This document presents the key outcomes of our review of our policy as it relates to disabled students. It provides an overview of the progress the sector has made since our guidance was published in 1999 and areas for development.

Outcomes of HEFCE review of its policy as it relates to disabled students

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Outcomes of HEFCE review of its policy as it relates to disabled students

To	Heads of HEFCE-funded institutions Heads of universities in Northern Ireland
Of interest to those responsible for	Senior management, Widening participation, Disability services, Student support services, Learning, teaching and the student experience, Admissions
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Executive summary

Purpose

1. This document presents the key outcomes of our review of our policy as it relates to disabled students. It provides an overview of the progress the sector has made since our guidance was published in 1999 and areas for development. There have been a number of legislative changes since we last issued guidance, so the recommendations for institutions in this document are intended to help them meet their amended legal duties.

2. The document also presents our future policy and strategy with regard to our support to the sector in meeting the entitlements of disabled students, and sets out good practice for institutions.

3. The document is intended to help higher education institutions (HEIs), those further education colleges directly funded by HEFCE, and sector organisations, in developing their strategy, provision, and support for disabled students, within the context of a social model of disability.

Key background

4. We decided to undertake a comprehensive review of our policy because there have been a number of legislative changes since we produced guidance for the sector on supporting disabled students in 1999 ('Guidance on base-level provision for disabled students in higher education institutions', HEFCE 99/04). We were keen to provide a more up-to-date picture that

better reflected the issues currently facing institutions and the progress that had been made. In addition, our funding for the Disability Equality Partnership (DEP) to support the sector in meeting the needs of disabled students was due to cease in December 2008. We therefore believed that a thorough review of our policy would be timely.

5. This review of our policy was commissioned jointly with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. It included research to establish the progress made in the provision and support of disabled students and to provide information on institutional policies and practices, identifying examples of good practice. The review also included an appraisal of our funding method for the mainstream disability allocation and an evaluation of the DEP, which was funded by us to provide support to the sector.

Outcomes of the review

There has been significant progress in support for disabled students but further work is needed to embed this support and move towards disability equality

6. The evidence from the research and evaluation carried out as part of the review shows that there have been significant developments in institutional support to meet the entitlements of disabled students since our original guidance to the sector in 1999. Disability issues are regularly considered across a range of institutional functions and processes. There is also evidence of widespread commitment and innovation among key staff in institutions and there are many examples of good practice.

7. Although a lot of positive change has been achieved, there are still areas in which improvements could be made. The review suggests that support for disabled students is not consistent across the sector and is not yet embedded in many institutions. There is also some evidence suggesting that the entitlements of some disabled students may not always be being fully met.

8. In institutions where disability support is embedded, practices are moving towards inclusivity. Inclusivity limits the use of additional practices for disabled students and adapts routine practices to meet the needs of all students. When practices have become inclusive, the term disability support has less relevance and is referred to as disability equality. We fully support advancement towards inclusivity and endorse it as good practice for all institutions to move towards.

9. We aim to build on the successes to date highlighted by the review, and to enhance links with broader equality and widening participation agendas. We will continue to work with our partners so that disability support is more consistent across the sector and moves from being a specialist service within institutions to being mainstreamed and embedded at every level. As part of this we will work with our partners to develop inclusive institutional cultures that embody a social model of disability and are anticipatory, proactive and flexible in nature.

There are some areas of the new legislation that are challenging and where further support might be welcomed

10. The evidence from the research carried out as part of our review showed that, since the introduction of the Disability Equality Duty (DED) in academic year 2005-06, the vast majority of institutions are complying fully with the legislation. However the results of a survey suggested that a very small number of institutions may have failed to meet all of the component parts of the DED. Areas that some institutions find challenging in some respects include:

• involving disabled students in the production of their Disability Equality Scheme (DES)

• either producing an annual report or making the annual report publicly available and easily accessible

• data monitoring: appropriate collection of data concerning disabled students is taking place in many institutions but the extent to which these data are monitored and acted upon in some institutions appears to be limited.

11. The research identified examples of good practice within some HEIs of involving disabled students in the development of their DES but this was proving to be a real challenge for many other

institutions despite their best efforts to secure such involvement.

12. We would like to remind institutions that they have a legal duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the DED to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people and to make anticipatory adjustments to meet the entitlements of disabled students. Institutions are legally required to involve disabled students in the production of their DES and to produce an annual report in relation to the actions and targets and to make this publicly available and easily accessible. Institutions can contact the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) for support in meeting the DED.

13. We will continue to work with the ECU to provide further support to institutions in meeting legislative requirements and develop specific projects to address the challenges being faced.

Sensitive practices may lead to an increase in disclosure rates and take-up of Disabled Students' Allowance

14. The evidence from the research carried out as part of the review found evidence suggesting that sensitive approaches throughout the student life-cycle led to a rise in disclosure rates and take-up of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) in certain institutions. There appears to be a link between claiming DSA and attainment and completion rates, so we will continue to work with our partners to provide support for institutions in this area. We will also undertake further work to identify practice that encourages greater levels of disclosure and increases in the take-up of DSA.

There are inconsistencies in national data sets

15. There are measurement and classification issues that make it difficult to research and compare data on disabled students. These include differing definitions of disability, a lack of consensus about disability subsets and an inconsistency of classification.

16. Addressing inconsistencies in national data sets is complex and requires a long-term approach. The definition of data on disability needs to be agreed at a national level and working across the education sector. The Information Standards Board exists to facilitate such work and we will bring the issues identified in our review to the attention of the Board.

There is a continued need for a specialist disability support service for the sector

17. The review has also shown that the support provided by the individual organisations that formed the DEP was highly regarded by the sector and there is a continued need for a specialist disability support service. However, the evaluation of the DEP revealed that there was little value added by the partnership arrangement in providing this support. As a result a decision was taken to discontinue the partnership as an organising structure when its contract ended in December 2008. Since then we have continued to fund the individual organisations to provide support to the sector in meeting the entitlements of disabled students.

Our funding methodology remains fit for purpose and our mainstream disability allocation has a leverage effect for other funding

18. The review did not indicate that our funding method should be fundamentally revised. Although a small number of the HEIs surveyed indicated that fluctuations in the funding had some impact on planning, the majority view was that the funding had a positive effect in leveraging in additional institutional resource and commitment. However, we are aware that the volatility in the method can sometimes affect planning within institutions and so we will keep it under review as part of the broader review of our teaching funding.

