Learning Services

ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

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INTRODUCTION

The last annual report focussed on the range of virtual services and resources we make available to our user communities. This year our focus is very much on the individual student and the tailored services, support and expertise which have been developed to meet the needs of all students.

THE CHANGING CHALLENGES OF DISABLED STUDENT SUPPORT

Background

In April 2014 David Willetts, announced a series of proposals to radically alter the Disability Students' Allowance (DSA) scheme, which provides funding to cover the cost of the extra support required by individual disabled students to enable them to participate in higher education on an equal basis to other students.

The proposals were designed to fundamentally "rebalance" the way that disabled students are supported by asking HEIs to do more in terms of anticipating the needs of their students in line with their responsibilities under the Equality Act. The result would ease the financial pressure on the Department by reducing the direct expenditure incurred by the DSA.

The introduction of these changes has been postponed until 16/17 entrants to higher education, but much of the preparation and changes to services have been introduced during 15/16.

This section will largely focus on the impact of these changes on our approaches to supporting students with disabilities, specifically learning difficulties, and more generally on the support delivered to all students to assist them to reach their academic potential. On a positive note these changes have presented an opportunity to be pro-active in embracing a new future for disability support and one which is embedded fully into core service delivery and will encourage wider inclusive practices to be adopted more consistently across the institution.

Funding changes

The most important change to funding is that the support categorised as Bands 1 and 2 of the Non-Medical Helper (NMH) allowance will no longer be funded via the DSA and the responsibility for delivering this support rests with the local institution.

The support specifically covers:

- Practical Support Assistant
- Proof reader
- Library Support Assistant
- Study Assistant
- Readers
- Examination Support Workers
- Scribe/Amanuensis
- Manual note-takers
- Workshop / Lab assistant
- Specialist Transcript

In addition, disabled students entitled to a computer and appropriate peripherals will be expected to contribute £200 to the overall cost; this was previously paid for in full.

£200
Amount disabled students must now contribute towards the cost of a computer

Learning Services response and context

1,198
Number of students with a self declared SpLD (HESA return)

790
Number of students who engaged with SpLD support team

300
Number of students in receipt of support from SpLD support team in 2015/16

Support for disabled students spans both Learning and Student Services, with Learning Services delivering the majority of support for students with a specific learning difficulty (SpLD). Staff from both Services collaborated on a review of the current model of 1-1 support and concluded that in some instances it has created an expectation of support by students which is at odds with the aim of increasing independence and developing the transferable skills necessary for transition into employment. However, while aiming to enhance and extend the support available to disabled students we have also had to remain mindful of our duties under the Equality Act to make the appropriate reasonable adjustments. Responsibility for this extends beyond the two Service areas and as the diagram indicates the academic community also has a key role to play.

• Specialist
  Support

* Disability student allowance
  (students with complex needs)

• Exam modifications
• Specialist equipment
• Alternative assessment
• Extended library loans

• Academic skills support
• Specialist networked software
• Reading lists available
• Revision strategies
• Lecture capture arrangements
• Learning Edge courses meet
  university 'baseline'

