

**University of Oxford**  
**Revised Disability Equality Scheme**

**December 2009**

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# University of Oxford

## Revised Disability Equality Scheme

### 1. Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce the University of Oxford's Revised Disability Equality Scheme. Reviewing the Scheme has enabled us to take stock of the good progress that has been made to date in provision for students and staff with disabilities, and to identify how we need to take work forward in the next few years. A collegiate University, with historic buildings, and time-honoured traditions, is a wonderful intellectual environment; it can also pose particular challenges to those with disabilities, and the University is committed to being alert and responsive to that. Work on equality impact assessment will be developed, as will our involvement of staff and students with disabilities, and our work with groups and networks locally and nationally. I am glad also of the opportunity to thank the Equality and Diversity Unit for its staff's commitment to working with our disabled members and to making real the University's own commitment to achieving equality of opportunity across our community.

Dr Sally Mapstone, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Personnel and Equality

### 1.1. Executive Summary

With this revised DES the University welcomes the opportunity to confirm how it has been carrying out its specific duty under the DDA (2005), giving an overview on progress made and outlining how disabled people have been involved. The University's commitment is reinforced by the DES Working Party, and the recent publication of the University's Integrated Equality Policy ([www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/policy/index.shtml](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/policy/index.shtml)), which outlines the importance of Disability Equality.

The University's recognition by both the Disability Rights Commission and the Equality Challenge Unit in 2007 as an exemplar of good practice has led to requests from other Universities and organisations for the Senior Disability Adviser to share good practice on meaningfully involving disabled people, including the existing collaborations with Oxford Brookes University, Oxford City Council and Oxford County Council. The University's approach to involving local groups has evolved in the light of the sector-wide experience of 'consultation fatigue'. Relationships with local groups such as the Oxford Access Forum have been strengthened to the extent that a launch event for this group will probably be hosted within the University during this academic year.

The University's Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) project has developed with the notion that a fully sustainable EIA process requires EIA reporting to be devolved and conducted locally. To this end the EDU is awaiting the results of a 'policy mapping' exercise (for centralised policies) that will assign 'policy owners' to respective policies, thus allowing the EDU to target information, training and support in the rollout implementation of the EIA process. As well as conducting three pilot EIA reports, the EDU has also been exploring ways in which the EIA process could be incorporated more flexibly into existing mechanisms of review.

Current student disclosures rose in 2008-9. This is in part a result of a doubling in the number of students disclosing mental health difficulties. There may be several reasons for the doubling in this category, including a shift in society's perception of mental health difficulties, OSS self-service function as opposed to completing a 'matriculation form' viewed by others and the reducing of stigma around mental health difficulties within the University by information and training.

Oxford has the lowest student drop-out rate in the UK: latest figures show that only 1.4 per cent of students discontinued their course, compared with the national drop-out rate of 7.2 per cent. Following the extensive data checking undertaken as a result of engagement with staff and students the Working Party is assured that students with disabilities do not appear to be out of line with the figure for the student body as a whole.

Staff disability disclosure in Higher Education is a sector-wide challenge and the University is currently reviewing recent guidance from the Equality Challenge Unit as well as continuing with a University specific project on staff disclosure to address particular difficulties in disclosures. Implementing the Core system during 2009-12 will enable all staff in the University to update their records in a 'self-service' mode and will therefore create a further opportunity to disclose a disability in addition to the various current routes for staff. Recruitment monitoring will also be automatic and thus greatly enhanced.

The University has demonstrated its commitment to disability equality by its continuing progress. There is more work to undertake, but the recent provision by the University of dedicated premises for the DAS from early 2010 makes a clear statement about the importance the University places on its equality work.

The DES Working Party will continue to meet on a termly basis. It is giving particular attention to the current challenges experienced by disabled undergraduates and graduates as far as funding bodies are concerned. The Working Party and senior offices within the University will continue to ensure that the major functional bodies and committees of the University are aware of the value of positive attitudes and sharing good practice in this area, and the continuing challenges that a devolved organisation can raise.