Our strategy and future support for the sector

19. Our review has found that the objectives of our policy as it relates to disabled students remain fit for purpose. Our policy to support and increase the participation of disabled students will continue to be a central part of our widening participation policy but is embedded throughout our organisation alongside the broader equality and diversity agenda.

20. We will continue to:

- build on the successes in the sector to date

- recognise the additional costs associated with recruiting and supporting disabled students and maintain the overall stability of funding through our mainstream disability allocation

- fund specialist disability support services for the sector through the work of Action on

Access, the Higher Education Academy and the Equality Challenge Unit

- work with our partners to support the sector in meeting the entitlements of disabled students and in other key areas for development, and to move towards disability equality and inclusive cultures.

Action required

21. No action is required in response to this document.

Background

22. HEFCE is committed to ensuring that all those with the potential to benefit from higher education (HE) have the opportunity to do so, whatever their background and whenever they need it. The fundamental aims of our policy as it relates to disabled students are: to build on the successes of higher and further education institutions; to maintain the overall stability of funding; and to enhance links with broader equality, widening participation, and teaching and learning agendas.

23. The objectives of our policy are to:

- embed disability work across our strategic aims

- work with sector partners to build capacity in institutions at all levels

- contribute to culture change in higher education, encouraging proactive and mainstreaming approaches to improving provision for disabled students

- support institutions in implementing the requirements of current and future legislation

- reduce the accountability burden on institutions.

24. Between 1993 and 2005 we supported special disability funding programmes with the aim of widening the participation of disabled students in HE and enabling institutions to meet new legislative requirements. In 2000-01 we introduced a mainstream disability funding allocation, as part of the block grant. This provides institutions with additional funds, on a recurrent basis, to recognise the additional costs that are incurred in recruiting and supporting disabled students. For 2008-09 the allocation is £13 million.

25. The National Disability Team provided hands-on support and advice to the sector until 2005. Between January 2006 and December 2008, support to the sector on disability issues was provided by the Higher Education Academy (the Academy), Action on Access (AonA) and the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU). These organisations worked together as the Disability Equality Partnership (DEP).

Rationale for undertaking the policy review

26. We and the sector had already moved forward with the implementation of our respective Disability Equality Schemes (DESs) with the associated requirement to assess the impact of our activities. Also, although the guidance issued to the sector in 1999 still contains information that is useful and relevant, we were keen to provide a more up-to-date picture that better reflected the issues currently facing institutions and the progress that has been made. We were keen to promote a move away from 'minimum compliance' towards a spirit of 'positive promotion' as underpinned by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. In addition, our funding for the DEP was due to cease in December 2008. We therefore believed that a thorough review of our policy as it relates to disabled students would be timely.

27. In undertaking the review, we also needed to take account of the 2007 National Audit Office (NAO) report 'Staying the course: the retention of students in higher education' which found that the take-up of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) varied across institutions and recommended that HEFCE investigate the issue further.

28. The review consisted of the following activities:

a. We and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) commissioned a team from the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds to establish what the HE sector in England and Wales is currently doing to meet the entitlements of disabled students and the progress that has been made since the original baseline provision study in 1999. This included a historical review, a review of the research base and evidence from a survey and case studies. Throughout the document where we refer to research and evidence we are referring to the University of Leeds report. We have also reproduced and summarised key areas of effective practice identified by the research. The full report of this research, 'Evaluation of Provision and Support for Disabled Students in Higher Education: Report to HEFCE and HEFCW' can be found at www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications/Research & evaluation.

b. We commissioned Oakleigh Consulting to carry out an independent evaluation of the work of the DEP to enable us to assess how successful the DEP was in achieving its aims and objectives and inform future policy in terms of the support we provide to the sector. The full report of this evaluation, 'Review of Disability Equality Partnership: a report to HEFCE' can be found at www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications/Research & evaluation.

c. A review of our funding methodology to ensure that, in light of the increases in student numbers claiming the DSA, and the changes in legislation, our current methodology remained fit for purpose. This review was based on modelling work carried out by our Analytical Services Group and the results of the survey and case studies carried out by the team at the University of Leeds.

Policy and legislative developments

29. There has been significant development in institutional support to meet the entitlements of disabled students since our last guidance to the sector in 1999. Perceptions have shifted over the past 10-15 years towards a view of disability as an equalities and therefore social issue, rather than a medical and therefore individual issue.

30. This shift in perception of disability is linked to changes in legislation and the policy and practice of Government and governmental agencies. The legal definition of disability in the UK is based on an individual or medical model of disability; an individual is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a considerable and long-term effect on their ability to perform everyday activities. In contrast, representative organisations of disabled people and many public bodies, such as ourselves and HEFCW, base their policy and practice on a social model of disability. The social model seeks to address the environmental and attitudinal barriers that can result in disadvantages for the individual, as opposed to a concentration on the specific impairment of the individual[1].

The social model of disability explained

The medical model of disability views disability as a 'problem' that belongs to the disabled individual. It is not seen as an issue to concern anyone other than the individual affected. For example, if a wheelchair-using student is unable to get into a building because of some steps, the medical model would suggest that this is because of the wheelchair, rather than the steps.

The social model of disability, in contrast, would see the steps as the disabling barrier. This model draws on the idea that it is society that disables people, through designing everything to meet the needs of the majority of people who are not disabled. There is a recognition within the social model that there is a great deal that society can do to reduce, and ultimately remove, some of these disabling barriers, and that this task is the responsibility of society, rather than the disabled person.

31. Despite the legal definition of disability, recent legislation has been influenced by the social model of disability and has had a positive effect on policy and provision for disabled students. In 2001 the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was updated to require further education colleges and higher education institutions (HEIs) to produce disability statements regarding their policy, provision and future plans. In the same year, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) was introduced. The SENDA made it illegal to discriminate against disabled students and established a legal duty to make anticipatory adjustments to meet their needs.

