility Unit (email: [info@jmuaccess.org.uk](mailto:info@jmuaccess.org.uk)) to offer Built Environment audits.

#### Cost

Available on request (approximately £600/day plus VAT and travel/ subsistence).

## SENDA compliance in Higher Education (also known as SWANDS)

#### Focus

A tool for individuals or academic departments which aims to support DDA Part 4/ SENDA compliance.

#### What's involved?

The tool provides a resource to assist self review of provision. It can be conducted by an individual or as supported self review. It is presented as a book (the latest version is the edition published in 2002).

Tool users:

- **read the themed legislation and guidance** which outlines what the SENDA Code of Practice requires (eg "3.9 It is unlawful for a responsible body to discriminate against a disabled person in the arrangements it makes for determining admissions or enrolments to the institution") and what the QAA Code of Practice for Students with Disabilities recommends (eg "Precept 5 In selecting students institutions should ensure equitable consideration of all applicants")
- **read a list of themed quotes** which highlight what students say about current practice (eg "There is not enough time and I can't keep up because of my medication...") and what staff say about current practice (eg "We had a student with a hearing impairment due to attend the lectures and I met with him to discuss where he would sit and how best to proceed...")
- **read any additional information** (eg case studies or examples)
- **evaluate current practice by answering the themed checklist questions** (eg "Are all documents related to placement learning available in an accessible format?"). Staff are encouraged to add "Action Comments" to each checklist question
- **visit the suggested reading** on each theme, or the text given in an appendix which describes positive communication (if required)

#### Topics covered

The tool covers learning and teaching with specific sections of the tool focused on:

- key points for SENDA compliance

- admissions
- course development, programme planning, approval and review
- preparing documents for printing, visual display and electronic dissemination
- lectures, seminars and tutorials
- fieldwork
- laboratories, workshops and other practice-based environments
- placement learning
- assessment
- professional bodies
- positive communication

### Outputs

Tool users obtain:

- a series of actions for staff to progress that have been prompted by answering the themed checklist questions
- personal development and training for staff

### Strengths

The tool:

- provides a resource that outlines legislative requirements and suggests good practice
- provides quotes from disabled students and academic staff to illustrate current practice
- is presented in discrete themed sections that allow staff to dip in and out of the book as required
- is a series of checklists with questions that are worded to suggest good practice (phrased as closed questions)
- provides impairment-related and general information about positive communication

### Developed by:

Judith Waterfield, University of Plymouth (email [j.waterfield@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:j.waterfield@plymouth.ac.uk)) and Bob West, University of Plymouth.

The tool was produced as part of the HEFCE-funded South West Academic Network for Disability Support (SWANDS) project (1999 – 2002).

### Cost

Free to download online from: <http://www.plym.ac.uk/assets/SWA/Sendadoc.pdf>

A hardcopy (cost on request) can be obtained from the Maxine Kemp, University of Plymouth (email: [mmkemp@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:mmkemp@plymouth.ac.uk)).

## Teachability: Creating an accessible curriculum for students with disabilities

### Focus

A tool for academic departments aiming to identify barriers that prevent disabled students from participating in programmes of study.

### What's involved?

The tool provides a resource to assist self review of provision. It can be conducted by an individual or as supported self review. It is presented as a book (version published in 2000) or a series of eight themed booklets (a rewrite of the 2000 version that was published in 2004).

For the 2004 version, tool users:

- **read a themed discussion about practice;** by peppering this text with suggestions of good practice (eg by stating relevant QAA Code of Practice statements or by quoting staff practice or student experiences) staff are prompted to think about the core subject/ programme requirements and reflect on existing provision
- **read the legislative requirements;** legal information is presented as answers to a series of questions that are relevant to the topic being covered (eg one booklet (2004 version) asks “When I am preparing and delivering lectures, are there any legal obligations I need to be aware of?”; the answer to this question is then given)
- **evaluate current practice by answering the themed statements** (eg one statement says “Assessment feedback to students is accessible to all our students...”; staff are encouraged to answer “True” or “False” and then comment and/or suggest solutions where there is a need for action)
- **visit the suggested reading for more information** (if required)

The tool users are encouraged to formulate a strategy to improve practice if the answers to the statements do not match with the legislative requirements or the user's personal standards.

### Topics covered

The tool covers curricular provision for disabled students with a different booklet (for the 2004 version) focused on a different topic.

