

Induction and Disabled Learners



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Action on Access

Action on Access is the national co-ordination team for widening participation in higher education, appointed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The Action on Access mission is to promote inclusivity and diversity, and the broadest possible access to higher education. We shape and influence both policy and practice and broker dialogue between policy-makers and practitioners. We challenge and support the sector, working with a wide range of partners and strategic alliances, to help deliver and embed widening participation.

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Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 5 |
| The Purpose of Induction | 5 |
| The Format and Duration of Induction | 6 |
| Why Focus on Arrangements for Disabled Students? | 6 |
| Access to Disability-specific Information | 7 |
| Mainstream or Discrete Approaches to Induction Programmes | 8 |
| Case Studies | 10 |
| Pre-entry Mainstream Induction which Includes Disabled Students | 11 |
| Case Study 1 – Stepping Stones 2HE: Students Active in Transition to HE | 11 |
| Pre-entry and Early Induction or Orientation Designed Solely for Disabled Students | 14 |
| Case Study 2 – Get Ahead: Early Induction Event for Disabled Students | 14 |
| Case Study 3 – Early Induction Programme | 17 |
| Impairment-specific Induction and Orientation Activities | 19 |
| Case Study 4 – Orientation/Induction Checklist for Students with Asperger’s Syndrome | 19 |
| Case Study 5 – Induction Programme for D/deaf Students | 21 |
| Extended Induction Activities | 23 |
| Case Study 6 – Induction Mentoring Programme | 25 |
| Case Study 7 – Campus Assistant Programme | 27 |
| Developing Induction and Orientation Programmes to Support Disabled Students | 30 |
| Designing for the Inclusion of Disabled Students | 30 |
| Accessible Information | 31 |
| Disability Disclosure and Confidentiality | 32 |
| Information about Individual Disabled Students | 32 |
| Identifying and Supporting Individual Students (Reasonable Adjustments) | 32 |
| Accessible Facilities and Resources | 33 |
| Working Collaboratively | 33 |
| References | 34 |
| Glossary | 35 |



Introduction



A significant number of studies have been undertaken into the barriers that students from non-traditional backgrounds encounter on entering higher education (HE). A few studies relate directly to the issues experienced by disabled students. However, little information is available specifically about orientation, induction and new student programmes for disabled students. This publication attempts to draw together some examples of practice in HE designed to offer an improved transition experience for disabled students. These examples are drawn from across the sector and describe both mainstream and discrete approaches to induction.

Action on Access is grateful to colleagues for volunteering examples of practice and case studies describing their programmes. Many of these examples have been developed by staff with a remit to work specifically with disabled students in HE. Others are designed by academic staff as an outcome of research into the first-year student experience or in response to retention issues. Further programmes have developed as widening participation and Aimhigher initiatives, and others from collaboration with external agencies. We hope that the case studies and guidance included in this publication provide inspiration and encouragement to staff considering developing new programmes, or reviewing existing ones, in order to support disabled student transition and success through early interventions.

The Purpose of Induction

Induction programmes serve a significant purpose for both new students and the higher education institution (HEI) they are entering by:

- Ensuring access to appropriate and timely information and advice about the course, support services, administrative procedures and the university.
- Promoting appropriate staff and student interaction to develop students' sense of community.
- Promoting students' affiliation to the institution.
- Supporting the transition to new methods of working and developing students' skills for autonomous and independent learning.
- Providing opportunities for students to engage purposefully with academic studies from the start. (Hoddle et al., 2004).

Without these interventions students are likely to take longer to settle into their new life and studies. If a student then experiences difficulties with any aspect of HE they are more likely to consider leaving without knowledge of where to find the right support services and networks. First-year students often report being overwhelmed with information, much of which they fail to remember. Studies have found that young people lack prior knowledge of what student life involves (Forsyth and Furlong, 2003), that they are expected to be too independent too early and



are shocked by what they feel is a lack of supervision and guidance (Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003; Read et al., 2003). Students' long-term relationships with their academic department and the institution stem from, and build upon, relationships founded during the initial stages (Gorard et al., 2006).

Transition, induction and orientation programmes should therefore seek to serve the key purposes of allowing students to acclimatise quickly to their new environment and making the best start possible in their studies. This will smooth the transition and help students to remain on course as effective learners.

The Format and Duration of Induction

Induction programmes are traditionally considered to take place immediately as new students arrive at university, often lasting approximately a week and finishing before the start of the formal academic programme. However, this view is now being challenged and a re-conceptualisation is taking place. Induction is becoming a process which begins prior to entry and which lasts throughout the first year of study. This is to prepare new students socially, academically and culturally (Hoddle et al., 2004). Case Study 1 from Bournemouth University and Case Study 6 from Brunel University, and the other examples in the section on Extended Induction Activities, take this model into account.

Why Focus on Arrangements for Disabled Students?

HEIs increasingly recognise the need to provide induction programmes that offer greater support during transition and throughout the first year of study to those groups of students who are generally under-represented in HE. The intention is to support those who may not have had opportunities to effectively prepare for HE and who may lack the essential knowledge and skills required to help them quickly settle into their studies. The definition of an under-represented student varies, but includes those who are:

- from low-participation neighbourhoods (on the basis of postcodes)
- disabled
- mature
- studying part-time
- from households with a low income
- from socio-economic classifications 4-7
- from an ethnic minority group
- the first in their family to enter higher education (National Audit Office, 2007)

A study at University College, Northampton, indicated that new students from these diverse backgrounds have concerns when they enter HE about fitting in socially, culturally and academically (Hoddle et al., 2004). In addition to these concerns, Hall and Tinklin (1998, 1999) explain that transition and integration in HE can be more problematic for some disabled students. This is because disabled students can also encounter physical or psychological barriers which make it harder for them to meet or engage with others in the important first few weeks in HE. To add to these concerns, disabled students also report receiving different levels of support from academic staff (Tinklin et al., 2004) and different treatment across different departments in the same institution (Hall and Tinklin, 1998, 1999).

These research findings therefore suggest that it is important for disabled students to participate in effective induction and orientation programmes.

Access to Disability-specific Information

Almost all HEIs have a named member of staff with some level of responsibility for organising provision for disabled students. Most institutions now have a separate disability service variously located within student services, equality and diversity, or academic support service departments. Amongst other functions, these services help arrange individual adjustments to learning and teaching for disabled students and support students throughout the process of applying for funding to support their studies.

The Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), a major source of financial support for UK disabled students, is designed to minimise difficulties disabled students experience within HE. The DSA contributes to support for specialist equipment, personal academic-related assistance, expenses (such as extra photocopying costs) and accessible transport.

According to a National Audit Office report (2007) these allowances have proven to be a key factor in the retention of disabled students. However, it also suggested that many disabled students are not accessing this additional funding.

“Students receiving an Allowance (DSA) are much more likely to continue their course than other students self-declaring a disability and, indeed, than students who are not disabled. Although the number receiving an Allowance has increased, at some institutions an Allowance is obtained by less than 10 per cent of self-declared disabled students studying full-time or at least more than half-time, and at other institutions over 70 per cent obtain an Allowance.” (National Audit Office, 2007 p.12)

Despite the existence of specialist services and funding, some disabled students do not have access to up-to-date information and advice prior to entering HE for a number of reasons:

- Research conducted on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions shows that 52% of people defined as disabled by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) would not choose to use the term disabled to describe themselves (Grewal et al., 2002). Therefore, many students who qualify for disability support do not consider themselves to be disabled and as a result they would not seek out information about specialist services.
- Students who have previously had poor experiences of educational support may refuse to consider applying for additional support in HE.
- Many disabled students do not want to be singled out as different by academic staff or their fellow students or labelled as a 'problem'.
- Disabled students may perceive additional support as giving them an unfair advantage over their peers and which they do not want to be seen as having.
- Key advisers can lack access to up-to-date information and are therefore unable to provide guidance and advice about support in HE to disabled young people.