32. According to the SENDA, discrimination is deemed apparent if institutions failed to make 'reasonable adjustments', or provided unfavourable treatment to a student relating to their impairment without justification. The DDA Code of Practice

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[1] See the University of Leicester web-site, www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/accessability/staff/social-model-of-disability

(Post 16) issued by the Disability Rights Commission provides guidance in this area. It suggests that in relation to making anticipatory reasonable adjustments, it may be appropriate for a university to ask students what they require in terms of adjustments, and that it might be reasonable to put these in place where a student has suggested a reasonable solution.

33. At the same time as the SENDA was introduced a government report[2] was produced that marked a change from a largely reactive position to one that sought to be much more proactive, and future legislation was developed from this new position. Amendments were made to the DDA in 2003 and 2005. The 2005 amendment introduced the Disability Equality Duty (DED), which placed a legal duty on all public sector organisations to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people and to actively address disability inequality. Under this duty significant public authorities were required to produce DESs. Schemes must be reviewed every three years and need to include:

- a statement of how disabled people were involved in developing the scheme

- an action plan including practical ways in which improvements will be made

- the arrangements in place for gathering information that would allow the organisation to measure progress against its targets on disability equality.

34. Since 2007 the Equality and Human Rights Commission has had responsibility for enforcing the Disability Equality Duty. It has the power to take legal action against public sector organisations that have not fulfilled the requirements of the DED.

35. The research undertaken as part of our review notes the Government's commitment to widening participation and equality as positively impacting on support for disabled students. It cites the development by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) of a single equality scheme (a document that brings together issues for race, disability and gender) as an example. Our own

single scheme was also highlighted and we hope both will be viewed as exemplars. Ours will be reviewed in 2010.

36. Our policies, guidance and programmes regarding disabled people, such as our guidance on equality impact assessments (EIAs) and our funding initiatives, are also recognised in the research as having a positive impact on disability support.

37. In institutions where disability support is embedded, practices are moving towards inclusivity. Inclusivity limits the use of additional practices for disabled students and adapts routine practices to meet the entitlements of all students. When practices have become inclusive the term 'disability support' has less relevance and is referred to as 'disability equality'. We fully support advancement towards inclusivity and endorse it as good practice for all institutions to move towards. Because our review looks back over the progress made in disability support over the past 10 years, and because levels of support offered by institutions are currently variable, we will use the term 'disability support' in this document.

Future legislation

38. Future legislation will encourage the HE sector to build on the progress that is being made in disability support, and to further promote the development of inclusive cultures. In April 2009 a new Equality Bill was introduced in the House of Commons that seeks to 'harmonise discrimination law, and to strengthen the law to support progress on equality'. This Bill will replace all existing equality legislation. The Bill is currently being debated in Parliament and it is anticipated that the majority of the Bill will come into force in autumn 2010, with the general public duty following in 2011.

39. The Bill proposes a general duty on public authorities (which includes HEFCE and all HEIs). It will replace existing equalities duties (relating to race, gender and disability) with a single duty covering the protected characteristics of race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion or

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[2] 'Improving Life Chances of Disabled People', Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (2001).

belief. It extends duties that did not previously apply to disability to this characteristic. The most significant changes in relation to disability are:

- the Bill will extend positive action to recruitment and promotion to all the protected characteristics listed above

- indirect discrimination[3] is redefined in the Bill and is extended to all the protected characteristics listed above except for marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity

- the Bill will also apply direct discrimination based on association and perception to all the protected characteristics listed in paragraph 39. An example of associative discrimination would be where a mature student has a disabled dependant living with them. The student should not be treated less favourably because of the dependant's disability. They may also be entitled to have some reasonable adjustments made to accommodate the dependant, even though it is the dependant who is disabled and not the student. Perceptive discrimination is when someone perceives someone to have a disability and treats them less favourably and/or withholds opportunities.

Outcomes of the review

Progress in the sector and key areas for development

40. Our policy review has shown that there have been significant developments in the support that is provided to disabled students in the sector. Disability issues are regularly considered across a range of institutional functions and processes. These advances have been linked to changes in legislation and the policy and practice of Government, government agencies, and innovations and developments within institutions. However, although good progress has been made, there are still some areas in which improvements can be made and further support provided.

41. The review has provided evidence of widespread commitment and innovation among key staff in institutions. Importantly, there seems to be a drive for continuous improvement, resulting in many institutions regularly reviewing and developing their support. The majority of institutions also have some form of dedicated support service for disabled students or provide support through a broader support service; there is much effective practice in the sector with regard to support for disabled students. An example of good practice regarding support for students with specific impairments is highlighted in a National Audit Office report that details the support offered to a student with autism. Support included social mentoring (paid for through the DSA) as opposed to academic mentoring, because that was identified as the need in this case. The student flourished[4].

42. There are, however, inconsistencies among institutions regarding the quality and level of support provided to disabled students, and there are still some instances of unmet entitlement. Although support services for disability are widespread there are differences in the prioritisation of different impairment categories and the subsequent level of resource committed to them. So, for example, the support needs of students with dyslexia are much better understood and resourced than the needs of mental health service users.

43. Furthermore, we would encourage institutions to address specific disability issues within an inclusive, joined-up framework which recognises that disabled students have multiple identities including belonging to other groups covered by equality and diversity legislation, identifying with a particular socio-economic group or as an international student.

44. The benefits of taking an anticipatory and inclusive approach are highlighted in the case of international disabled students. Although all disabled students are covered by the legislation, the research conducted as part of our report suggested

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[3] Indirect discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is seemingly neutral but particularly disadvantages people with a protected characteristic after it is implemented and its impact is assessed. Where a particular group is disadvantaged in this way, a person in that group is indirectly discriminated against if they are put at that disadvantage, unless it can be objectively justified.

[4] 'Supporting people with autism through adulthood', National Audit Office (2009).

that this group may sometimes lack support. International students and students from the European Union (EU) are not eligible for DSA and are not specifically covered through the mainstream funding allocation, because this funding covers home students. By taking an inclusive and anticipatory approach, the needs of international students would be significantly met through also meeting the needs of home students. This can then be supplemented through use of dedicated funds for international students, from the fees paid by this group, to meet specific entitlements of students such as note-takers. The research provided evidence of this effective practice, to ensure that the needs of international students are met – for example the use of international student hardship funds.

45. Addressing the areas for improvement highlighted in paragraph 42 is also more effective if provision and support for disabled students is embedded within institutions' broader learning, teaching and support processes. There are a number of examples of institutions taking a much more strategic and inclusive approach to the delivery of their provision and support and there would be benefits in sharing these approaches and strategies more broadly.

