

# DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME: Fourth Annual Progress Report (2010-2011)

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## 1. Introduction

This is the fourth annual report on the University's Disability Equality Scheme (DES). The report outlines the progress during 2010-11, highlights key features of the University's ongoing disability equality work, and provides data on key aspects of the staff and student population of the University.

The Disability Equality Scheme was first developed in response to the Disability Equality Duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. Work relating to the scheme has been undertaken by the Disability Advisory Service (DAS) and the Equality and Diversity Unit (EDU). Progress has been overseen by a steering group<sup>1</sup>, which meets termly under the chairmanship of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Personnel and Equality).

## 2. Demonstrating Progress

The DES Steering Group continues to monitor and review targets set within the current action plan. The involvement of disabled staff and students in the steering group, together with a representative range of senior managers, ensures that targets are appropriate and achievable, and progress is monitored.

### 2.1 Action plan progress

The DES was last updated in 2009<sup>2</sup>; and will be re-visited in 2011/12, in the light of the changes to legislation. The University has continued to make significant progress in most areas of the Action Plan, and has again refreshed the membership of the steering group to include more students with disabilities. The Plan is available at:

[http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/localsites/equalityanddiversity/documents/disability/2009\\_Revised\\_DES\\_Action\\_Plan\\_and\\_Progress\\_Update.pdf](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/localsites/equalityanddiversity/documents/disability/2009_Revised_DES_Action_Plan_and_Progress_Update.pdf)

### 2.2 Eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity

The University has proactively promoted equality of opportunity for disabled staff and students, informed by engagement and involvement with disabled students and staff.

Following the restructuring of the EDU and the transfer of the DAS to the Academic Administration Division, a working group was set up to make recommendations on the support needs of disabled staff. This group will report to the Personnel Committee during MT2011, recommending the appointment of a staff disability officer within the EDU. In the meantime, the Occupational Health Service has been actively promoting the Government's Access to Work scheme, which provides financial support towards workplace adjustments for disabled staff.

<sup>1</sup> The University's DES and minutes of the steering group meetings are available at [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/disab/des.shtml](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/disab/des.shtml) and in alternative formats, including Braille, audio and large print on request.

<sup>2</sup> The DES relates to those areas of common interest to the University as a whole. Individual colleges will be producing revised schemes or their equivalent responses in light of the Equality Act 2010. The policies, practices and procedures specific to each college are not, therefore, covered by this report.

A number of initiatives have been undertaken to promote equality for disabled students:

- During 2010, the DES Steering Group became aware that a number of disabled students funded by different research councils under the umbrella of RCUK were not experiencing the same level of provision in relation to the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Personnel and Equality), the Education Policy Support section, and the DAS made written representations to RCUK on this issue, including case studies highlighting the difficulties experienced by some students. Following a meeting with RCUK officers, the University worked with the RCUK to improve the guidance it provides on the DSA, as well as suggestions for FAQs for the RCUK website. Progress on this has been delayed while the RCUK implements a new 'shared services' centre for DSA. The DES Steering Group will continue to monitor the situation, in concert with the Russell Group Equality Forum, which has also expressed similar concerns.
- The University has also sought to improve the study support available to disabled students who are not able to access the UK government DSA (primarily non-UK students). With the agreement of the University's Planning and Resource Allocation Committee (PRAC), and the relevant Conference of College committees, the University is piloting a scheme during 2010-11 to provide financial assistance for study support for non-UK disabled students, up to a maximum of £10,000 per student (which is broadly comparable to the amount UK postgraduate students receive), as follows:

Overseas undergraduates	50% (college) / 50% (department)
EU undergraduates	35% (college) / 65% (department)
Overseas postgraduates	15% (college) / 85% (department)

The assessment of the individual students' study support needs is carried out along the same lines as for the DSA.