Students who do not have access to information about DSA and who have not had help to apply for their allowance at the pre-entry stage are likely to be significantly disadvantaged in relation to both their disabled and non-disabled peers. Lack of awareness about the prevailing attitudes to and support for disabled students in HE also prevents timely access to appropriate adjustments and support that a disabled student may require. Induction is therefore a significant and essential opportunity to provide such information to all students.



Mainstream or Discrete Approaches to Induction Programmes

Across the sector, HEIs have implemented programmes specifically designed to meet the needs of disabled students (discrete events) and those directed at all new students (mainstream events). Discrete induction programmes and activities aim to provide support separately to disabled learners in recognition of the additional transition issues many of these students will encounter. For example, see Case Study 4 from Trinity College of Music, and Case Study 5 from the University of Central Lancashire.

Mainstream approaches generally adapt or embed information for disabled learners within existing induction programmes; disabled students attending events alongside their non-disabled peers. These approaches and activities tend to be designed to take into account the growing breadth of student diversity and as such might be viewed as being more inclusive.

There are arguments for and against each approach depending upon individual circumstances and financial and organisational constraints.

Arguments for discrete, additional induction activities include:

- Information is specific, targeted and appropriate. It is not lost amongst a raft of other detail.
- The specific issues faced by disabled students can be considered and addressed (in confidence).
- Students have additional opportunities and time to familiarise themselves with the systems and structures of their HEI.
- Mainstream activities may not be designed to be accessible to, and inclusive of, disabled students.

And against:

- Disabled students may be perceived by both themselves and other students as being different to their peers.
- Disabled students may miss out on the main student induction programme if timetabled activities for discrete events coincide.
- Such events rely on disabled students declaring to the institution before they can be invited to participate. Not all disabled students are known to the HEI.



Arguments for mainstream induction activities include:

- Disabled students are not treated differently or considered special.
- All students face transition issues and require assistance with some general principles (e.g. how to access student support) to aid their entry to HE.
- Information communicated about provision for disabled students will reach all students including those who have not considered whether they are disabled as well as those students who are unwilling to disclose for whatever reason.
- Disabled students can maximise time spent with their non-disabled peers at this early stage when all new students are forming important friendships.

And against:

- Disabled students don't get the disability specific information they require and therefore have to spend time finding out additional information.
- Disabled students will be reluctant to disclose a disability or identify themselves as being different in any way by asking specific questions about support in front of other students.
- Some students lack confidence to ask for assistance or to approach support services.

The following case studies, provided by a number of different HEIs, give examples of induction programmes designed to help address some of the issues discussed above. We hope the variety of approaches described, and the guidance towards the end of this publication, will offer new perspectives to support you in reviewing your own induction provision and that they will help ensure disabled students recruited to your HEI go on to succeed in their studies.

Case Studies



Pre-entry Mainstream Induction which Includes Disabled Students

Activities designed to engage with students prior to their entry into the first year of HE study can help the HEI find out about their new students, give the students an idea about what to expect once they start, and spread the load for students who are receiving, absorbing and using vast quantities of new information.

“Induction programmes should provide clarity about what is expected of students at university, build confidence and motivation and allow the students to integrate. This process is most effective if it starts before enrolment and extends through the first semester – as this is when the majority of students who withdraw do so – or beyond.”
(Thomas et al., 2005).

Examples of pre-entry preparatory activities have been developed by both HEIs and Aimhigher partnerships. For example, Aimhigher North London, Suffolk and Greater Merseyside have all run summer schools for disabled young people. Aimhigher Merseyside also aims to deliver Aimhigher programmes that actively include disabled learners. They are achieving this by promoting positive images of disabled people in higher education through a project called ‘Difference Matters’, and producing a set of guides about engaging with young disabled people. For more information visit the Aimhigher Greater Merseyside web site: <http://www.ahgtm.ac.uk/differencematters>

The following example of a pre-entry mainstream induction programme aims to include disabled students by giving consideration to accessible design of resources and programme content.

Case Study 1

Stepping Stones 2HE: Students Active in Transition to HE

Bournemouth University

Contact: Christine Keenan, Learning and Teaching Fellow, Bournemouth University, ckeenan@bournemouth.ac.uk

Context and Main Purpose of the Activity

In 2002, research with students studying at the University from a cross-section of socio-economic backgrounds revealed that they often felt very uncertain about what to expect on arrival at university. Students were also quite critical of the University’s induction processes. It emerged that early decisions to leave were often influenced by insufficient information about starting at university and not getting down to work quickly enough. A common issue was information overload, which was problematic given the complexity of the transition/induction experience. Evidently, we lacked understanding of students’ previous academic experiences and lacked a mechanism for sharing discussion about expectations.

I developed Stepping Stones 2HE, a web-based resource to enhance transition and induction, as an outcome of my research. New students are directed to the website six weeks before arrival at university. The website aims to encourage early commitment and engagement with their course and the wider university by providing information about university study, student support, and the other aspects of university life that are traditionally provided during induction week. It aims to improve confidence about starting at university, and provides some directed learning that relates to planned induction activities. Part of the resource comprises an ‘About You’ survey designed to encourage students to interact with us and reflect on their previous learning experiences and also encourage expression about expectations of both themselves and of the university. It has also been a space where students have felt safe to disclose disability and personal anxieties about starting university, for example, as a mature female returner to study. This has allowed targeted support to be provided.

From a pilot study in one academic school, a phased Stepping Stones 2HE roll-out is now taking place across the whole University. All courses in three out of six schools are now involved and there are pilot courses in different discipline areas moving towards a complete roll-out for 2009. We are developing a management and implementation plan which will ensure that the initiative has consistency across the schools. This has been funded, in part, by the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund, releasing time to set up Stepping Stones as a fully-inclusive transition support for all students.



Identified Target Group(s)

The Stepping Stones 2HE concept acknowledges that all students, whatever their background and personal circumstances, experience concerns about starting on their higher education journey. It mainstreams the experience and aspires to address the needs of all students, including those with disability and those from widening participation backgrounds.

Identified Barriers/Issues for Disabled Students (Why Activity is Needed)

The literature acknowledges transition and induction are critical phases in the student journey shared by the whole student community and that it is a critical area of concern. There is often a lack of understanding about student expectations and insufficient recognition that university culture, systems and processes can be a significant barrier to successful student integration.

How the Activity Addresses the Barriers/Issues

My own research interest looks at the influence of institutional habitus on transition and has involved considerable engagement with numbers of students from across the student body, including whole cohorts. This has enabled me to ensure that we develop a better understanding of the needs of our students. Improving understanding of each other's expectations has also proved beneficial.

The programme aims to enhance social and academic integration. It facilitates the development of relationships between the new student and the wider University, their new area of study and with staff at the University. This is also achieved through learning activities completed prior to entry that are then built on during induction week, enhancing social and academic relationships with peers.

This innovative approach ensures students receive important information in a way that they have more control over, as they can absorb it at their own pace, in their own home. The induction period is now more academically focused. Students arrive better prepared and during induction they work collaboratively towards an objective, e.g. giving presentations and poster demonstrations. This has led to a more active approach to induction, with other induction processes phased at more relevant, contextualised and accessible points in the first year.