46. There was evidence that support for disabled students remains at the margins in a number of institutions. The involvement of senior managers in changing the culture of an institution is crucial. A key tool for mainstreaming disability is through completion of EIAs. EIAs can improve mechanisms for policy review and for embedding equality and diversity into all of an institution's activities. Securing engagement with this process at all levels within an institution supports the embedding process. The research conducted as part of this review indicated that there are varying levels of engagement with EIAs in the sector.

47. In terms of the destination of disabled students on completion of their degree, the research from the University of Leeds found that there was no difference between disabled students in aggregate in employment and non-disabled students. But when the disabled student group is disaggregated, the statistics do show that some impairment groups fare better than others; for example, partially sighted students, wheelchair users and students requiring assistance with the activities of daily living have higher levels of unemployment. However, other sources of data on the first destination of disabled graduates indicate differences between disabled learners in aggregate and non-disabled learners in employment, with fewer disabled graduates being in full-time work[5].

48. It is important that the entitlements of students are met throughout the student life-cycle from pre-entry support right through to graduation and into employment. It was this latter part of the life-cycle in which practice seemed to be less well developed. This finding could be linked to the statistics regarding the destination of disabled students and reflects a need for support in transition from HE to employment or postgraduate studies.

49. It is also important that institutions link specific areas of support within an inclusive umbrella that forms an overarching policy. An inclusive approach recognises that disabled students may also belong to other groups covered by equality and diversity legislation, or may identify with a particular socio-economic group or as an international student. Such an approach will seek to ensure that the diversity of student need can be met without isolating one group of students from another.

The institutional role in improving support services for students

50. Institutions need to identify those students with impairments whose entitlements are not being met and work to improve support for those students. This would ideally be part of the inclusive approach outlined in paragraph 49 and the text below, 'Addressing individual impairments within an overarching inclusive strategy'. We acknowledge that this will be more challenging for students with some impairments than others and that students experience impairments in different ways. Therefore, an approach that acknowledges the heterogeneity of particular impairment types is

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[5] 'What Happens Next? A Report on the First Destinations of Graduates with Disabilities', AGCAS (2009); 'Disabled students and higher education', DIUS (2009).

essential. Continuing professional development (CPD) for staff is also fundamental to providing student support services and is mentioned in more detail below. As institutions move towards inclusivity, the role of student support services will ideally adapt; support will be delivered across an institution and specialist staff will advise workers who interface with students rather than continuing to work with disabled students.

51. Investigation of the financial circumstances of disabled students and how this impacts on their experiences would be a helpful part of identifying whether disabled students' entitlements are being met.

52. Institutions could further develop exit strategies for disabled students. Where good practice was found in easing this transition, it included activities such as careers workshops, workshops on skills and employability, and exit interviews.

Good practice: Addressing individual impairments within an overarching inclusive strategy

- Be aware of the specific issues faced by students with particular impairments, and establish practices to better understand students' individual needs.

- Ensure that adjustments are made in every aspect of the student experience and that these are linked to other areas of equality and diversity; this will support individuals in an ongoing way.

- Aim to be both proactive and preventative whenever possible but also to be in a position to respond to any new or emergent difficulties that can arise for students.

- Ensure that services offered are as 'seamless' as possible through joined-up approaches. This reduces the possibility that student entitlements will remain unmet or 'fall through the gaps' through, for example, delayed responses.

- Provide academic, social and residential environments that are as inclusive as possible. Embed this inclusivity within all relevant practices, from initial publicity through to graduation.

- A good practice example of an inclusive approach would be providing a welcome document for students covering both generic issues and specialised needs. One university provided a guide titled 'Student support: A helping hand through university life'. This included coverage of loneliness, homesickness, stress, exam stress, panic attacks, helping a friend in crisis, eating disorders, self-harm, alcohol, drugs, personal safety, harassment, looked-after young people, family liaison, students with children and immigration advice. At the same time, it introduced the Student Support Team and support issues, and referred to making an appointment with a Student Support Adviser as one of its sections.

Our role in improving support services for students

53. We will work with our partners to provide support to institutions to enable them to move towards offering a consistent level of support for all students.

54. We recognise that a role of institutions is to suitably equip students for their life after HE and their transition to employment. We will build on work already being undertaken to identify and develop approaches to support institutions with their exit strategies.

Disability Equality Duty: meeting legislative requirements

55. Evidence suggests that the vast majority of institutions are complying fully with the legislation. However, there are some areas that are proving challenging for some institutions and where further support might be welcomed.

56. For example, the research identified examples of good practice within some HEIs of involving disabled students in the development of their DESs but this was proving to be a real challenge for many other institutions despite their best efforts to secure such involvement.

57. Data collection is critical to the DES in order to monitor institutional and student progress and improve institutional performance. Appropriate collection of data concerning disabled students is taking place in many institutions including the number of disabled students registered, impairment groupings, courses taken and outcomes. However, the extent to which these data are monitored and acted upon in some institutions appears to be limited.

58. Institutions are required to produce an annual report in relation to the actions and targets in their DES and to make this publicly available and easily accessible. The research suggested that a very small number of institutions may have failed to meet this requirement, although this is based on web searches and results of a survey so is not conclusive evidence that institutions are not complying with the legislation.

59. We would like to remind institutions that they are legally required to involve disabled students in the production of their DES and to produce an annual report in relation to the actions and targets and to make this publicly available and easily accessible. Institutions have a legal duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the DED to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people and to make anticipatory adjustments to meet the entitlements of disabled students. Institutions can contact the ECU for support in meeting the DED.

The institutional role in fulfilling the DES

60. There has been increasing weight placed on the significance of institutional data collection and its use to monitor and evaluate widening participation interventions. The recent introduction of the request for widening participation strategic assessments[6] places renewed emphasis on the need for institutions to make better use of data information management, to better evidence and inform policy and practice, and set milestones and targets. Within the equalities agenda there are specific issues to address.

61. Where institutions identify gaps in their data collection and monitoring these should be addressed. In addition, in order to comply with the DDA, institutions need to produce an annual report in relation to the actions and targets in their DES. The quality of the data is therefore important in relation to the completion of an acceptable annual report.