DSA*

Institutional Reasonable Adjustments

Inclusive teaching and learning practices (physical & virtual)
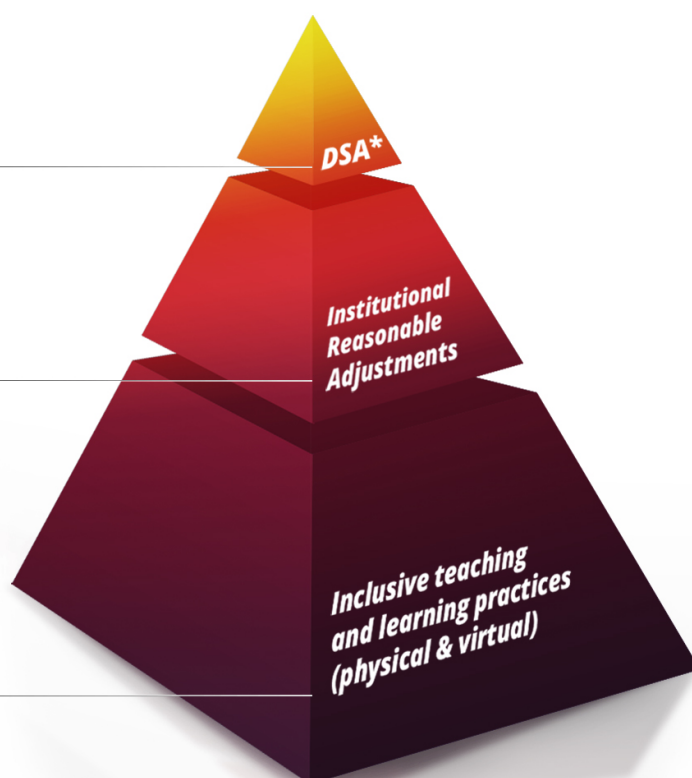
THE CHANGING CHALLENGES OF DISABLED STUDENT SUPPORT

Areas for review

Lecture Capture

Our attention was initially focussed on where the biggest impact from the withdrawal of funding would be felt. Looking at the uptake and allocation of support under the previous funding regime, the use of scribes to assist students in lectures and seminars with note –taking was a key support activity which would no longer be funded. It was clear that institutions would be expected to be the primary provider of this support using software to record lectures and/or use assistive technology for note taking. Prompted by these changes Learning Services undertook a review of the options available for lecture capture, from downloaded audio capture apps, personal audio recording devices, to large scale proprietary lecture capture systems. A business case was successfully submitted for a 12 month pilot to deploy a proprietary solution with the aim of extending this from 16/17.

Lecture capture can be achieved using low cost solutions such as personal devices but for the provision of consistency and as a general enhancement for all students, an institution-wide solution was identified as the preferred option.

Panopto, has been live since mid-October 2015. Recording software and equipment has been installed to capture the audio and presentation screen on demand in all of the lecture theatres on the Ormskirk campus. Portable kits have been made available for loan from the University Library, which enable the Panopto recording software to be used from any Windows computer (at Edge Hill or elsewhere). Installing the software on demand from the network for use in staff offices is currently being tested with IT Services, and the software will become a standard addition to classrooms in the future.

Panopto has been live since mid-October 2015

An extract from the blog by Natalie Reynolds, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education:

The result of using Panopto was that my trainees were able to access the session when they needed it and not when I sent it to them. The fact that content was added in after the initial lecture (trainee presentations) gave them further ownership of the piece and made them more willing to access the content. The impact of using Panopto for this particular session was that it significantly reduced the volume of emails I received with questions about placement issues: trainees were able to access the recorded session and go straight to the information relevant to their situation. The other significant point is that trainees were able to have answers to these questions immediately, regardless of what time their question was posed as the recorded session is available on Blackboard. For key sessions such as the one outlined, I would have no hesitation in recording the session so that it can be accessed straight away by trainees at a later date, at a time when they need it.

Panopto: printed notices in lecture theatres

Lecture Capture Enabled Room
(Audio and slides only)

Capture
your voice in sync with your presentation slides

Edit
your recording (optional)

Share
with your students via Learning Edge (Blackboard)