Notable Successes of the Activity

Once students begin the process, and have had a challenging and stimulating induction experience, their confidence increases rapidly. Stepping Stones 2HE works with students in a way that values them as individuals in the transition process. Staff and student comments below from evaluations identify that:

“The programme is fun; enables early group bonding; enthuses students, they are keen to participate and create an end product; makes students feel part of the university before they arrive; is a good introduction to return to study; effective in leaving students feeling positive, determined and enthusiastic and creates a genuine ‘buzz’ around the school.”

“Academics have been impressed at the standard of work completed in a short space of time and the knowledge that students gained.”

“In one program, new students demonstrated their work to second-year students who were amazed at what the first-years had produced.”

“The commitment shown to working together having only been recently introduced to each other was a delight.”

Funding from the Higher Education Academy has been received to undertake a more detailed review of this approach to supporting transition to higher education. So far, feedback from students indicates that the programme helped to prepare them for their new environment, their motivation was very positive at the start of the course, and significantly, over the course of the year, there is a clear improvement in how students rate their positive feelings about life at university.

Challenges

The introduction of this approach into each new area of the University requires staff development and includes: developing the pre-induction learning activities, re-thinking approaches to induction week and developing better understandings of the expectations of new students.

Implementation requires planning to fit with the academic cycle. The resource is released to students in mid-August so site information needs to be prepared early in the summer term before competing demands of holidays and other scholarly activities. Lead-in time with technologists is required.

Although the resource is web-based, another challenge has been that students needed a unique ID and password to complete the on-line survey. The introduction of on-line enrolment services will trigger an alert to the resource and provide students with their University log-ins so that they can respond to the ‘About You’ survey.

Lessons Learned

A key lesson has been that we need to think carefully about how we communicate the benefits of using Stepping Stones 2HE to new students. We intend to direct students to the resource within their letter of confirmation. This will ensure that we reach all students, including late enrollers and students arriving through clearing.

Acknowledgements

Bournemouth University supported this approach through the Learning and Teaching Development Committee, First Year Experience Task Group, and latterly through the University Strategy. In 2004, I was awarded a University learning and teaching fellowship to develop the resource. Academic staff have enthusiastically involved themselves with the concept, contributing to the design of activities and encouraging students during the induction period. There is also considerable commitment and contribution from the support services: registry, librarians, additional learning needs service, study support, the students’ union, technologists, and many others in the University.

Additional Reading

Keenan, C. (2008) Students getting down to work before they start at university: a model for improving retention, in: Crosling, G., Thomas, L. and Heagney, M. (Eds.) Improving Student Retention in Higher Education: the Role of Teaching and Learning, Routledge Farmer.

Keenan, C. (2006) Stepping Stones 2HE: Bridging the Transition Gap. Higher Education Academy Exchange magazine.

Pre-entry and Early Induction or Orientation Designed Solely for Disabled Students

Pre-entry and early induction activities targeting new disabled students are generally designed to provide specific additional information, to build confidence, help acclimatisation and confidence building, and to help form social networks. Two different approaches to discrete pre-entry induction for disabled students are described in the following case studies.

Case Study 2

Get Ahead - Early Induction Event for Disabled Students

University of Derby

Contact: Chéron Stevenson, Support & Advisory Service, University of Derby, C.P.Stevenson@derby.ac.uk

Context and Main Purpose of the Activity

Get Ahead is a pre-entry induction programme aimed at new students who have declared a disability or specific learning difficulty (SpLD) to the University. The purpose is to ease the transition into HE using a programme of practical and social activities funded by Aimhigher. The event fits within the University's widening participation and retention initiatives. It is organised each year immediately prior to the usual student arrival date. Get Ahead forms part of the pre-entry work to support disabled prospective students undertaken by the support and advisory service.

The programme enables early interface between students and a range of University services and faculties when more staff time is available. It provides opportunities to: discuss support needs; familiarise students with the campus and surrounding area, including routes to the University and town; help build social networks; and communicate key messages about facilities available and the HE study environment to new students before they start their course, prior to their induction programme. (Get Ahead programme details are available on request). The opportunity to move into halls of residence early, at no additional cost, is a positive experience for students and site staff.

The event ensures each student has an opportunity to meet with a service adviser resulting in a support plan. This is an internal confidential document outlining the responsibilities University departments or academic staff have to make adjustments for each disabled student.

Identified Target Group(s)

All first-year disabled students and students declaring a SpLD are invited to attend. The event is optional, and students are free to go to some or all of the week's activities.

Identified Barriers/Issues for Disabled Students (Why Activity is Needed)

The transition to university can be difficult for some disabled students. As well as dealing with the demands of a new course of study and the first few weeks of university life, they also have to go through the process of ensuring their support is in place. Many students arriving at the University have not started this process. Early experiences of university life can have a significant impact upon a student's success in HE and the University's retention rates. In the first few weeks of term some disabled students can become isolated and be inundated with disability support arrangements and study demands, which can lead to early drop-out.



How the Activity Addresses the Barriers/Issues

Get Ahead helps to ensure:

- The transition into university is made easier and more manageable
- Initial experiences of HE are improved
- Necessary support is in place at an earlier stage
- Students feel more confident in the first crucial weeks of university life
- Students know their way around and they understand the role of the support & advisory service
- All staff involved can offer more support at a less busy period

Notable Successes of the Activity

The average retention rate, at around 92%, of disabled students with support plans in place provides a positive picture. Feedback received has been very constructive and students tell us Get Ahead helps:

- them feel more confident
- them meet new friends in a more relaxed environment
- them get organised
- make coming to university an easier and more pleasant experience
- reduce homesickness
- them get to know staff so they seem more approachable if a problem arises



Challenges

- The event occurs early in September and staff may not be available due to annual leave or other commitments.
- Predicting student numbers attending and adjusting the programme can be difficult. This also impacts on funding estimates.
- The competing demand for student residential accommodation for conferences.
- Being realistic about what can be achieved or included in the programme.

Lessons Learned

- Clear aims are necessary and a vision of what the activity intends to achieve.
- Devising a programme from the students' perspective (using student views) that is varied and enables participation at all levels.
- New students have made the effort to come and the programme is providing one of their first experiences of the University.
- Identifying someone responsible for co-ordinating the event and a commitment from colleagues to assist.
- Pre-planning up to 9 months in advance to: recruit and book key staff and agree their contribution; secure accessible transport to ensure students get to and from evening events safely; and booking accessible facilities and specialist staffing such as interpreters.
- Timing the programme to allow for events to be repeated so that students do not miss out.
- Student helpers are vital and they need to be recruited and briefed about their duties. (N.B. student helpers are paid).
- Building flexibility into the programme for contingencies.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the support and advisory team, university nurses, dyslexia support tutors, student helpers, disability co-ordinators from faculties, school liaison officers, library staff, residential assistants, hall managers, the housing centre team, the students' union, and the chaplaincy team.

Case Study 3

Early Induction Programme

Bath Spa University

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Context and Main Purpose of the Activity

A programme of events and activities for first-year students starting at the University who had disclosed a disability on their UCAS forms was established in September 2007 as a result of collaboration between the disability and widening participation teams. The percentage of full-time undergraduate entrants in receipt of a DSA at the University rose from 3.8% in 2001/02 to 7.5% in 2005/06 (HESA performance indicators). The growing number provided an incentive to pilot this early induction experience. The aim of the 'Early Induction Programme' was to help new students settle in and quickly feel part of the student body by offering extra support at this key transition point. It was also hoped that the programme would offer reassurance to parents and carers.