- In Trinity Term 2010, focus groups were held with students with disabilities, long-term health conditions, and specific learning difficulties (SpLDs<sup>3</sup>) to seek to understand why, in the main, these students reported lower levels of satisfaction than other students in responses to the National Student Survey (of final year undergraduates) and the Student Barometer survey (which covers all students except final year undergraduates and benchmarks the Oxford experience against 120 other universities). With the help of the focus groups, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to all students with disabilities. The preliminary results are available at [www.ox.ac.uk/students/surveys](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/surveys) and have been discussed by the DES steering group. Recommendations arising from the survey will be presented to the Education Committee and the Senior Tutors' Committee for consideration by a working group, chaired by the Assessor, which will be responsible for implementing the recommendations.
- In addition to the work undertaken on student satisfaction, the Education Committee set up a working group to review the University's policies, practices and procedures as they relate to students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SpLDs). This is the largest group of students with disabilities at Oxford (and throughout Higher Education Institutions). Oxford students have contributed to this review via questionnaires, surveys and focus groups and have representation on the working group. The review

<sup>3</sup> SpLD is the blanket term for dyslexia, dyspraxia and Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder

will make recommendations to develop and enhance the experience of students with SpLDs.

- Work has also been undertaken to enhance the support provided to students with Asperger Syndrome (AS). 10 percent of the 170 new undergraduate students disclosing a disability in the 2010-11 academic year were students with AS. The DAS and Oxford University Student Union (OUSU) have developed an AS 'buddying' scheme to ensure that, in addition to the peer support and college 'parent' systems, as well as other mentoring and study support already provided, students with AS are included and supported during Freshers' week. The Careers Service has also developed a programme for students with AS to ensure that they have the opportunity to enter employment and other post-University opportunities.
- In October 2010, the University held its first 'Disability Awareness Week', which was organised by the OUSU campaign for Students with Disabilities and facilitated by the DAS. The week-long programme consisted of lunchtime seminars open to all students and staff to raise awareness of issues relating to SpLDs, communication difficulties (including stammering and other speech impairment), mental health, and hearing and visual impairments. The programme was devised by disabled students and delivered, in the main, by local 'by us for us' groups. In addition, a number of events were held across the collegiate University, including a discussion between medical students and the parent of a child with Sickle Cell Anaemia, a club night raising awareness of hearing impairment caused by loud music, and a series of disability-themed films and debates. The University will now hold Disability Awareness Week in week 6 of every Michaelmas term.

### **2.3 Community engagement**

The proposed development of the University's sports facilities has many benefits, including better access to sport for students and staff with disabilities. The UK Disability Swim Team recently used the University pool for training, and prospective competitors in the 2012 Paralympics have recently graduated from the University or are likely to be studying at Oxford

Oxford students are also promoting sporting opportunities for disabled people in Oxfordshire via KEEN (Kids Enjoy Exercise Now), a registered charity and a joint organisation of Oxford and Oxford Brookes students, which provides recreational activities for young people with special needs.

### **2.4 Continued Involvement by staff and students**

Disabled students continue to be proactively involved in a variety of ways as the ethos of involvement has spread throughout the University. At the end of each term, the DAS seeks feedback from students with disabilities on the study support they have received. Relevant feedback is passed on to the steering group (e.g. the RCUK difficulties mentioned in section 2.2 above). The results of the National Student Survey and the Student Barometer survey are also scrutinised in terms of disability and relevant action is progressed.

Involvement has been sought in many areas of the University, including the Pitt Rivers Museum revised audio tour, assessing the acoustic impact on visitors to the new Ashmolean galleries who use hearing aids; the proposed centre for sport redevelopment (and other University building projects via the BESC sub-committee on access); and participation in the 'Healthtalkonline' project ([www.healthtalkonline.org.uk](http://www.healthtalkonline.org.uk)).

The information on Healthtalkonline is based on qualitative research into patient experiences, led by experts at the University of Oxford. The personal stories of health and

illness on the website in the form of video, audio or written content aims to enable patients, families and healthcare professionals to benefit from the experiences of others. Involvement from Oxford University student volunteers with mental health difficulties has been particularly valuable, and currently students with eating disorders are participating in the development of material.

