

Institute of Education
Report on Disability Equality
December 2008

Introduction

The Institute is pleased to introduce our second annual report on the Institute's Disability Equality Scheme. This report is intended to be a short summary on the progress of disability equality at the Institute. We are currently streamlining our reporting process to create a single equality annual report that will incorporate disability as one of its strands. This will enable us to ensure that we gather data from the full student experience cycle and also allow for more detailed consideration of the interrelationships between different equalities categories and the multiple identities of staff and students. This report will be available from March 2009.

The provision for disabled people at the Institute has improved considerably over the past six years since the introduction of our Disability Office and the Equalities Manager. This is in part as a response to legal requirements, but also due to the strong commitment to equality of opportunity and the active contribution of staff within the Institute who help and support disabled people. The Institute works continually to improve its provision for disabled people, ensuring equal access and adequate support for disabled staff, students and visitors.

As at November 2008, disabled staff make up 4.8% (47) of our total workforce (982). This includes 418 academic staff, of which 16 identify as disabled, and 564 members of professional staff, of which 31 identify as disabled. This has increased from 3.1% when our first Disability Equality Scheme was published in 2006. We know that this increase is in part due to high levels of disclosures from current staff who have chosen to talk about their disability.

In the 2006-07 academic year disabled students represented 4.6% (282) of a total of approximately 6,070 enrolled students. This is a notable increase on the percentage of disabled students enrolled in the previous academic year (3.5%). This period has also seen an increase in the number of disabled applicants to the Institute's courses (from

3.7% to 4.5%), and a significantly increase in our disclosure rates across all programme areas.

We welcome comments from staff and students on our progress in implementing the DES and associated action plans.

Consultation and Involvement

The Institute of Education encourages disabled student feedback by providing focus group events jointly run with the Bloomsbury Colleges. The focus groups are held twice a year. In addition, disabled students are sent a bi-annual questionnaire asking about their perceptions of services and support at the Institute. If students are not comfortable with these methods of feedback 1:1 interview sessions are offered to encourage students to relay their experiences. The information received plays a key role in the development of disability support at the Institute and directly informs the Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan.

The representation of disabled staff on the Institute's Disability Sub-Committee ensures the continuous input of disabled staff into the monitoring and strategic development of the Institute's provision for disabled staff and students. The Institute has continued to work hard to promote the role of the Equalities Manager and the Equal Opportunities Co-ordinators as a source of advice and support for staff and these colleagues have provided an additional conduit for disabled staff to provide feedback on their experiences and, through their membership of the Equal Opportunities Committee, raise key issues for discussion and action.

The Institute has recently set up a disabled staff network group that will offer increased methods for consultation with disabled staff, this group is due to meet during December. The Equality Annual Report will be sent to this group for consultation.

Progress

Our key priorities for 2007/2008 were to consult widely with students on the current action plan and devise key priorities for the coming year, this has been achieved with the Student Voices event and the ongoing communication exercises from the Disability

Support Office. The second key priority was to convene a network group to support disabled staff, this network has now been set up and as noted above will be meeting for the first time in December.

In order to develop provision the Disability Support Office (DSO) actively seeks funding opportunities in order to provide better service provision and embed disability equality across the Institute. In the 07/08 academic year, TDA funding has been awarded to develop case studies as has HEFCE funding to develop a staff resource for making online and face to face courses accessible. The DSO intends to continue this as it is an important mechanism to improve service provision.

Some of our other key achievements during the past year are detailed below.

Diversity Week

The Institute joined with the Bloomsbury Colleges in November 2008 for our second Diversity Awareness Week. The week is aimed at staff and students and includes a wide range of events to celebrate different aspects of diversity. The week included sessions on assistive technology, back care with a physiotherapist, a presentation on LGBT representations in film from the V&A museum, a talk with the Director of Changing Faces Charity, and a presentation from the Different Women Project. The 2008 event was streamlined, with an increased focus on one or two key events each day, to reflect feedback on the previous year's timetable. This made the events extremely successful and the attendance was much higher than in 2007. It has been agreed between the Bloomsbury Colleges that this will continue as an annual event.

Equal Pay Audit

The Institute carried out a full Equal Pay Audit between April and October 2008. Data is still being considered and reports are being taken to the committee for action. The analysis showed that disability does not seem to have an effect on any aspect of pay.

Student Voices

The Institute established student voices in 2006-07 with the Bloomsbury Colleges. Student Voices enables students to feedback information about the disabled student

experience in focus groups. The focus groups are held twice a year to encourage participation. Students have benefited from interacting and discussing their experiences with students from other Colleges.