The programme provides the opportunity for new disabled students to arrive prior to induction week to allow orientation of the campus, student accommodation and the local area. Students can meet and talk with staff and current students to answer queries and offer advice and reassurance. The programme was institutionally funded as part of the outreach programme, an aspect of the University's Widening Participation Strategic Plan. This is informed by the vision, mission statement and strategic objectives set out in the University Strategic Plan.

Identified Target Group(s)

The target group was self-selected. Every new undergraduate student disclosing a disability on their UCAS form was personally invited to attend by the disability officer. Not all new students took advantage of the programme. The range of attendee impairments included dyslexia, mental health issues, ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome, sight or hearing impairment and mobility issues. With agreement of the students, parents, carers or supporters were invited to stay and take part in the first day of activities. Again, some chose to stay, others did not.

Identified Barriers/Issues for Disabled Students (Why Activity is Needed)

During freshers' week the amount of information given, the level of activity that takes place and the sheer number of people around campus can be the source of confusion and anxiety for some disabled students. In common with the experience of many universities, we have found that disabled students can arrive at the University unsure of their support entitlement or what is available. Some students also lack the confidence to request support. This can result in delays in support implementation. Parents and carers are also concerned and anxious that adequate support will be in place. Moving away from home can be a stressful and anxious time for both student and parent.

How the Activity Addresses the Barriers/Issues

This programme helps new disabled students overcome the daunting prospect of starting university and enhances self-confidence by offering a head start. Through early induction it offers personal support, provides information and guidance in a relaxed atmosphere, allows students to ask questions in a safe environment and encourages social interaction with a small group of new and current students and key support staff. Students and parents/carers can gain confidence in the University's capacity to provide appropriate support.

Day 1 activities:

- Student support services presentations identify key student support services staff. Q&A sessions and individual consultations with the disability officer and team to arrange support. Campus orientation, social networking opportunities with current students. Treasure-hunt activity introducing students to key teaching and study areas, library, IT suites, refectory, the students' union, and the welfare offices.

- Confidence-building presentation introducing students to new ways of studying and learning, note-taking and memory-improving techniques. This demonstrates that students already possess HE study skills they can utilise and reassures them that lectures and note-taking are not as daunting as imagined.
- President of the students' union gives a talk about student union services, explaining freshers' week events and arranging for students to buy bus passes early.

Day 2 activities:

- Orientation and social activities tailored mainly to residential students to familiarise with the University bus routes, including campus and city pick-up/drop-off.
- City orientation delivered by student ambassadors including key places of interest, good shops, entertainment venues, NHS walk-in centre, banks and supermarkets.
- A small pre-term evening event in the students' union for students and ambassadors.

Notable Successes of the Activity

Verbal student and parent/carer feedback was extremely positive. Evaluation showed students seemed to have found all activities useful and that the programme helped them to feel integrated and allayed some fears. The motivational session inspired many. Comments were received on the speaker's confidence in them as students and how capable they are to succeed in their studies. At the post-event debrief, staff noted how well the students seemed to interact with each other and commented on the positive atmosphere surrounding the programme. It was fun for us and very rewarding. We will look at including quotes from these students in the invitation letter for the 2008/09 programme. The disability officer is undertaking a long-term programme evaluation.

Some of the 2007/08 participants have volunteered to work on a range of widening participation events. One student is working on widening participation outreach school events as a student ambassador. Many expressed interest in helping at this year's early induction.

Challenges

- Settling residential students into their accommodation and straightaway expecting them to join in with Day 1 activities proved difficult. Underestimating the range of arrival times and the amount of time it takes to move into accommodation.
- Insufficient time for parents/carers and new students to meet support staff; consultations were ad-hoc and sometimes rushed.

Lessons Learned

- Extending the programme by a day, so that residential students can settle in before commencing activities. Adding an introductory reception for new arrivals and parents/carers to meet support staff who can answer queries and allay concerns. A pilot triage system on Day 1 and making one-to-one appointments so students can consult with disability staff and so staff can deal confidentially with individual queries and ensure paperwork is in order so that support can be put into place.
- For cross-departmental working, it is essential to have a clear, structured time frame built into the planning process so that everyone understands their role in the co-ordination and delivery of the programme. This type of event can take months of planning and involves people from many other departments within the institution. This year everyone involved will be fully briefed prior to the event.
- We will hold a discussion group with students who participated in the pilot programme to help review the programme, to identify what worked and what could be improved.

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Impairment-specific Induction and Orientation Activities

Such programmes can support disabled students by communicating impairment-specific information in advance of, or alongside, the main induction programme. This helps to ensure that key information is provided in a way that is accessible to the students, e.g. teaching the session in British Sign Language for deaf students. Students can also be introduced to, work with and get to know their support workers in advance. This familiarity helps when the academic course begins. Impairment-specific sessions also tend to cover only those issues and concerns relevant to students with a specific impairment which may be of little relevance to other disabled students. In addition, these sessions can potentially enable students to get to know a support network of their peers who might experience similar difficulties with settling in or with studying at HE.

The first example below describes a pre-entry activity for students with Asperger's Syndrome. The second is a programme for deaf students running parallel to the students' mainstream induction.

Case Study 4

Orientation/Induction Checklist for Students with Asperger's Syndrome

Trinity College of Music

Contact: James Hitchins, Disability Officer, jhitchins@tcm.ac.uk

Context and Main Purpose of the Activity

The aim of this orientation induction programme (and its accompanying checklist) was to show new students with Asperger's Syndrome around the institution and local area before their course started so that they were not overwhelmed by all the new information they had to deal with. As induction can also be socially problematic, finding out specific information in a discrete induction event means that these students with interpersonal and communication difficulties do not have to rely on questioning their peers to orientate themselves and to negotiate college procedures.

We contacted students with Asperger's Syndrome over the summer and picked up on certain anxieties from parents, key workers and students themselves regarding their integration and practical matters about higher education that they had not had to deal with before. The students did not need persuading; they were keen to attend the event.

A checklist of things to go through with students prior to starting their course was devised and an orientation programme, to meet individual key members of staff, was organised. The list covered information about: halls of

residence, local amenities, how to buy a travel card, what to bring to College, and things the disability service needs to do (e.g. extra disability awareness training for staff, letters to staff informing them about the student, etc.). Going through the checklist took roughly two hours for each student and included a trip to the supermarket.

The students were invited to arrive at College during the weekend before the start of term so staff were able to devote time to these students. Three students were seen over the weekend last year.

The scheme was funded and resourced through the disability service at the College as it fits in with our equal opportunities policy, i.e. making reasonable adjustments. Student services co-ordinated the programme and worked with admissions in order to identify the times at which students would be arriving and make the arrangements to ensure that everyone they need to meet could be fitted in.

Identified Target Group(s)

New students with Asperger's Syndrome were identified to participate in the orientation induction as a result of information provided in the health and disability questionnaires sent out in April by the College disability service. Contact with students, parents and carers was then established before the students arrived at their halls of residence.

Identified Barriers/Issues for Disabled Students (Why Activity is Needed)

The activity was needed to lessen the anxiety of students with Asperger's Syndrome entering HE as it is a new environment for them. This is important as many students with Asperger's Syndrome take longer to adapt to new situations than their non-disabled peers. Coming to the College site for the first time can be intimidating; it is a very grand building and the open practising of music can intimidate new students. This can be a particular issue with students with Asperger's Syndrome.