Our role in supporting institutions to fulfil the DED

62. We will, with our partners, structure some of our support to institutions to assist them in securing better engagement with their disabled students. Some work is already under way in this area: the Academy and the ECU have been working with seven HEIs to further the involvement of disabled students across HEI functions, and there is the potential to extend this work. In 2008, we introduced our own forum for involving disabled people in our policy development process and will look to share any lessons gained as this strategy progresses.

63. We appreciate that data collection and monitoring is a difficult area and will work with the Academy and ECU to support institutions with monitoring the intake and progress of students throughout their student journey. Research shows that monitoring of student progress ideally takes place as part of departmental impact assessments[7]. Therefore student groups that are underachieving can be identified early and appropriate interventions and support can be put in place.

64. We will seek to establish whether some institutions are not producing an annual report and if there is any indication that aspects of the DED are not being met we will provide further support to ensure that this is addressed.

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6 'Request for widening participation strategic assessments' (HEFCE 2009/01). All HEFCE publications can be read in full at www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications.

7 'Ethnicity, Gender and Degree Attainment Project – Final Report', Higher Education Academy (2008).

Disclosure and Disabled Students' Allowance

65. Disclosure is a cause of data problems because it is not a legal requirement for a student to disclose a disability and therefore not all students do so. Furthermore, not all students who declare a disability subsequently claim DSA. However, it is important to encourage disclosure and for students who are entitled to claim DSA to do so, because this has potential consequences for their future completion and attainment. In addition, disclosure is important in ensuring that both institutional management and national administrative data sets are as accurate as possible. As noted in paragraph 27, the NAO raised concerns about the differences in take-up of DSA between different institutions. The research carried out as part of our review echoed this disparity and explored possible explanations based on changing institutional practices.

66. The research found that, once students with disabilities are in HE, their degree attainment is lower than their peers, and that there is evidence to suggest that this persists even after controlling for a range of other factors[8]. However, those in receipt of DSA are more likely to be awarded a first-class degree than those disabled students who are not claiming DSA. This suggests that the uptake of DSA may have an important role to play in degree attainment.

67. The receipt of DSA may also have an impact on the continuation/completion rates of disabled students. The first-year continuation rate for 2002-03 full-time undergraduate entrants was greater for disabled students in receipt of DSA than for both disabled students not claiming DSA and those students with no known disability.

The institutional role in increasing disclosure and take-up of DSA

68. There are a number of reasons why students might choose not to disclose a disability including:

- lack of awareness of entitlement, or that they are disabled

- not enough opportunities to disclose

- fear of discrimination

- concerns about confidentiality

- insensitive practices.

69. A practice that may encourage disclosure is disability awareness-raising for all students during their induction. The benefits of this are two-fold: increased awareness can promote an inclusive culture for the whole student body; and disclosure, and subsequent take-up of DSA, may increase as more students may realise they are disabled or feel more comfortable disclosing.

70. The development of sensitive and inclusive systems and processes might also contribute to improved disclosure of disability and take-up levels of DSA. These inclusive and sensitive practices would enable institutions to anticipate need and support students without positioning the individual as a 'problem' or 'issue'.

> ### Good practice: Encouraging disclosure and take-up of DSA
>
> - Offer a variety of opportunities for disclosure throughout the student journey.
>
> - Explain terminology such as 'disability' and 'disabled' to ensure students are aware what constitutes a 'disability' and which needs can be met through DSA.
>
> - Place questions regarding disability sensitively, for example not next to questions that ask applicants to disclose a criminal record.
>
> - Use sensitive language in questions.
>
> - Use transparent disclosure practice such as explaining why information on disability is needed and what it will be used for, and demonstrating a commitment to confidentiality.
>
> - Advertise and raise awareness; for example members of the disability team

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[8] 'Disabled Students and Higher Education', DIUS (2009).

> could attend open days and disability awareness could be an integral part of the induction process for all students.
>
> - Create inclusive learning environments that ensure all students have equal access to the information being presented and are able to participate fully in the experience whether this be through visual, physical or audio aids/adjustments, or teaching and learning pedagogy.

Our role in increasing disclosure and take-up of DSA

71. No conclusive evidence for the reasons behind the differential take-up of DSA has been identified and there appears to be a link between claiming DSA and attainment and completion rates, so we will continue to work with our partners to provide support for institutions. We will also do further work to identify practice that encourages greater levels of disclosure and subsequent increases in the take-up of DSA.

72. Supporting institutional development of inclusive learning practices also has an important role to play in the degree attainment and completion rates of disabled students, especially for those not in a position to claim DSA. Support currently available in this area aims to develop, identify and promote good practice. For example as part of our support to the sector we have funded the Academy's Research Seminar Series, which includes a strand focused on 'inclusive practices to promote equality for disabled students'. The Academy is also holding a Summit Programme, which aims to develop inclusive learning and teaching. The ECU is responsible for providing equality training to institutions. As part of our support we will look to evaluate and build on the successes of such projects.

National data issues

73. While it is accepted that the action taken by Government, the funding councils and institutions has had a positive effect on improving the experiences of disabled students over the past 10-15 years, it remains difficult to measure the impact of

policies and activities with any degree of accuracy. Part of the problem is the inability to isolate the effect of one activity or policy from the broader context within which it is delivered. However, in regard to disability this is further exacerbated by a large number of measurement and classification issues that make it difficult to research and compare data. Consequently it is hard to quantify the impact of legislation and policy or to attribute certain changes to specific policy interventions. Measurement difficulties include differing definitions of disability, a lack of consensus about disability subsets and an inconsistency of classification, techniques of data collection and assessment methodology.

Our role in national data issues

74. Addressing inconsistencies in national data sets is complex and requires a long-term approach. The definition of data on disability needs to be agreed at a national level and working across the education sector. The Information Standards Board exists to facilitate such work and we will bring the issues identified in our review to the attention of the Board.

Learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum design

75. There are indications that teaching and assessment practices vary widely both within and between institutions. In many cases it was found that staff across an institution would have different levels of engagement, awareness and attitudes towards changing their approach and provision to better meet the entitlements of disabled students.