### 3. Monitoring and Information Gathering

The DES Steering Group continues to monitor student admissions and retention data, as well as staff recruitment statistics.

#### 3.1 Undergraduate admission data

Oxford received a record number of applications for 2010 entry: 17,144. This was an increase of 12% over the previous year. The overall acceptance rate for 2010, 18.4%, was accordingly lower than for 2009 (21%). In the academic year 2010-11, applications from students with disabilities remained at around 4% of total undergraduate applications to Oxford. Monitoring of these applications, shown in Table 1, indicates that applicants with disabilities tend to have a similar or higher rate of success in comparison with non-disabled applicants.

Oxford's OFFA Agreement for 2012 onwards includes a number of targets to diversify the student body, including continuing to meet or exceed our benchmark for participation by disabled students.

This data only includes those disclosing a disability on application; some students do not disclose until later.

Table 1: Undergraduate applications

Year of Entry	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total number of undergraduate applications	13,639	13,388	15,277	17,144
Applications from disabled students (% of total)	594 (4.4% )	537 (4.0%)	559 (4.0%)	794 (4.6%)
Acceptances of disabled applicants	151	126	140	136
Success rate of disabled applicants (vs non-disabled applicants)	25.4% (23%)	23.5% (24.7%)	25.0% (21%)	17.0% (18.5%)

Source: Undergraduate Admissions Office Statistics 2007-2010

#### 3.2 Graduate admissions data

In 2009-10, 8,701 of the total university student population of just under 20,000 were postgraduate students. Graduate applications rose by 15% in the 2010-11 academic year, compared to 2009-10. Applicants declaring a disability on application represented 3.9% of all applicants (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Graduate applications

<b>Year of Entry</b>	<b>2007-8</b>	<b>2008-9</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>
Total number of graduate applications	12,492	13,551	17,500	20,130
Applications from disabled students (% of total)	457 (3.7%)	514 (3.8%)	676 (3.9%)	746 (3.0%)
Acceptances of disabled applicants	161	170	260	181
Success rate of disabled applicants (vs non-disabled applicants)	33% (44%)	46.9% (44.6%)	38% (39%)	37% (34%)

Source: Oxford University Graduate Admissions and Funding Office

During 2011, Graduate Admissions and Funding have worked with DAS, Legal Services and an external legal firm to enhance the ease of application for graduate study for applicants with disabilities. The resulting changes will ensure the University is fully proactive in providing support to such candidates and in seeking feedback on the provision made. The results of the work will be seen in operation in the new graduate admissions round, from 1 September 2011, in terms of provision of the main and other specialised application forms and associated Application Guides in a wider variety of formats. A dedicated short guide for applicants with disabilities applying for graduate studies has been produced and placed on the University website, as has a guide for on-course graduate students with disabilities.

### 3.3 Current students declaring a disability

Table 3 shows the continued increase in the number of students disclosing a disability, as well as the increase in active cases managed by the DAS. It can also be seen that the number of students in receipt of the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) is still small in comparison to the total number of students disclosing a disability, though not all of these are Home students eligible for DSA. Work continues, via disability contacts and disability advisers, to encourage students to apply for DSA funding for adjustments to support their study, and by raising awareness of the full spectrum of reasonable adjustments available. A recent HEFCE policy review highlighted the degree success rate of students in receipt of DSA<sup>4</sup>.

Table 3: Current students declaring a disability

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>2007-8</b>	<b>2008-9</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>
Total known students with a disability (vs Disability Office active case files)*	1223 (988)	1273 (1028)	1322 (1439†)	1543 (1480†)
HESA return (students in receipt of DSA)**	373	440	453	675

Source: \*Disability Office Database 2005-2011/\*\*Oxford University HESA Return 2005-2011

† The active case file figure is higher than the HESA return as it includes students who have not updated their disability status (a HESA requirement) on their student record, those beyond year 4 of DPhil study, students who have deferred entry, and some individuals being supported by DAS who are not yet formally registered as students including students who are intermitting.