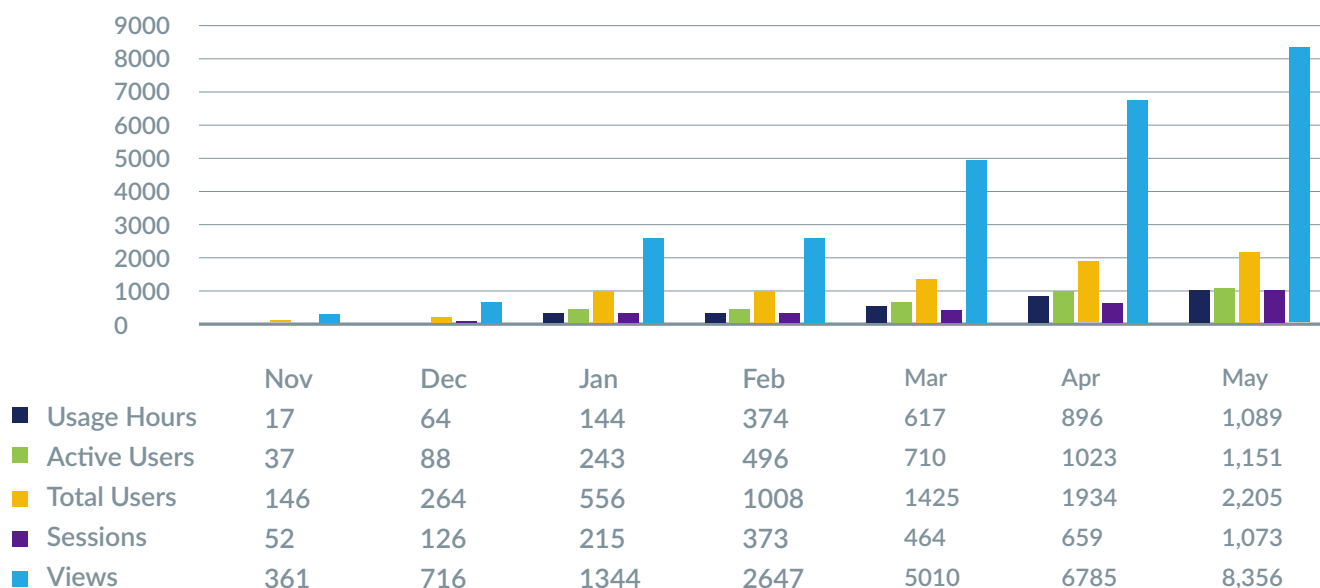For enquiries please contact: lecturecapture@edgehill.ac.uk

Case Studies

In November, a Learning Edge blog post and printed notices in lecture theatres (see opposite) attracted engagement from all faculties. This, along with promotion at each faculty's teaching enhanced learning (TEL) steering group and board meetings, generated enthusiasm amongst staff. From a soft launch with the focus on interested staff ' opting in' to use the software, the adoption of Panopto has been pleasingly brisk, with use almost doubling each month as illustrated in the table below.

It is interesting to note that in May, each item was viewed on average 7.4 times, suggesting that while it was initially introduced as a' reasonable adjustment' for disabled students, its value extends to all students as a revision aid in preparation for exam or coursework submission and as the following case studies illustrate, in quite unexpected ways.

1. Student Practice Evidence

Panopto has the ability to allow for a student 'drop box' facility on a Blackboard course, whereby students can upload digital audio and video recordings of teaching practice (for example). This can only be seen by the student uploading the recordings and any instructors on the Blackboard course. This can then be assessed and feedback given. This has resolved issues whereby content was sent through the post, which some schools have been reticent to allow. This will also save the institution time and money when it comes to going to schools to observe performance, as this can be recorded and uploaded.

Panopto usage statistics: Nov 2015- May2016

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Usage Hours	17	64	144	374	617	896	1,089
Active Users	37	88	243	496	710	1023	1,151
Total Users	146	264	556	1008	1425	1934	2,205
Sessions	52	126	215	373	464	659	1,073
Views	361	716	1344	2647	5010	6785	8,356

THE CHANGING CHALLENGES OF DISABLED STUDENT SUPPORT

Case Studies

Assistive Technologies and Study Apps

2. Clinical Skills Student Observations

Clinical skills have been using this in quite a unique way. They have been attaching an iPad to a drip stand which is then used to record students working with dummies in a mock-up environment. The drip stand is then moved around as it would be in such an environment, so provides a first person view of various scenarios. These can then be assessed, and feedback given, and the resulting recordings placed on the lecture capture server as learning tools.