76. Teaching, learning and assessment practices that are sensitive to the entitlements of disabled students are strongly linked to appropriate and sufficiently comprehensive CPD for staff. Improvements in provision result from staff who are adequately resourced to learn more about diverse needs, and given sufficient time and support to design and implement changes in the curriculum, modes of delivery, and assessment methods. There is a wide variety of staff CPD already delivered in HEIs, ranging from impairment-specific training, e-learning, increasing the accessibility of teaching and improving assessment, feedback and marking approaches.

The institutional role in improving teaching and assessment

77. Many institutions would benefit from further developing inclusive assessment practices which are flexible and kept under regular review. Consulting disabled students as part of this process will help ensure their entitlements are met.

78. Monitoring participation rates, continuation rates and attainment by disability status at a subject level within departments could also be helpful in identifying trends. These data can then be used to inform target setting, teaching and assessment methods and student support within departments.

79. Many institutions recognise that different levels of training are needed for different staff and have found that a compulsory comprehensive training package is particularly effective. Where such CPD is done well and is sufficiently comprehensive in its coverage, it could make a considerable contribution to the mainstreaming of disability support across the institution.

80. Institutions that are not already doing so need to ensure they are providing adequate CPD so that staff are in a position to design and implement changes in curriculum design, modes of delivery, and methods of assessment in light of diverse student needs.

Good practice: Factors to consider when planning staff CPD

- Keep CPD for staff under review and ensure it is appropriate; there are a variety of resources available and training should range from the general to the much more specific depending on the staff concerned.

- CPD needs to take account of specific impairments within an inclusive context that acknowledges that everybody experiences disabilities differently. This will aid in planning and designing inclusive teaching and assessment, and in developing inclusive policies and practices, and will reduce barriers to learning.

Physical accessibility

81. In addressing accessibility it is helpful to recognise that accessibility encompasses more than changes to physical spaces for people with physical needs. For example, use of colour contrast or a range of floor coverings can make environments more user-friendly for people with visual impairments. Most institutions have already made significant improvements to physical accessibility over the past 10 years but there are still areas that are less well developed. These include: access within teaching spaces; estates strategy and review; and the information available on institutions' web-sites.

82. The research identified that the layout and facilities in teaching rooms could sometimes benefit from further improvement/adjustments. For example, ensuring that there are designated spaces for wheelchair users and that audio-visual equipment is accessible for students making presentations, would be reasonable anticipatory adjustments to make to learning spaces.

83. The quality and volume of relevant information on web-sites varies significantly between institutions: for example, the amount of information available regarding DSA, the availability of accessibility maps, the presence or not of a DES, and the ease with which it could be found. But this is all information that can be of great importance to disabled students, both during the application process and after enrolment.

The institutional role in improving accessibility

84. Institutional practice that integrates accessibility into new build and refurbishment, and that takes account of access improvement in estates strategies, is likely to be particularly effective. Programmes of regular estates review, consultation of disabled people, frequent access audits and impact assessments will also help to ensure that any physical barriers to access are addressed. The ECU is undertaking two projects in this area that may be of interest to institutions: checklists for 'inclusive campus environments for sensory-impaired students' and 'inclusive building design', for use by estates, facilities managers and those responsible for procuring buildings.

85. Further gains could be made by the innovative use of technology. The installation of speaking lifts, automatic doors and systems that detect a device held by a student and informs them of their location have all been identified by institutional staff as examples of good practice. The use of technology to improve accessibility can contribute to the creation of a 'smart campus'[9]. Such a campus would be receptive and inclusive and involve the use of new technologies alongside improving buildings. The work of the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) TechDis moves beyond the use of technology to enhance physical accessibility in isolation from other areas of accessibility. The organisation looks at ways in which specialist technologies can integrate with mainstream technologies to best effect and to benefit inclusive practice. Guidance is available from JISC TechDis in relation to best practice in the use of technology.

Good practice: Moving towards a 'smart campus'

- Periodically check the availability, costs and benefits of technological innovations, in conjunction with regular access audit and ongoing improvement to physical structures.

- Regularly consult disabled students and community informants about potential changes.

- Develop a longer-term vision of the campus as a more receptive and inclusive environment, in which new technologies could play an important role.

86. Institutions should ensure information that would be useful to disabled students is presented on their web-sites (for example information regarding DSA, accessibility maps and the DES). It is particularly beneficial if this information is regularly updated, in an appropriate format and easy to find. It is useful if access to the information is considered alongside its presentation. For example it is beneficial to take account of the visual dexterity and fine motor control of the users.

Good practice: Web-sites

- Good accessibility features, such as the ability to alter the layout, background or presentation of the site. Features should be present on the main page and throughout the web-site.

- A specific location for disability services information, linked to the main pages. Ensure this information covers key topics and issues.

- Include links to the DES and/or Disability Statement.

- Provide accessibility maps or similar guides.

- Provide contact details within specific parts of the site (ideally including connections to student organisations as well as university resources, units and their staff).

- Provide detailed information regarding the provision of residential accommodation, including contact details.

- Provide financial/funding information.

Our role in improving accessibility

87. We will investigate whether we should encourage institutions to adopt a standard, consistent body of information to be available on their web-sites and easily accessible as a minimum for effective practice.

88. We are interested in any pilot activities that institutions are undertaking utilising space planning and inclusive environments which use technology and space to adapt to different learning styles and access requirements.

89. The review has shown that some institutions would benefit from additional clarification regarding the legal requirement for them to anticipate the needs of disabled students. Fulfilling the legislation with regard to anticipatory adjustments helps to prevent the need to make reasonable adjustments. The ECU currently has a

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[9] 'Provision and Support for Disabled Students in Higher Education', University of Leeds (2009).

project investigating the funding arrangements for disabled students and staff in making anticipatory and reasonable adjustments. The ECU has offered the guidance in the box below:

Statement from the Equality Challenge Unit: Reasonable adjustments and competency standards

The Disability Discrimination Act requires education providers to anticipate adjustments to ensure disabled students are not put at a substantial disadvantage in relation to:

- a provision, criterion or practice, other than a competence standard, applied by or on behalf of the education provider; or

- any physical feature of premises occupied by the education provider.

Substantial disadvantages are defined as those that are not minor or trivial (see paragraph 5.8 and 5.9 of the DDA Code of Practice (revised) for providers of post-16 education and related services http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/drc/the_law/legislation__codes__regulation/codes_of_practice.html).