Case Studies of Disabled students on PGCE courses

This is a Teacher Development Agency funded project on the recruitment and retention of disabled students on courses at the Institute. Current disabled students on Initial Teacher Education courses were approached to write about their experiences and support received on their courses. The case studies were sent for use to staff development, marketing and faculty contacts so that information could be disseminated throughout documentation as well as being used for staff development. A variety of disabilities were highlighted within the case studies from a range of PGCE courses. The information contained within the case studies is useful as students have commented on different levels of support from the Institute, including physical access, support from the Disability Office to support on course from tutors.

TQEF Funded project: enabling access to online and face to face courses

The intent of the project is to develop a web resource to support staff in making their courses (both online and face to face) accessible. In particular the resource will include documentation of key lessons from existing research, supplemented with 'minimum manuals' and 'tip sheets' and an update of the existing accessibility guidelines, and an extension to them to include VLE accessibility guidelines.

Access

The Institute reviews physical accessibility on an ongoing basis. In the past year, access has been improved in the Students Union and the signage continues to be updated. The addition of further disabled parking arrangements are in progress.

Workforce Data

The percentage of disabled staff (4.8%) employed by the Institute is higher than the percentage across the higher education sector (2.8%). The number of declared

disabilities has increased since 2006 but the percentage has remained the same since 2007. A small change in the number of disabled people will not show a great percentage change due to the relatively small numbers involved.

The table below provides the trends of staff by ethnicity and grade in the last 2 years. The following figures should be taken as minimum as a large percentages are still unknown. Staff may have a disability that they have not declared, such as dyslexia, asthma or learning difficulties.

	Disabled Staff October 2007	Disabled Staff October 2007
Grades 1 - 5	7 (6%)	7 (5%)
Grade 6	7 (4%)	10 (6%)
Grade 7	9 (6%)	7 (4)
Grade 8	12 (5%)	12 (5%)
Grade 9 & 10	4 (3%)	2 (1%)
Senior Management Grades	6 (5%)	9 (7%)
	45 (5%)	47 (5%)

Student Data

The number of disabled students at the Institute has been increasing over the past three years, as at October 2008 there were a total of 207 disabled students who have disclosed to the Institute. The table below shows the proportions of disabled students.

Disability	Proportion
Specific Learning Disabilities	47.3%
Visual Impairment	6.8%
Hearing Impairment	6.3%

Mobility impairment	4.3%
Mental Health	3.4%
Unseen Disability	15.0%
Multiple Disabilities	2.4%
Other	6.8%
Unknown	7.7%

Disability Equality Implementation

The Disability Sub-Committee is responsible for overseeing the disability equality action plans and the development of the scheme. This is based on a continuing cycle of activity with the aim of ensuring that disability equality is mainstreamed in the principle functions of the Institute, and it has been a key tool in structuring the Institute's work in relation to disability equality.

The current action plans have been divided into staff and student areas for ease of reference. Progress within the last year can be seen in the updated staff and student action plans attached as Appendices 3 and 4.

Action Plan

A detailed action will be provided as part of the annual report that will be published in April 2009.

Next steps

Though progress has been made on the DES, it is important for the Institute to continually monitor progress and issues raised during implementation, in light of the experience gained at the Institute and other HEIs, to ensure successful progression in year three.

The Institute proposes to take the following action to assist in the progression and effectiveness of the next phase of the DES:

- A HEFCE Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund funded project has been commissioned to develop a website that provides information for staff regarding accessibility. The project is due to complete by January 2009.
- Work with the staff network group to ensure they are embedded within the Institute and used effectively to support staff and also as a consultative forum.
- A re-survey all staff will be undertaken to increase awareness of disability and encourage disclosure. We will also be moving to recording categories of disability status in line with the HESA changes.
- To continue to improve staff development activities regarding accessibility and learning and teaching.
- To develop a comprehensive monitoring system to determine the effectiveness and impact of Learning Support Agreements to inform student retention aims.
- To continue to develop publicity and transparency of information for staff and students.
- To ensure that the new institute website is accessible.
- To review the Personal Emergency Egress System.

Conclusion

The provision for disabled staff, students and visitors at the Institute has improved considerably over the past six years. The DES has provided a dynamic tool for the Institute to use to develop provision over the next two years. This annual report indicates that the rate of improvement has increased over the last year and that this development is being undertaken in a strategic manner.

The drafting of the annual report has been a helpful process for the Institute as it allows us to reflect upon our progress. Whilst the progress sections of this report indicate opportunities which we need to maximise over the next two years, this should not detract from the clear evidence of progress made in the last year.

If you would like to comment on this report or if you would like to seek advice or guidance please contact:

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