3. Coursework Audio Guidance

One course is using Panopto to provide audio guidance to completing coursework. The lecturer explains what the assignment is, what is required and where the students can get additional resources. This then makes more sense to the student, rather than being a sheet of paper with some typewritten instructions and has the added benefit of being more inclusive.

We anticipated the introduction of lecture capture would reduce the need for some disabled learners to have 1-1 note taking support. For some this delivers the required reasonable adjustment. For others the note taking may be reduced and for those with complex needs it is recognised that it may not replace the need for note taking at all and the role of the scribe will continue to be necessary. The challenge for 16/17 is to work with academic colleagues to embed the recording of lectures as part of their everyday practices and to encourage all to see it as central to their inclusive teaching/learning activities.

Assistive Technologies

In addition to the adapted space within the University library where students have access to a range of technologies, an extra 36 laptops were made available for loan on a self-service basis from mid March. These laptops are available 24/7 and will have essential assistive technologies e.g. Inspiration; Read and Write preloaded. To optimise access to these technologies for all students discussions will take place with IT Services to review the licence agreements and implement network access for all assistive technologies, where possible.

Study Apps to support student progression

This project and identification of four study apps endorsed by ourselves and informed by student feedback, alongside a set of robust selection criteria, spanned the needs of disabled students and the wider student population. The Fab Four focus on the core academic skills of referencing, RefMe; note-taking, Evernote; saving articles off-line for reading, Instapaper, and for revision, mind maps etc, GoConqr.

Promotion of these apps to the general student population is via our website, social media and in person; more targeted support on the use of Evernote and other study apps is provided to disabled students. It will be difficult to assess the uptake and usage of these apps and it is expected that this is an area which will require regular review as the technology moves with speed.

Study Apps: RefMe, Evernote, Instapaper, GoConqr.

PREPARATION FOR 2016/17

Staffing

New workflows and the student support plan

A proposed new staffing model to consolidate support for library support assistance and study assistance was agreed as part of the 16/17 budget submission. The posts are a Learning Support Officer (Assistive Technologies) and an Academic Skills Officer (Disability Support). Both roles will sit within existing student support teams within Learning Services and liaise closely with Disability Advisers within Student Services to triage, track and deliver an appropriate support package for individuals based on a new reasonable adjustments policy. For new incoming disabled students in 16/17, these roles will seek to replace and rationalise a significant proportion of the support previously delivered on a one to one basis by Learning Facilitators whilst still providing a targeted support offer. As the new quality framework requires clarity and consistency around the suitability of any reasonable adjustments offered by institutions it is likely that there will be externally scrutiny over the coming 12 months as the new funding model becomes an operational reality. These roles will be key in gathering feedback from disabled students, monitoring issues and identifying best practice for future development.

Alongside the appointment of additional staff, the opportunity was also taken to review how support required by disabled students is communicated to and within each academic department.

To improve this process the role of the departmental contact was revisited and a more standardised approach agreed. Their duties are to:

- Act as the named contact for receipt and distribution of student support plans to departmental colleagues e.g. personal tutor; admin staff

- Each semester contact all students who have a plan, to confirm that they're receiving the required academic support

- Liaise with Learning Services staff on queries related to SpLD support and Student Services for all other support queries

- Attend relevant development and training sessions arranged by Learning or Student Services

To complement this we have also introduced a student support plan to improve local (departmental/module) awareness of the support needs of individual students. Each Head of Department has nominated a named contact whose role is twofold; to act as the distributor of the information to colleagues and to ensure that the reasonable adjustments identified in the plan are discussed and implemented. Developed in collaboration with academic colleagues the plan is part of a new system to improve communication, local awareness of individual student needs and provide a collective overview of the range of support required.