Booklets currently available cover creating accessible:

- placements, study abroad and field trips
- seminars and tutorials
- lectures
- information about courses or programmes of study
- examinations and assessment
- e-learning resources

Booklets still being developed cover creating accessible:

- practical classes for disabled students
- curricular and degree programmes

### Outputs

Tool users obtain:

- a series of actions for staff to progress that have been prompted by answering the themed statements
- personal development and training for staff

### Strengths

The tool:

- provides a resource that highlights curriculum issues, suggests good practice and

outlines legislative requirements relating to disabled students

- provides quotes from disabled students and academic staff to illustrate real experiences
- is presented in discrete themed booklets (2004 version) which allow staff to focus on one curriculum issue at a time
- has a themed checklist for each topic that is worded to suggest good practice (phrased as closed questions)

#### **Developed by:**

The Teachability Partnership (the Glasgow Caledonian University, the Glasgow School of Art, the University of Glasgow, the University of Paisley, and the University of Strathclyde). Authored by Anne Simpson, Manager of the Teachability project (email: [a.simpson@mis.strath.ac.uk](mailto:a.simpson@mis.strath.ac.uk)).

The tool was produced as part of a Scottish Higher Education Funding Council-funded project.

#### **Cost**

Teachability (2004 version): Hardcopies of individual booklets can be obtained from Anne Simpson (cost and availability on request) or many of the booklets are free to download online from: <http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/>

Teachability (2000 version): Free to download online from the Teachability website (see URL above).

## **3.2 Tools in development**

At the time of writing this report, there are a number of disability-related review methodologies being developed that should have applicability to HE. These tools are:

### **Audit tool for auxiliary aids and services**

#### **Scope**

The tool will be a set of questions for HE staff that cover the issues relevant to the provision of auxiliary aids and disability services. The questions will prompt the user to record any action that is needed to improve disability provision.

#### **Extra information**

The audit tool is still being developed and there is currently no date for release.

If you would like to collaborate on the development of this tool, contact Carol Doyle (contact details below).

#### **Contact details**

Carol Doyle, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (email: [cdoyle@uwic.ac.uk](mailto:cdoyle@uwic.ac.uk)).

## **DART (Disabilities: Academic Resource Tool)**

### **Scope**

The tool will be an online (web-based) database populated with advice based on current best practice guidelines, and advice arising from a qualitative survey of 30 students from six HEIs across a range of engineering/built environment disciplines.

Users will be able to search the database by:

- barriers (eg inaccessible material, inflexible deadlines)
- context (eg lectures, laboratory work, examinations)
- disability (eg deaf/hearing-impaired, dyslexia, cerebral palsy)

In addition, users will be able to record the actions they have taken to improve the delivery of their teaching, and to enhance the learning opportunities offered to students.

### **Extra information**

This tool is being developed as part of a HEFCE/DELNI-funded “improving provision for disabled students” project (2003 – 2005).

Tool users will be able to access full student case histories, links to various disability related sites, and links to all HEFCE/DELNI-funded disability project websites.

### **Contact details**

Alan Maddocks, Loughborough University (email: [A.P.Maddocks@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:A.P.Maddocks@lboro.ac.uk)) or the DART project website: <http://dart.lboro.ac.uk/>

## **Improving provision for disabled psychology students checklist**

### **Scope**

The tool will be a checklist, based on the Teachability resources, that has been adapted to focus on psychology-related curriculum issues.

### **Extra information**

This tool is being developed as part of a HEFCE/DELNI-funded “improving provision for disabled students” project (2003 – 2005).

The checklist has been adapted and will be piloted between January and March 2005. There is currently no date for general release.

### **Contact details**

Lucy Zinkiewicz, Project Manager, HEA Psychology Network, University of York (email: [l.zinkiewicz@psych.york.ac.uk](mailto:l.zinkiewicz@psych.york.ac.uk)).

## **National Disability Team checklists**

### **Scope**

The tool will be a number of checklists (ie a series of themed questions) which aim to prompt HE staff to consider the provision they offer for disabled students.

Individual checklists will cover: marketing; research and supervision; catering and residential; admissions; pre-entry and outreach; staff development; information and libraries; quality and monitoring; central services; senior management issues; copyright and intellectual property; and employability.

### Extra information

The checklists are being produced autumn 2004 – spring 2005. The checklists are free to download from the resources area on the NDT website:

<http://www.natdisteam.ac.uk/resources.html>).

### Contact details

NDT (email: [natdisteam@apu.ac.uk](mailto:natdisteam@apu.ac.uk)).