How the Activity Addresses the Barriers/Issues

- Assists in forming a one-to-one connection with student services from an early point, which helps the students feel welcome and comfortable. It also means the student has met a contact person for each service rather than just a having a name and phone number before the course starts.
- Introducing them to the One-Stop-Shop (student services) where they can come and confidentially ask practical questions.
- Geographically they are more able to navigate the College and local area (shops, transport, post office, bank, etc.) independently.
- The induction checklist is available from the college on request.

Notable Successes of the Activity

- Students know who to ring or see if difficulties arise.
- Initial support reassures parents and carers, allowing them to 'hand-over' responsibility.
- Although the impact on student retention is hard to judge, all students who participated in the programme are still at the College.

Challenges

It is hard to organise for all the necessary staff to work at the weekend, especially just prior to induction week as this is a very busy and tiring time for all staff involved.

Lessons Learned

This is something that we need to do regularly as it has been positive and the students have been very appreciative of the idea.

It is important not to overload students during orientation because they will not absorb the information.

Acknowledgements

Dr Catherine Dowland-Pillinger, Head of Student Services.

Case Study 5

Induction Programme for D/deaf Students

University of Central Lancashire

Contact: Kay McCrea, Head of the Specialised Learning Resource Unit (SLRU), KMccrea@uclan.ac.uk

Context and Main Purpose of the Activity

The induction programme designed for new and returning deaf students at the University has developed over the 10 years it has been in operation. A welcome pack is sent out to deaf students prior to arriving at the University which includes a newsletter, an invitation to the induction training event, information about the Deaf and British Sign Language (DBSL) Society, and notice of social events organised by deaf students for deaf students.

The induction itself is designed to give new students an opportunity to meet each other and returning students. It is also a chance for them to get to know 'who's who' in the University. Specialised learning resource unit (SLRU) staff and the advisers for deaf students explain their roles and present information about their services. The event is fully accessible, providing access in BSL, sign-supported English (SSE) and text.

Following the general introduction programme, which includes providing details of: services available within the University; systems in place for booking or cancelling interpreters, note takers and language tutors; funding body financial support; the Access to Learning Fund and the assessment of need process; and a series of 'round robin' workshops held on how to work with interpreters, manual note takers, electronic note takers and language tutors. Students attend sessions depending upon the services they will use. The induction concludes with a get-together, including a buffet, which provides a relaxed opportunity for all to socialise.

The SLRU houses a highly qualified team of BSL/English interpreters who specialise in interpreting in higher education. The SLRU also provides access to manual and electronic note taking and IT training services for both deaf and non-deaf students, a range of transcription services and works alongside tutors and departments to facilitate and promote accessibility within the University.

Identified Target Group(s)

The induction training event is open to all new and returning deaf students, from foundation entry to post-graduate level.

Identified Barriers/Issues for Disabled Students (Why Activity is Needed)

The first few weeks in HE can be a confusing time for any new student. Deaf students face extra challenges, such as language barriers and feeling isolated amongst their hearing peers. It is therefore a critical time to establish a link with deaf students, provide them with relevant information to allow them to settle in quickly and to meet their deaf peers.

At the start of the academic year all students reach a point of information overload. Being mindful of this, induction information for deaf students is revisited throughout the year by: producing a series of information brochures; putting information onto our website; inviting 'deaf reps' to regular feedback meetings; sending out voice mails about how to use services; and producing an additional mid-year newsletter update as a reminder of available services. A University-based social networking site is in the process of being set up where induction information will also be posted so students can access this throughout the year.

How the Activity Addresses the Barriers/Issues

The induction training event offers deaf students an opportunity to meet with fellow deaf students, and provides them with an introduction to and information about the various services available on campus.

The timing is carefully planned to fit around mainstream induction events, minimising the impact on other timetabled activities. Although the induction for deaf students is run as a discrete session during freshers' week, students are encouraged to attend other mainstream events and, if need be, dip in and out of our induction sessions.

Notable Successes of the Activity

Paper-based evaluation requests are sent out at the end of each year. Students are also invited to come to a meeting where they can feedback if they wish. Deaf students indicate that the programme has been effective. Tutors, interpreters and note takers have also described positive experiences working with the students who have been through this induction. It is easy to identify which students have attended because they engage more effectively in the classroom and with interpreters, note takers and language tutors. Students also report they appreciate knowing about specialist services and opportunities to socialise with their deaf peers from the outset.

Challenges

- Getting the timing and the balance of activities right depending on the number of students who participate. Low numbers can present problems and make training ineffective.
- Finding a suitable time during freshers' week that does not clash with other timetables.
- Encouraging students to attend sessions. During their first week at University there are often many competing activities on offer to new students and it can be difficult sometimes to get across the importance of the induction. Some years are better attended than others.
- The social networking site will require monitoring and administering to check appropriateness of postings, etc, but it is anticipated that this will be a virtual deaf community for sharing ideas, news and information. There will be the opportunity to include video material on the site, making it more interactive for deaf students.
- Note taking services are also provided for a wide range of students with varying needs. We have deliberated over how best to accommodate all students who work with a note taker at the induction training event. To date, we have not found a way to successfully include everyone into these sessions so have continued to offer induction to non-deaf students on a one-to-one basis.

Lessons Learned

- The style of the induction training event lends itself to larger numbers of deaf students, but the programme could be adapted for smaller numbers of students.
- The event was initially designed for both new and returning deaf students. After reviewing the programme, it was decided to provide a series of more tailored sessions for each group. This resulted in greater flexibility. In future some of the training workshop materials may be made available in alternative formats, e.g. DVD, e-learning.
- This year an on-line survey tool for evaluation purposes has been piloted. In addition, the idea of gaining feedback from students by offering a meeting, facilitated by a deaf person who is not directly involved with the service, is being considered to allow objective and anonymous feedback.

Acknowledgements

Staff in the SLRU and advisers for deaf students.



Extended Induction Activities

Induction has traditionally been delivered as an initial orientation week or set of activities over several days. However HEIs are finding that new students do not always have the necessary confidence, sense of belonging or skills sets on entry to be able to absorb pre-requisite knowledge and acquire essential skills in such a short space of time.

“Overall, participants in the research wanted a longer induction period which offered a more supportive programme providing a more comprehensive introduction to study requirements.” (Elliott, 2002).

In order to support success and retain students on programme, induction activities are beginning to be extended to the first term or semester, and in some institutions induction activities are embedded throughout the first year programme.

“Institutions are now recognising the value of a ‘longer and thinner’ induction that starts earlier and lasts longer than a week. This provides a more effective opportunity for new students to assimilate and make sense of the information provided, to socialise with the staff and existing students through a range of activities.” (Thomas et al., 2005)

Below is an example of a disability service’s input into such a programme.

Southampton Solent University has a ‘Spiral Induction Programme’ where induction is seen as a process commencing even before the student starts at the institution, continuing through the first term and the first year. Information is provided to students at the outset and is reiterated over the course of the spiral programme.

Phase one of the spiral programme commences with the disability service, study assistance and making contact with potential disabled students from open days onwards. They begin a dialogue with the students from this point, providing information, advice and guidance about DSA, support and adjustments to learning and teaching that the student might need. Students are encouraged to register with study assistance as early as possible; however, they can choose not to receive support. Once registered, students receive reminders throughout the year about disability provision in case they subsequently wish to take up the support available.