ACADEMIC SKILLS SUPPORT FOR ALL STUDENTS

Our aim

Principles of inclusive curriculum design:

- Anticipatory
- Flexible
- Accountable
- Collaborative
- Transparent
- Equitable

Although a significant focus during 15/16 was on responding to the changes to the DSA, equal attention was paid to the development of support for the wider student population. The aim was to refresh and broaden our approaches to the delivery of skills support.

We launched our new brand 'Uni Skills' in October 2015 which signalled a departure from the default approach of 1-1 support, to one which aligned itself to the rhythm of the student's academic year and which also included contributions from the Counselling and Well -being team on positive thinking; managing stress and avoiding 'procrastination' – 'Stop putting things off and get things done'.

The Uni Skills package included:

- A range of bookable workshops to cover academic and support skills and strategies

- New online toolkits developed for students to work through at their own pace.

- Support via the Ask desk with 1-1 support beginning with a consultation with a member of the Academic Support Division or Student Advisor. If required, staff would also arrange for a follow up 1-1 appointment for further help and advice

Uni Skills

This approach had to achieve three key goals:

1. Maintain the quality of the service provision, recognising that 1-1 support was not sustainable and limited the number of students supported

2. Develop a flexible and adaptable model of support that could provide academic colleagues with content which could be embedded within the curriculum

3. Ensure that the materials could be easily updated and that the technical skills required could be equally easily mastered

The launch of Uni Skills in 15/16 was warmly received by many students and as with all new ventures underwent rigorous evaluation; the lessons learnt and improvements will be tackled for the 16/17 iteration with a view to refining and improving the range and quality of our support.

ehu.ac.uk/ uniskills

RESEARCH SUPPORT

Research support

Student advisors

The landscape has changed dramatically since the last REF in 2013 and there is now a raft of requirements which need to be met if researchers are to have their outputs considered for the next REF in 2020. Working in collaboration with the Research Office, we have been building and adapting services and processes in line with the HEFCE requirements for open access and the university's preference for Green Open access.

We also continue to take responsibility for the deposit of research outputs in the institution's repository, Edge Hill Research Archive (EHRA). This is more than a simple process. A considerable amount of advice and guidance is available to academic colleagues, often uncertain about which version of their research to deposit; the impact embargoes have on access to their research and, most importantly, understanding that it is their responsibility to deposit their output within the specified time frame, if to remain eligible for the next REF. The volume of activity related to research has grown significantly during 2015/16 and alongside an increase in the number of deposits, a decision was taken to transfer responsibility for the hosting and support of our repository from the University of Southampton, to University of London Computing Centre. This move has also enabled us to offer a dedicated repository for research data, specifically data that has been generated alongside published outputs and should, if meeting the principles for open access, be appropriately curated and made publicly available. The roll out of an institution wide process for the management of research data has been pencilled in for 16/17, alongside the appointment of a Research Support Librarian, who will help drive and model our offer of support and services to all research students and staff.

Initially conceived in 2012/3, the role of the student advisor has evolved over the intervening years to become a service in its own right, distinct from the staffed Welcome and Ask desks. A team of 6 students are recruited on an annual basis, trained by staff to be confident in managing a broad range of transactional enquiries, relieving pressure on staff. In addition, the roles now include peer to peer sessions, with students leading introductions to the VLE, Learning Edge or team training with a Learning Services colleague. The inclusion of students in the workforce has extended the options for support - not all students feel confident about approaching a member of staff and having students available can help bridge a gap

LEARNING SERVICES SUCCESSES IN 2015-16

RefMe

The annual report provides an opportunity to showcase the various successes the Service has had during the year.

As part of our aim to improve the student learning experience, we became the first university to partner with Reference Me and become a RefMe Institute.

Reference Me (RefMe) is the world's leading and most accurate research, referencing and management tool, allowing users free access to cite any source via a mobile app.