The anticipatory nature of reasonable adjustments requires education providers to be pro-active in finding out about individual disabled students' needs but this does not mean that education providers should wait for a disabled person to approach them before giving consideration to the duty to make reasonable adjustments (paragraph 5.11, Code of Practice):

Education providers should be planning continually for the reasonable adjustments they need to make, whether or not they have disabled students. They should anticipate the requirements of disabled people and the adjustments that may have to be made for them. In many cases, it is appropriate to ask students to identify whether they have any particular requirements and, if so, what adjustments may need to be made. Failure to anticipate the need for an adjustment may result in it being too late to comply with the duty to make the adjustment when a disabled person requires it and therefore constitute a failure to discharge the duty.

The Code of Practice recognises that: Education providers cannot be expected to anticipate the needs of every prospective student however, the DDA does require consideration and implementation of a range of mechanisms to overcome barriers that are likely to or would obviously impair disabled people. The Code also provides good practice examples including an education provider making provision to convert examination papers in large font, as well as the anticipation of the need for British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation through setting up access within short notice (see paragraphs 5.13 and 1.14 of the Code).

The higher education sector has a range of good practice examples relating to the practical implementation of reasonable adjustments which include:

- Open University's Accessibility Guide

- The University of Northampton's introduction of a policy allowing the electronic recording of lectures by students. This policy affords all students the opportunity to audio record any lecture in order to ensure the university is making anticipatory reasonable adjustments under the DDA.

- Institute of Physics guide 'Access for all: A guide to disability good practice for University Physics Departments'. This guide includes information about competency standards, admissions as well as a range of case studies and practical examples to support and make adjustments for disabled students.

In relation to competency standards, alongside information provided within the Code of Practice referred to above, the main and current source of information for HEIs was

written by Skill for SPA (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Programme) and agreed by ECU: www.spa.ac.uk/good-practice/competence-standards.html. There will additionally be more information provided within the revised QAA Code of Practice for Disabled Students (which should be published by the end of 2009).

Evaluation of the DEP

90. Between January 2006 and December 2008, we funded the Academy, AonA and the ECU to work together and co-ordinate the work they each do to provide support to the sector with regard to its provision and support for disabled students. This working arrangement was called the Disability Equality Partnership (DEP). Funding was agreed for three years at a total investment of £1.2 million.

91. The strategic aims of the DEP were to:

•   support the development and implementation of strategic and operational planning of priorities specific to the work of the partnership

•   support wider dissemination of good practice to improve provision for disabled students

•   respond to the dynamic needs of the sector and proactively engage with current and emerging themes and priorities.

92. We commissioned Oakleigh Consulting to evaluate the DEP and assess how well the three organisations were meeting the aims and objectives of the partnership. We stated that the evaluation of the DEP would enable us to establish what worked well in the arrangement, what aspects of it and the support it offered might be enhanced and whether the arrangement was the most appropriate vehicle to deliver such support.

93. The evaluation highlighted the positive work that the three individual organisations had undertaken. However, it also demonstrated that much of that positive work had been undertaken with little collaboration between the partners and

without the partnership arrangement adding value to the support offered.

94. The evaluation highlighted the continued need for providing specialist disability support in the sector and acknowledged that a co-ordinated approach to such support would be welcomed. However, it also acknowledged that such support needed to be driven by a strategic approach that addressed disability issues across the sector and attempted to unite organisations working in this area.

95. In light of the findings from the evaluation of the DEP, which called into question the effectiveness and 'added value' of the partnership structure, it was decided not to extend the contract of the DEP past December 2008. However, the evaluation clearly recognised the value and quality of the work undertaken by each of the individual partner organisations and the expertise and commitment of the staff responsible for developing and delivering the activity. Therefore, we agreed that funding should be extended to each of the three organisations until July 2009 but that the 'DEP' as an organising structure would cease. The organisations continue to provide support services and where additional support is needed we will continue to work with them to ensure this is provided.

Review of our funding methodology

96. HEFCE funding for supporting disabled students is part of the block teaching grant that an institution receives. The purpose of the mainstream disability allocation is to recognise the additional costs of recruiting and supporting disabled students. It is not a form of individual student support. It is calculated on the basis of the number of students in receipt of the DSA. Our funding to institutions to support disabled students is currently £13 million per year. We do not place any conditions on how the mainstream disability allocation is distributed or spent; institutions have full autonomy to distribute funding according to their priorities and needs[10].

97. Concern was expressed in 2007-08 by a small number of institutions about the continued appropriateness of the current method for calculating the mainstream disability allocation. There has always been a certain amount of movement in the

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10 'Funding higher education in England: How HEFCE allocates its funds' (HEFCE 2008/33) provides a breakdown and explanation of HEFCE's total funding allocation.

funds delivered through this method and institutions will often see a change in the amount of funding they receive year-on-year. However, recently, for a small minority of institutions this has become more pronounced as a result of larger numbers of students recorded across the sector as being in receipt of DSA.

98. The current funding methodology is based on a banded quartile approach that groups institutions according to the proportion of their students in receipt of DSA. Early in 2008 we undertook some modelling to identify whether any alterations could be made to the current methodology to reduce the effect of moving between quartiles. It was found that modifying the current methodology had no significant effect on the extent of the variance between the quartiles.

99. The survey research that was undertaken for the review included a section that specifically addressed the issue of funding. Although a small number of the HEIs surveyed indicated that fluctuations in the funding had some impact on planning, the majority view was that the funding had a positive effect in leveraging in additional institutional resource and commitment. There was not a majority view that the funding method was not fit for purpose. Consequently, we do not propose designing and consulting on a new funding method for the mainstream disability allocation.

100. The research carried out as part of our review showed that institutions draw on a range of different funding streams to deliver their support and provision for disabled students. The research suggested that a variety of approaches are taken to disbursing the mainstream disability allocation. The distribution methods most frequently used included either allocating a block grant to a central support service or allocating it to disability services. The research also indicated that the mainstream disability allocation is primarily used to fund dedicated disability services, technical assistance and equipment, improving campus accessibility, providing individual support, staff training and supplementing DSA for individual students.

101. Although all disabled students are covered by the legislation, the research conducted as part of our report suggested that international students can sometimes lack support. International students and students from the EU are not eligible for DSA and are not specifically covered through the mainstream funding allocation, because this funding relates to home students. By taking an inclusive and anticipatory approach the needs of these students would be significantly met through also meeting the needs of home students. This can then be supplemented through use of dedicated funds for international students, from the fees paid by this group, to meet specific entitlements of individuals, such as note-takers. The research provided evidence of this effective practice, to ensure that the needs of international students were met, for example the use of international student hardship funds.