<sup>4</sup>See [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09\\_49/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_49/) key background: section 14

### 3.4 Current student disability by category

'Dyslexia, dyspraxia and other Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs)' remains the largest grouping of students with disabilities (see Table 4 below). The number of students with 'ASD/Asperger Syndrome', and 'unseen disabilities' (such as epilepsy and fatigue conditions) is on the increase; and the number of students declaring mobility difficulties has increased slightly. Students disclosing conditions listed as 'Other disability/health condition/not listed' have doubled from last year.

Table 4: Current students by disability category (2009-10)

Disability Category	Number disclosed	Disability Category	Number disclosed
1. Dyslexia*	679	6. Mental health difficulties	119
2. Blind/partially sighted	50	7. An unseen disability e.g. diabetes, epilepsy	221
3. Deaf/hearing impairment	41	8. Two or more disabilities	59
4. Wheelchair user/mobility difficulties	63	9. Other disability/health condition/not listed	170
5. Personal care support	0	10. ASD/Asperger syndrome	37

Source: Disability Office Database 2010\*\*

\*Including students with dyspraxia and other SpLDs

\*\* The table includes all students on the DAS database; not all these will yet have registered as students

### 3.5 Student retention

Oxford has one of the lowest drop-out rates in UK Higher Education. Figures published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency for 2009-10 show that only 1.5 % of Oxford students dropped out, compared with the national average of 7.2 %. Students with disabilities have a slightly higher drop-out rate than non-disabled students but the small numbers (see Table 5 below) involved mean no significant trend is evident.

Table 5: Student withdrawals: disabled vs non-disabled

<b>2010-11</b>	<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>Postgraduate</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total Student Number (number of disabled students)</b>	<b>11723 (908)</b>	<b>9327 (635)</b>	<b>21050 (1543)</b>
Non- Disabled Student Withdrawals†	46 (0.43%)	103 (1.18%)	<b>149 (0.76%)</b>
Disabled Student Withdrawals †	11 (1.21%)	10 (1.57%)	<b>21 (1.36%)</b>
Combined disabled and non-disabled student withdrawal †	57 (0.49%)	113 (1.21%)	<b>170 (0.81%)</b>
<b>2009-10</b>	<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>Postgraduate</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total Student Number (number of disabled students)</b>	<b>11765 (831)</b>	<b>8707 (491)</b>	<b>20472 (1322)</b>
Non- Disabled Student Withdrawals	91 (0.83%)	143 (1.74%)	<b>234 (1.22%)</b>
Disabled Student Withdrawals	12 (1.44%)	10 (2.04%)	<b>22 (1.66%)</b>
Combined disabled and non-disabled student withdrawal	103 (0.88%)	153 (1.76)	<b>256 (1.25%)</b>
<b>2008-9</b>	<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>Postgraduate</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total Student Number (number of disabled students)</b>	<b>11734 (824)</b>	<b>8101 (449)</b>	<b>19835 (1273)</b>
Non- Disabled Student Withdrawals	71 (0.65%)	132 (1.73%)	<b>203 (1.09%)</b>
Disabled Student Withdrawals	11 (1.33%)	12 (2.67%)	<b>23 (1.81%)</b>
Combined disabled and non-disabled student withdrawal	82 (0.70%)	144 (1.78%)	<b>226 (1.14%)</b>

Source: University of Oxford Student Data Management and Analysis / \*Disability Office Database 2008-2011

† December 2010 snapshot

### 3.6 Staff recruitment monitoring data

(Staff recruitment data are collected by means of monitoring forms returned by applicants on a voluntary basis. In 2009, 49% of applicants returned monitoring forms, whereas in 2010 64% returned forms. While this marks an improvement, caution is still necessary when interpreting the results of staff recruitment data, as the data are significantly incomplete. It is to be hoped that the introduction of a new Personnel database (HRIS) and online recruitment will facilitate more comprehensive data collection and improve the accuracy of recruitment data<sup>5</sup>.)