Phase two of the programme is an early induction event for disabled students. New disabled students who have expressed concerns about starting in HE, and those with significant support needs or who are considered more ‘vulnerable’, are invited. This is delivered two days prior to the start of their main induction event. The programme began in 2006 as a result of a research project with existing students about their views of transition to HE. Students use the programme activities to orientate and acclimatise themselves, meet faculty and study assistance staff and members of the Students’ Union. Students can also move into University halls early at no extra cost. Students attending the programme report feeling more confident at the start of their course and have been able to help non-disabled new students settle in when they arrive. Past participants are recruited to be helpers on the following year’s programme.



Phase three involves study assistance, delivering an input at the beginning of each student's course about specialist support. Subsequent reminders are delivered by course and faculty staff. Student support network officers in academic faculties are part of the process, acting as key named staff for disabled students. These staff also support referral to study assistance by helping to identify students who are struggling. Support for disabled students is seen as a faculty role as well as a specialist service role. This encourages students to feel comfortable speaking to whoever they think is most appropriate; people who know them, rather than always having to go to a centralised service.

Contact: Andrea Peoples, Disability Co-ordinator, Southampton Solent University, Andrea.Peoples@solent.ac.uk

Another example of induction support which begins pre-entry and continues into the first year is that provided by collaboration between universities and the National Autistic Society (NAS). So far over 30 HEIs have worked with the NAS on a range of transition support for students with Asperger's Syndrome. The support offered is tailored to meet needs of the specific student as Asperger's Syndrome is very varied. A menu of activities is available which includes training for support and academic staff, individual student mentoring and supporting groups of students to meet socially and discuss issues. For more information and a leaflet about the NAS Prospects service contact Vicky Little, Transitions Consultant, NAS, Victoria.Little@nas.org.uk

According to the STAR project at the University of Ulster, effective induction can support skills and confidence-building at transition and on entry, particularly if delivered over a period of time. The following two case studies describe mentoring schemes established to offer on-going support to students throughout the first year of study. The first, from Brunel University, describes a scheme for students from widening participation backgrounds that specifically includes and supports disabled students. The programme links with three other mentoring schemes designed to support students from pre-entry to progression to employment. The second from the University of Essex is provided via funding set aside as a result of the University's Office for Fair Access (OFFA) agreement and is a programme designed specifically for disabled students.

Case Study 6

Induction Mentoring Programme

Brunel University

Contact: Dr Beverley Crooks, Widening Participation Co-ordinator, Beverley.Crooks@brunel.ac.uk or Marie Ashton, Mentoring Co-ordinator, Marie.Ashton@brunel.ac.uk

Context and Main Purpose of the Activity

The University has 4 overarching mentoring programmes: 1) prospective student outreach mentoring, 2) first-year student mentoring, 3) widening participation student career mentoring, and 4) ethnic minority student career mentoring. The Peer Advice Learning Support (PALS) programme, an inclusive peer mentoring scheme for first-year students was established as a pilot in September 2007. The scheme meets a key area of the widening participation strategy and falls under the additionality element of the OFFA agreement (appendix to widening participation strategy).

PALS links to both the University pre-entry outreach mentoring programme and the careers mentoring programme supporting progression to employment or further studies. The aim is to establish transition support through continuous mentoring from pre-entry to as far into the student's course as necessary, creating a 'University for Success' model. The intention is that for most students PALS mentoring support ceases at the end of the first year, but support can continue past this point if it is seen as being needed.

One aim of PALS is to increase the number of disabled students at the University through early contact. Currently the University does not meet its HEFCE benchmark for disabled students although numbers are improving. The widening participation strategy ensures that widening participation resources target specific areas to meet student needs, such as enhancing the student experience with the aim of improving retention. It is intended that the PALS pilot will be expanded in subsequent years and embedded into mainstream provision as a student entitlement that will be sustained by the University, ultimately to be owned by individual academic schools.

Identified Target Group(s)

Students who fall into the widening participation cohort in its broadest sense are targeted. For example, students from lower socio-economic groups; disabled students; local authority care leavers; those who have learnt English in the last 10 years; or those studying in schools or colleges with poor progression rates to university. The aim is make provision for all students at risk of not completing their degree. The scheme is offered on a self-referral basis. This year there is a pilot with 8 students, which includes two disabled students.

Identified Barriers/Issues for Disabled Students (Why Activity is Needed)

Although overall University retention figures are good, there remain pockets of problem areas. In the past, Brunel had significant numbers of disabled students leaving their studies early. There is now an effective range of entry support and services for disabled students. However, there is growing evidence that some academic schools may not always be able to meet the significant needs of widening participation students on entry and during their first year to enable them to stay on course. PALS is designed to supplement academic support for students with the most need or who are the least prepared for HE.

PALS was also set up in response to what learners in school and further education said they wanted from the University. For example, disabled learners asked for continued contact with the University after outreach activities and visits had taken place. The continued support of the PALS mentoring programme appealed to prospective mentees as the new students were aware that there would be key stages of settling into university that mentors could support them to work through.

How the Activity Addresses the Barriers/Issues

PALS mentors work with students for as long or as short a time as the student mentee wishes. PALS is a resource the student engages with individually and personally. It is separate and supplementary to academic school support provision. There is no direct dialogue between the mentoring co-ordinator and academic school personal tutors unless necessary, and always with the student's consent. PALS provides a valuable extension of the induction programme available to students. It ensures that, long after the formal induction week is over, students have access to ongoing support, guidance and advice. Although most disabled students receive their DSA as soon as they arrive, there is a growing number who do not. The mentoring programme has proved a valuable tool for students who have not disclosed their disability or who are anxious about starting university.

Notable Successes of the Activity

Qualitative feedback is being obtained to identify the impact of the scheme on the student experience and to inform future programme developments. A formal group get-together was organised to review the programme which will be modified as a result of the evaluation. Further formal reviews will take place after end of year exams. The strong and productive relationships developed between undergraduates and prospective students has been highly valued. The final evaluations proved that the PALS works and plans are in place to expand the programme. One student stated, "I would not have made it through the first term without the help of my mentor."

Challenges

- The 4 programmes are new to the University but in hindsight the mentoring co-ordinator needed more training in disability issues to enhance programme targeting and delivery.
- We expected more students to come forward to be mentored in their first few weeks.
- The University hopes the scheme will grow by word of mouth as students see the benefits. Already there are more learners, currently at FE colleges, who are being mentored pre-entry. Not all these learners will choose Brunel. However the pre-entry mentoring may increase the numbers of students who do come to Brunel and the future take-up of PALS.

Lessons Learned

- A formal group get-together was organised to review the programme which will be modified as a result of the evaluation. At present quantitative evaluation can be carried out on only very small numbers so the data will not be significant. However, ongoing evaluation has highlighted the importance of regular liaison with all parties involved in the mentoring relationship.
- To improve recruitment, advertising continued throughout the first academic year to enable students to join the scheme at any point. In recognition of the need to provide ongoing support at the point of most need, the programme will be extended to students entering their second, third and fourth years.
- The pool of forty widening participation student ambassadors employed by the widening participation team to work on a range of activities has proved to be a valuable source of student mentors.

Acknowledgements

The programme is supported by staff in the disability and dyslexia service and the placement and careers service, who also help to advertise the programme.



Case Study 7

Campus Assistant Programme

University of Essex

Contact: Angela Jones, Assistant Director (Disability), Student Support Office, University of Essex, angela@essex.ac.uk

Context and Main Purpose of the Activity

In 2007, the University of Essex created a new part-time campus assistant (CA) position open to current students for the benefit of new disabled students, international and home. Previously, disabled student feedback indicated that social and academic induction activities were very daunting. This programme has been piloted at the University's largest campus where over 50% of students live in halls of residence. The CA role supports new disabled students during the transition from home to university, providing pre-arrival contact and advice and practical support including socialisation and a listening ear during the first weeks in HE. The CA also provides limited ongoing support and contact with disabled students throughout the year.