## 3.3 Other tools and audit processes

In addition to the tools and audit processes summarised on the previous pages, the research team are aware of the following review methodologies that may have applicability to HE:

Name	Contact details
Audit on Access for Deaf people, University of Bristol	Claire Wickham, Director of the Centre for Access and Communication Studies email: <a href="mailto:claire.wickham@bristol.ac.uk">claire.wickham@bristol.ac.uk</a>
Eversheds DDA/ SENDA questionnaire	Nick Saunders, Senior Associate email: <a href="mailto:NicholasSaunders@eversheds.com">NicholasSaunders@eversheds.com</a>
Integrating disability into educational arenas (IDEAs)	Matthew Winter, Project Manager IDEAs email: <a href="mailto:m.c.winter@abdn.ac.uk">m.c.winter@abdn.ac.uk</a>
Making research accessible checklist, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne	Val Farrar, Premia project manager, email: <a href="mailto:val.farrar@ncl.ac.uk">val.farrar@ncl.ac.uk</a>
Rights to Access	Linda Butler, Association of Colleges Director of Communications email: <a href="mailto:linda_butler@aoc.co.uk">linda_butler@aoc.co.uk</a>
HEI Student Union audit tool	Caroline Davies, Freelance consultant email: <a href="mailto:cjdavies@dial.pipex.com">cjdavies@dial.pipex.com</a>
HEI Library and Learning Centre audit tool	Caroline Davies, Freelance consultant email: <a href="mailto:cjdavies@dial.pipex.com">cjdavies@dial.pipex.com</a>
Equalities needs evaluation	Carol Wilson, Freelance consultant tel: <b>0790 9808233</b>
Conducting impact assessments for equal opportunities in higher education (HEFCE, October 2004/37)	Amy Norton, HEFCE email: <a href="mailto:a.norton@hefce.ac.uk">a.norton@hefce.ac.uk</a>

It has not been possible to provide a full description for these tools or audit processes within the time scale of this research. However the name of each review and contact details for further information have been provided for completeness.

The research team anticipate that there may be HE relevant tools or audit processes that have not been included in this report. Therefore, if you are aware of any review method applicable to HE that is not included in this publication, please contact the National Disability Team (email: [natdisteam@apu.ac.uk](mailto:natdisteam@apu.ac.uk)).

## 4.0 Next Stage

The NDT hope that this report has demonstrated a variety of methods that individuals, departments and HEIs can use to measure and/or review the provision they offer for disabled students.

If you have not already reviewed your provision or curriculum, why not re-visit the findings section of this report to find a type of review that would be appropriate for you or your institution? To assist with this decision it might be helpful to seek additional information by talking with colleagues, contacting auditors or speaking with tool developers. If you have already undertaken a review of provision, why not use the information presented in this report to update or extend your findings?

If you would like to learn more about “Reviewing provision and building capacity for disabled students”, look out for other NDT publications in this series that will be available in 2005. One report will take a more reflective look at audits by: offering tips on preparing for an audit; comparing different audit processes (for example the strengths and limitations of using an external consultant verses an internally conducted self review of provision); and providing vignettes from HE staff who have conducted/ experienced audits. Another report in the “Reviewing provision and building capacity disabled students” series will consider the applicability of equality audits and impact equality analysis processes rather than tool or audit processes that focus solely on disability issues.

## 5.0 Appendix

### 5.1 Contributors to the research

Name	Organisation
Alan Maddocks	Loughborough University
Anne Simpson	University of Strathclyde
Carol Doyle	University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
Caroline Davies	Independent consultant
Claire Wickham	University of Bristol
Ellen Sanders	University of Nottingham
Gerard Conroy	Independent consultant
Jean Jameson	London School of Economics and Political Science
Jill Hammond	Glasgow School of Art
John Milligan	Royal National Institute of the Blind
Judith Waterfield	University of Plymouth
Lee Smith	Royal National Institute of the Blind
Lynne Barnes	University of Central Lancashire
Melissa Godfray	Bond Pearce
Paul Brown	Scottish Disability Team
Richard Neville	University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology
Steve Titley	Oldham Lifelong Learning Service
Tina Elliott	Freelance consultant

### 5.2 Abbreviations and acronyms

The abbreviations and acronyms used in this report are explained in the table below:

Abbreviation or Acronym	Description
DAP (s)	Disability Action Plan (s)
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DELNI	Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
GSA	Glasgow School of Art
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HEI (s)	Higher Education Institution (s)
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IDEAs	Integrating Disability into Educational Arenas
LSE	London School of Economics
NDT	National Disability Team
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
RNIB	Royal National Institute of the Blind
RNID	Royal National Institute for Deaf People
SDT	Scottish Disability Team
SENDA	Special Educational Needs and Disability Act
SWANDS	South West Academic Network for Disability Support