<sup>5</sup> The HRIS database is currently in its pilot phase. The recruitment module will be live end 2011.

The proportion of applicants who disclosed a disability, and who were shortlisted for interview, is the same as for other applicants (see Table 6 below). Figures for 2009-10 show that there is parity of experience for disabled and non-disabled staff, with a higher proportion of appointments of applicants with disabilities than in the previous two years.

Table 6: recruitment monitoring statistics for 2007-10

	Disabled	Not Disabled	Declined to Specify	Unknown	Total
2007-08					
Total Applied	53	3084	24	0	3161
Total Shortlisted	13 (25%)	718 (23%)	12 (50%)	0	743 (24%)
Total Appointed	3 (6%)	207 (7%)	1 (4%)	0	211 (7%)
2008-09					
Total Applied	239	6740	91	0	7070
Total Shortlisted	59 (25%)	1504 (22%)	23 (25%)	0	1586 (22%)
Total Appointed	11 (5%)	387 (6%)	7 (8%)	0	405 (6%)
2009-10					
Total Applied	296	12007	214	0	12517
Total Shortlisted	66 (22%)	2588 (22%)	49 (23%)	0	2703 (22%)
Total Appointed	24 (8%)	720 (6%)	12 (6%)	0	756 (6%)

Source: Equality & Diversity Unit Recruitment Monitoring/OpenDoor

### 3.7 Current Staff in Post

Table 7 shows that around 4% of staff in post currently declare a disability, but this data is incomplete (the Employers' Forum on Disability suggest that 9% of the labour force is currently disabled). It is expected that quality and coverage of equal opportunities data will gradually improve with the implementation of the new HR Information System. The recent survey of harassment advisers throughout the University covering 2007-2010 indicated no reported cases of harassment relating to a disability.

Table 7: Breakdown of University staff by information on disability

Staff in Post 31 July 2007	Disabled	Not disabled	Decline to specify	Not known	Grand total
	364 (4.0%)	7365	88	1172	8989
Staff in Post 31 July 2008	Disabled	Not disabled	Decline to specify	Not known	Grand total
	341 (3.6%)	6928	88	2123	9480
Staff in Post 31 July 2009	Disabled	Not disabled	Decline to specify	Not known	Grand total
	388 (3.8%)	7943	110	1645	10086

Source: University of Oxford Personnel Services/OpenDoor

#### 4. Continuation and development of the DES

Membership of the DES Steering Group includes a cross-section of the collegiate University's staff and students. It is chaired by Dr Stephen Goss (Pro-Vice Chancellor (Personnel and Equality)), with the Head of the Equality and Diversity Unit and Head of the Disability Advisory Service in attendance. Following changes to the legislation, the University will be reviewing the Disability Equality Scheme and Steering Group during 2011/12, alongside the other equality schemes.

**2011 membership**

Dr Stephen Goss	Chair and Pro-Vice Chancellor (Personnel and Equality)
Trudy Coe	Head Equality and Diversity Unit
Peter Quinn	Head of the Disability Advisory Service (Secretary)
Michael Jackson	Support Staff Representative
Dr Ian Brown	Occupational Health
Isobel Hughes	Estates Directorate
Marie Tidball	Alumni Undergraduate & Graduate
Kathryn Grant	Legal Services
Robert Franklin	Academic Staff Representative
Tom Perry	OUSU Welfare
Richard Hughes	Education Committee
Sara Smith	Education Committee
The Assessor	Proctors Office
Jamie Frew	Alumni Undergraduate
Liz Grolimund	OUP Representative
Dan Holloway	Departmental Disability Contact
Will De Laszlo	Alumni Graduate Student
Dr Fiona Spensley	Senior Tutor Committee Representative
Helen Smith	Personnel Services
Tanja Roembke	Undergraduate Student
Andrew Dunne	Students with Disabilities Campaign
Elsa Bell	Director of Welfare Counselling and DAS
Alison Cross	Head of Personnel Services
Kathy Noren	Disability Advisory Service