The project also aims to expand the CA's skills, providing the opportunity to develop written and verbal communication skills, time management, and enhancing 'employability'. The post was funded as part of the University job placement programme funded from additional top-up fee income and had a budget of £5,000 for the first year.

Identified Target Group(s)

CA support was targeted at disabled students who were likely to find transition to HE difficult and included students with Asperger's Syndrome, mental health difficulties or mobility impairment. Individuals who expressed anxiety during early contact with disability advisers were also offered this provision.

Ongoing CA support for international students was funded by the programme. Continuing academic support for home students can be funded from the disabled students' allowances. During the year, the CA also offered short-term assistance to students with temporary disabilities, e.g. showing accessible routes to students with broken limbs.

Identified Barriers/Issues for Disabled Students (Why Activity is Needed)

Disabled students face the same worries and fears as all students about starting a new phase in their life; however, difficulties may be heightened by their disability or long-term medical condition and can seem like an insurmountable barrier. Disabled students also experience additional barriers related to their impairment.

Anecdotal evidence reports:

- Disabled students' concerns include anxiety about leaving home, social interaction, caring for self (including disability-related daily living needs), identifying what is required of them as a student and when, as well as issues with orientation.
- Disability advisers identified that disabled students, particularly those with Asperger's Syndrome struggle with the transition to HE and find the first few weeks daunting (this is supported by the experience of disability staff in other HEIs). Some students initially visit student support daily or more frequently and experience high levels of anxiety.
- Several students indicated that withdrawal had been considered as a result of difficulties in settling in.

Disability advisers recognise that, whilst they can support transition and arrange academic support, they do not have the capacity to provide sufficient assistance to students experiencing anxiety over social or orientation aspects of transition, for example, attending students' union events and familiarisation with the local area, shops and bus routes.

How the Activity Addresses the Barriers/Issues

The CA role can provide support in confronting and overcoming transition barriers so a new disabled student's experience of starting university is positive, equipping them to initially manage more effectively and for the duration of their studies. The CA provides new disabled students with a person they can contact to discuss concerns or worries they may have both prior to arrival and during the first few weeks. The CA is a fellow student with personal experience of starting university and they are aware of specialist support and other services, university processes, campus layout, etc. The CA can provide assistance appropriate to the student's needs in both academic and social situations.

Notable Successes of the Activity

This pilot activity has not yet been formally evaluated. However, informal student feedback indicates that the programme has been useful this year. Examples include:

- An international student, who had previously withdrawn from a course, did not disclose a disability prior to arrival due to concerns about how this would affect his application. He was also unsure of his support requirements. The CA provided ongoing contact and reassurance whilst support was arranged.

- A student with Asperger's Syndrome said the CA, "pretty much helped me start up here; he showed me where my classes and lectures were, gave recommendations about things on campus and helped me get my timetable sorted; not the easiest thing to do! He was also there for the next few weeks after freshers' week, occasionally checking up to make sure everything was OK, which I found useful because it was just nice to know someone, albeit they were being paid. I'd recommend the service to anyone."
- The CA provided initial assistance to an international student with a visual impairment and the student benefited from a guide to the local area and campus facilities.
- A student with mobility impairment and a mental health difficulty was anxious about studying in HE prior to arrival. She had initial contact with the CA and found she actually needed very little support once she arrived.

Challenges

- Allocation of time from disability advisers for the supervision and training of the CA.
- Consideration of the CA's own needs and course demands, their availability round deadlines and exams and cover during holiday periods.
- Students who have personal experience of a disability or long-term medical condition were encouraged to apply for the position. Unfortunately a disabled CA was not appointed this year (advertising and promotion of the post will be reviewed for next year).

Lessons Learned

- It was necessary to commence planning around Easter in order for funding to be in place and CAs recruited and trained to start in mid-August.
- A pro-vice chancellor was already engaged with reviewing the student experience and development of job placement opportunities. He was very supportive and agreed that this position was beneficial in supporting student induction. It was useful to link developments to existing activity as this can speed up approval.

Acknowledgements

The disability advisers have taken a lead in the training and supervision of the CAs. This initiative has been supported by senior management with the director of student support taking an active lead and the pro-vice chancellor championing developments.

Developing Induction and Orientation Programmes to Support Disabled Students

By applying the following to your institution's practice, you can help ensure you have built inclusivity into the design of your induction and orientation programmes. Some may require changes to practice that are not within your direct remit but it is still useful for you to consider these and the role you could play in helping deliver any changes required.

Designing for the Inclusion of Disabled Students

1. Review your induction programme to identify barriers to the inclusion of disabled students. Plan ahead to remove any aspects or content of the programme which are inaccessible or that might exclude disabled students.
2. Consult with specialist disability staff in the institution (and if you have one, the departmental disability co-ordinator) regarding adjustments to your induction programme which could make it more inclusive to, and accessible for, disabled students.
3. Prior to making changes to your induction programme, consult with disabled people to ensure that you have assessed any negative or positive impact these changes may have on disabled students.
4. When reviewing the induction programme, use any feedback gained from investigations into why disabled students leave the course early to identify changes that could support the retention of disabled students.
5. When designing programmes, ensure there is sufficient time for disabled students to:
 - move between activities and to travel between venues (particularly those with mobility impairments and sight difficulties)
 - participate in the social aspects of the programme at break times
 - reflect on the information provided (particularly students with concentration and information-processing difficulties)
6. Ensure information about provision for disabled students is given a high profile within the programme.
7. Design activities which actively integrate disabled students into group and social activities. This will prevent social isolation and demonstrate effective strategies for team learning that include all, e.g. for group project work. This is particularly important for students with social integration difficulties such as those with Asperger's Syndrome, deaf students or some students with mental health difficulties.
8. Include activities that utilise students' previous experiences and existing knowledge and skills to help to build relations between disabled and non-disabled students. Disabled students may well have strengths in specific skills areas which will give positive messages about disability to their peers and build the disabled student's self confidence.
9. Ensure new disabled students have been introduced to key staff in the academic department who can assist them with disability-related issues, such as their personal tutor and the school or departmental disability co-ordinator if these roles exist, as soon as possible (in some cases prior to registration) so they are familiar with the member of staff, their contact details and where they can be located.
10. Consider offering pre-entry induction activities for disabled students who may need additional time to orientate and familiarise themselves with facilities, staff and key contacts. For example, students with Asperger's Syndrome may benefit from campus and local area orientation prior to the main induction programme and being allocated a named departmental contact.



Accessible Information

11. When reviewing pre-arrival and induction information for new students, consult disabled students and specialist disability staff to help improve the accessibility of the design, format and content. For example, information could be colour coded, organised clearly in sections, and processes presented optionally as flow charts as well as in descriptive or in list format.
12. Send information about induction to disabled students well in advance in appropriate formats (in some circumstances, involving parents by providing them with information can be useful). Providing the dates and times of induction events will enable arrangements to be made in advance for any individual support needed and will help students locate venues in advance.
13. Check that disabled students can access any electronic media being used during induction, such as the virtual learning environment (VLE). Ensure any accessibility adjustments have been made well in advance of students needing to use the resource. Provide training and clear guidance in its use.
14. Aim to keep induction information as focused as possible to avoid overload. Resources that might be provided before students arrive could include timetables, course handbooks, reading lists or materials accessed via a VLE.
15. Ensure the induction timetable and location of activities is made available on the school or department website in accessible formats and that staff, student helpers and new students are aware of this.
16. Make information, handouts and presentations used during induction available in accessible formats.
17. Ensure that presentations are delivered so that they are accessible to students who may be lip-reading. For example, face the audience at all times, do not walk around whilst talking, and do not stand with your face in shadow.
18. Ensure PowerPoint presentations are designed to be accessible and are made available electronically (on the VLE) after the induction activity to allow students to re-read the information provided.
19. Reiterate information supplied during the initial orientation period throughout the first academic year to reinforce essential facts. For example, post it on the VLE or the web, re-address issues in personal tutorials, and/or provide induction follow-up sessions.