Learning Services, on behalf of the University signed up to RefMe Institute, the premium edition of the tool, which provides students with the ability to import unlimited references from any source directly into the body of their text, whilst automatically building a bibliography as they write. They will also be able to convert printed text into digital with their smartphone camera.

Students have already started to use the RefMe facility in large numbers, and because it's so easy to use, it is particularly popular with students with learning difficulties. An added bonus is that the app includes the Harvard referencing style which is used at the University.

Awards

CSE ++

We have yet again met and exceeded the criteria for Customer Service Excellence; on this occasion we have been commended in two specific areas

'We provide our customers with the information they need in ways which meet their needs and preferences, using a variety of appropriate channels.'

This was awarded for the innovative and dynamic classroom support technology MAVIS which provides staff with information about known technical issues in classrooms and is available via an Android app or via our web page for other devices.

MAVIS provides real time notifications for staff of ongoing issues affecting the technical AV functionality of rooms so that, if necessary alternative options can be prepared in advance. We can demonstrate our commitment to developing and delivering customer focused services through our recruitment, training and development policies for staff.

Compliance plus was also awarded for our peer review/support model which has been deemed excellent in terms of innovation, benefit and impact. This approach extends from peer observation of workshops to 1-1 support and is designed to help both parties progress their skills base.

LEARNING SERVICES SUCCESSES IN 2015-16

Awards

1st exhibition on loan

Social Media Award

Where for art though William?

For the following…

'Finally, our new Social Media Award goes to Edge Hill University Library for #WhereforeArtThouWilliam, a week long social media campaign and competition to celebrate the life and works of William Shakespeare (Shakespeare 400) and promote reading for pleasure with World Book Night. The project achieved a number of diverse objectives in a very coherent way to great effect on an £18 budget, and was pitched to offer light relief to students during their stressful exam/dissertation period.'

Social media campaign and competition

LEARNING SERVICES' COMPETITION
Guess the PLAY and PLACE from photos.

SHAKESPEARE 400?

Celebrating the life of Eleanor Rathbone

The exhibition was on loan to us for several months from the Central Library in Liverpool and is a fascinating insight into the work of this great social reformer and woman's rights campaigner Eleanor Rathbone.

During her lifetime she had many significant achievements, including:

• Secretary of the Liverpool Women's Suffrage Society 1897 and a leading campaigner for women's rights

• First woman elected to Liverpool City Council in 1909

• Elected as MP for the Combined English Universities in 1929

• Establishment of the School of Social Sciences at Liverpool University

• Investigations into the social and industrial conditions in Liverpool in the early 20thcentury, particularly those relating to the family

• Campaigner for family allowances to be paid directly to women and better benefits for children of the unemployed

• Human rights activist and early anti-Nazi campaigner

This exhibition signalled a step change and a move away from focussing primarily on content solely from the University's archive.

APPENDIX 1:

Essential Statistics

Staffing figures		
Learning Services staff	Jan '16	144

	2015/16
Print and eResources budget	£1,280,000

Resources	August '16
Number of items in stock	265,782
Number of eJournals	60,634
Number of eBooks	165,347

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Total Issues	210,130	201,943	206,895
eBook accesses	2,170,293	2,508,476	3,187,618
Full text downloads	759,493	781,559	935,420

Measuring our performance in 2015-16

LEARNING SERVICES: MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE IN 2015-16

How many students accessed our support...

- **9,094** students attended Uni Skills events
- **6,917** views of Academic Skills online toolkits
- **4,279** students attended inductions
- **2,196** specialist SpLD 1-2-1 support appointments
- **1,188** Academic Skills 1-2-1 appointments

Our investment in resources...

- **£1.2m** spend for library resources
- **12,520** new books purchased
- **1,067** new books chosen by students

Did you know...

150,000 eBooks available
60,000 eJournals available
206,895 books issued

+

38 weeks of 24/7 opening
60 new laptops and PCs
Auto-renewals = fewer fines

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