Our funding methodology going forwards

102. We will continue to monitor the allocation to ensure that it remains fit for purpose in the medium and longer term.

Our strategy for future support to the sector

103. Our policy to support and increase participation of disabled students will continue to be a central part of our widening participation (WP) policy but is embedded throughout our organisation alongside the broader equality and diversity agenda. The fundamental aims of our policy will be to:

- continue to build on the successes of higher and further education institutions

- maintain the overall stability of funding

- enhance links with broader equality, widening participation, and learning and teaching agendas.

104. However, the review has highlighted a need to ensure that support is more consistent across the sector and moves away from being a specialist service within institutions to being embedded at every level. Our aim is to encourage and support institutions to take a strategic approach to WP more broadly. As part of this we will work with our partners to develop inclusive institutional cultures that embody a social model of disability and are anticipatory, proactive and flexible in nature.

105. There is a continued need for supporting institutions in meeting the entitlements of disabled students. Particular areas were identified where action may be necessary and support and guidance is most needed. We will continue to work with our partners to provide support to institutions in these areas.

106.   We will continue to work with our partners to provide support to institutions and to identify examples of good practice that can be disseminated and transferred to the sector.

107.   The review highlighted the need for our support to the sector to have a more strategic focus and involve more partner organisations. Effective marketing and communication of our support will be key in ensuring that institutions are aware of the support available.

108.   The review has found that the objectives of our policy as described in paragraph 23 remain fit for purpose. Our strategy to deliver our policy as it relates to disabled students reflects the outcomes of the review and includes the following:

a.   To continue to recognise the additional costs associated with recruiting and supporting disabled students through our mainstream disability allocation. This funding method will be kept under review as part of our broader review of our teaching funding.

b.   To work with our partners to support the sector in meeting the entitlements of disabled students. This includes the funding we provide to the Academy, ECU and AonA to support the sector in line with our overarching support strategy. We will keep under review how our support is delivered to the sector and will use the widening participation strategic assessments (WPSAs) to further inform our strategic approach.

c.   Clear communication of the outcomes of the review and our planned support to the sector.

d.   Continuous review of our strategy through the regular review of targets in our own DES and our action plan which details how we aim to meet the entitlements of protected equalities groups across the breadth of our work. Review will also take place through the development of rigorous sector[11] and equality impact assessments.

e.   Ongoing consultation with disabled people regarding our policies, strategies and proposed support to the sector. We have established a strategy for involving disabled people and have a

group whose membership includes people with disabilities as well as those who work in providing disability support who can be called upon to offer views and opinions at different stages of our policy development.

109.   We will work with our partners in the key areas of development to:

- meet specific disability entitlements within an overarching, inclusive approach

- achieve a consistent level of disability support across the sector

- improve engagement with disabled students

- improve data and measurement issues

- improve disclosure and take-up of DSA.

110.   Working with our partners, we will arrange an annual standing conference for senior officers in the key organisations delivering support to the sector in regard to disabled students. Such conferences will provide an opportunity for the organisations to share ideas, exchange knowledge and set sector strategy. They will also provide an opportunity to set an annual theme to be addressed for the coming year with targets against which progress can be measured at key points.

111.   AonA will continue to embed disability work into the widening participation agenda, including outreach, and will also provide a helpdesk (help@actiononaccess.org) and a resource directory. The ECU will continue to ensure the embedding of disability provision in the context of broader equalities developments, to include providing equalities training and support in fulfilling the DED. The Academy will continue to support disability within the area of learning and teaching. These organisations will also provide programmes of support and dissemination that address the areas for development within their areas of specialisation.

112.   To support the embedding of disability within institutions and a move towards inclusive cultures we will work with our partners to help institutions develop the use of EIAs. Our guidance 'Conducting

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[11] At HEFCE we assess the impact of our policies to ensure that they: minimise the regulatory burden for HEIs; promote equality and diversity; and promote sustainable development. These impact assessments are referred to as 'sector impact assessments'. Further information about the impact assessment process can be found at www.hefce.ac.uk under About us/Sector impact assessments.

impact assessments for equal opportunities in higher education' (HEFCE 2004/37) provides a useful basis for this. Completion of WPSAs by institutions will also support the embedding of disability activity in institutions. The WPSAs outline institutional commitment to WP including the support provided to disabled students. Our aim is that WPSAs will help institutions develop a strategic approach to WP which should then be reflected in the support given to disabled students.

113.   JISC TechDis has recently conducted research at an institutional management level to ascertain the barriers faced by institutions in making mainstream provision more inclusive with respect to technology. A research paper and senior management briefing have been published, which include steps towards embedding the use of technology as a whole-institution culture[12]. Some of the principles regarding making mainstream provision more inclusive can be more broadly applied than to technology alone.

114.   The forthcoming revised Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Code of Practice, section 3 regarding disabled students, will also provide a useful source of guidance in advancing support for disabled students.

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[12] 'Technology change for inclusion: 12 steps towards embedding inclusive practice with technology as a whole-institution culture in UK higher education', JISC TechDis (2009).

Annex A
Useful contacts/partners

Action on Access	www.actiononaccess.org
Equality Challenge Unit	www.ecu.ac.uk
Higher Education Academy	www.heacademy.ac.uk
JISC TechDis	www.techdis.ac.uk
Leadership Foundation for Higher Education	www.lfhe.ac.uk
National Association of Disability Practitioners	www.nadp-uk.org
Skill: National Bureau for Disabled Students	www.skill.org.uk
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education	www.qaa.ac.uk

List of abbreviations

AonA	Action on Access
The Academy	Higher Education Academy
CPD	Continuing professional development
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DED	Disability Equality Duty
DEP	Disability Equality Partnership
DES	Disability Equality Scheme
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
DSA	Disabled Students' Allowance
ECU	Equality Challenge Unit
EIA	Equality impact assessment
HE	Higher education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HEI	Higher education institution
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
NAO	National Audit Office
SENDA	Special Educational Needs and Disability Act
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
WP	Widening participation
WPSA	Widening participation strategic assessment