Disability Disclosure and Confidentiality

20. Provide a range of opportunities that encourage disclosure; explain what is meant by the term 'disabled' and the reason why early disclosure is advisable. For example, make clear that declaration is advisable (and why) during induction presentations, provide statements in the course handbook and invite specialist disability staff to contribute to induction.
21. Be aware that students may need a confidential space in which to disclose or discuss information about their disability.
22. Aim to identify all students on the course who have declared a disability prior to or during induction in order to ensure that the required individual reasonable adjustments are in place for the start of the course.
23. Ensure disabled students are aware that information disclosed about an impairment remains confidential and will only be passed on to relevant staff within the university with the student's permission, e.g. specialist disability staff. Check your confidentiality and data protection policies.

Information about Individual Disabled Students

24. Ensure information from the student record-keeping system about disability declaration, obtained during application or registration, is available to staff organising induction activities in order for them to make individual reasonable adjustments. Alternatively, check with specialist disability staff (or the school or departmental disability co-ordinator) to identify which students on the induction programme have declared a disability.
25. Encourage disabled students to meet with specialist disability staff (and the school or departmental disability co-ordinator) during induction in order to make sure their support requirements and any learning and teaching adjustments have been put in place.

Identifying and Supporting Individual Students (Reasonable Adjustments)

26. Consider introducing basic academic skills diagnostic testing into your induction programme to help identify students who may be at risk. For example, dyslexic students with study skills difficulties or dyscalculic students may struggle with the maths component of programmes. Ensure you obtain advice from specialist disability staff prior to implementing screening to ensure it does not discriminate against disabled students. Any students identified via such a system should receive additional support to develop the required essential skills. If it is suspected that a student has a specific learning difficulty they should be referred to specialist disability staff.
27. If a disabled student has already received an assessment of the adjustments they require, ensure any recommended individual provision is put in place to maximise inclusion in all induction activities.
28. If a disabled student has declared their disability on application, but their individual support requirements have not been identified prior to induction, ensure you liaise with specialist disability staff (or the school or departmental disability co-ordinator) and the student to implement effective interim reasonable adjustments for induction.
29. Try to ensure all students on your programme who have declared a disability have received an appointment with specialist disability staff to assess their requirements.
30. Where possible use mentors or peer support systems to provide additional guidance and orientation for disabled students. Provide training for student peer mentors on working with disabled students. Aim to recruit disabled student peer mentors who can offer relevant support from personal experience and act as role models.
31. Ensure disabled students who require Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) have been referred for assessment so a plan can be put in place prior to the start of the course.
32. Check whether disabled students on your course have attended induction. If they were not present, identify why and, if appropriate, provide opportunities for them to access the information missed and to discuss any emerging issues.

Accessible Facilities and Resources

33. Use accessible venues and wherever possible choose those that have hearing loops installed.
34. Campus tours involving students with mobility difficulties should use accessible routes to ensure the inclusion of disabled students with their peers. Advise students with mobility difficulties about accessible routes around campus.
35. Ensure accessible computer clusters with adaptive technology (if required) are used. Arrange technical support to assist disabled students with access requirements.
36. Provide alternative arrangements or anticipatory adjustments where it is necessary for students to queue or stand for any length of time. For example, offer individual appointments and/or provide seating in waiting areas for people with mobility difficulties.

Working Collaboratively

37. Ensure reception staff on campus and in the school or department office are aware of the requirements of individual disabled students. Where necessary inform staff about reasonable adjustments required by individual disabled students and ensure staff understand their role in implementing these arrangements.
38. Ensure staff contributing to the induction programme such as library, learning resources and IT staff have designed their input to be accessible to disabled students and that they have taken into account the relevant recommendations for accessible design and delivery.
39. Consider working with specialist disability staff to offer early induction to disabled students on your course to enable them to orientate themselves within the institution. This will allow disabled students to focus more on the content of the mainstream induction programme, worry less about how they will cope, and be more confident about what to expect from the non-academic aspects of their course and help them feel they belong from the outset.
40. Ensure all staff involved in induction receive information and/or professional development around best practice in supporting and communicating with disabled students. Staff should be given opportunities to explore existing good practice in removing barriers to inclusion of disabled students.

The above was adapted from a guide created by Tina Elliott in 2008 for a Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund project to develop guidance for academic staff at the University of Westminster with the aim of supporting the development of an inclusive curriculum for disabled students.

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Glossary

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| ADHD | Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorder |
| BSL | British Sign Language |
| CA | Campus Assistant |
| DBSL | Deaf and British Sign Language |
| DDA | Disability Discrimination Act |
| DSA | Disabled Students' Allowance |
| FE | Further Education |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| HEFCE | Higher Education Funding Council for England |
| HESA | Higher Education Statistic Agency |
| NAO | National Audit Office |
| OFFA | Office for Fair Access |
| PALS | Peer Advice Learning Support |
| PEEPs | Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans |
| SLRU | Specialised Learning Resource Unit |
| SpLD | Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) |
| SSE | Sign-supported English |
| UCAS | Universities & Colleges Admissions Service |
| VLE | Virtual Learning Environment |

Publications

from Action on Access

- > Induction and Disabled Learners, June 2009
- > Embedding Success: Learning from Disability Projects in Higher Education, July 2008
- > Higher Education Progression Framework Guide, June 2008
- > University Admissions & Vocational Qualifications: Two Years On, June 2008
- > A Summary Guide to 14-19 Reform: Updated 2008, May 2008
- > Post-16 Education and Disabled Learners, January 2008.
- > Action On Access: Looking to the Future of Widening Participation, December 2007.
- > Disability: A Rough Guide for Widening Participation Practitioners, March 2007.
- > Policy That Works: Widening Participation to Higher Education. December 2006.
- > Progressing to Higher Education: Vocational Qualifications and Admissions, March 2006.
- > The Learner Perspective in Educational Transitions, February 2006.
- > A Summary Guide to 14 – 19 Reform, October 2005.
- > International Comparators of Widening Participation to and through Higher Education: Policy and Practice.
 - Australian Universities, their Students and Social Equity, September 2005.
 - South African Universities, New Developments and the Adult Population, September 2005.
 - Canada: Widening Participation in Rural and Coastal Areas, September 2005.
 - Higher Education in the USA, Student Fees, Financial Aid and Access, November 2005.
 - Sweden, its Universities and Vocational Education, November 2005.
- > Working Together: Aimhigher Governance and Management, A Guide for Partnerships, September 2005.
- > Aimhigher and the Learning and Skills Council: Approaches to Joint Working, July 2005.
- > Making a Difference: The Impact of Aimhigher. A set of 10 case studies, June 2005.
- > Widening Participation: A Rough Guide for Higher Education Providers, April 2005.
- > Student Success in Higher Education, October 2004.

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