The Strategic Plan of the University undertakes to strengthen the collegiate University's commitment to Equality and Diversity, and commits the University to deliver the objectives of the Equality Schemes including the DES. In addition, the reconstitution of the University's Committee on Student Health and Welfare and the Integrated Equality Policy reinforce this. The continued commitment by the University to the meaningful involvement of disabled staff, students and individuals and groups, locally, nationally and internationally, means that delivering disability equality at the University of Oxford is a key objective.

## **1.2. Introduction**

The University of Oxford (herein referred to as the University) is a collegiate university, with 38 self-governing colleges related to the University in a type of federal system. There are also six permanent private halls, founded by different Christian denominations. Thirty colleges and all halls admit students for both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Six other colleges are for graduates only; one has fellows only, and one specialises in part-time and continuing education. As well as being an internationally renowned centre for teaching and research, the University welcomes visitors to its museums, galleries, botanical gardens, and to conferences, public lectures and other events held within its colleges and departments. The University has the largest university library service in the UK, as well as the oldest museum in the UK. The University has over 20,000 full-time students drawn from 142 countries. The University and its colleges employ over 16,000 people.

With this revised DES the University welcomes the opportunity to confirm how it has been carrying out its specific duty under the DDA (2005), giving an overview on progress made and outlining how disabled people have been involved.

The DED has been a valuable opportunity for the University to reinforce its longstanding commitment to disability equality. The University recognises the value of involving disabled people, and in the past three years the element of ‘meaningful involvement’ as part of our duty has been a powerful driver for change. This has enabled the University to forge closer links with disabled people as individuals and within organisations; disabled people have recognised, when engaging with the University, our continuing commitment to remove barriers in policy, practice and procedure. This commitment is reinforced by the DES Working Party, and the recent publication of the University’s Integrated Equality Policy (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/policy/index.shtml>), which outlines the importance of Disability Equality.

The University has made significant progress in most areas of the DES action plan and has refreshed the Working Party membership to include a variety of representatives with disabilities including mental health difficulties and other ‘unseen disabilities’. Termly meetings of the Working Party ensure that progress is monitored, and that issues identified by disabled staff and students can be tackled strategically in a timely fashion.

This revised DES deals with those areas common to the University as a whole. Individual colleges will be producing revised schemes to cover policies, practices and procedures specific to each college; those are not, therefore, covered by this revision. Please visit <http://www.ox.ac.uk/colleges> for further information on Oxford’s Colleges.

## **1.3 The Equality and Diversity Unit and the DAS**

Essential day to day work with students and staff with disabilities is carried out in the Equality and Diversity Unit (EDU), and in particular by the Disability Advisory Service (DAS). The DAS provides advice and facilitates study support for prospective and current disabled students and alumni, and provides information and advice to staff, visitors and enquirers. More than half of the advisers employed within the DAS have a disclosed disability. The DAS surveys disabled students on a termly basis to ensure support is appropriate and to discover whether any themes of good or poor experience can be identified and made known via the network of Disability Contacts within each University department and library and within each College and PPH.

The EDU is neither a part of a central student services function nor personnel services, unlike similar services the majority of HEIs in the UK. Its position in the University’s

structure means that a single unit of the University is able to capture the experience of both students and staff and ensure that this is fed into the DES Working Party. This avoids the difficulty sometimes reported by colleagues in other HEIs where the DES is produced in a student centred or staff centred unit.

The EDU also works closely with the Oxford University Student Union, which facilitates a number of relevant student groups including the Students with Disabilities Group. The Senior Disability Adviser is on the steering group for the Oxford Student Mental Health Network (OSMHN). OSMHN is another opportunity to involve disabled groups, particularly Oxfordshire Mind, in identifying barriers in policy practice and procedure from their engagement with University students.

#### **1.4. Involvement of disabled people in Oxford's DES**

The DES Working Party includes representatives from both students and staff with disabilities, members of the collegiate University with personal and professional experience of disability and senior representatives, including the Head of the Equality and Diversity Unit, responsible for overseeing and implementing the DES. It is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Equality and Diversity, and its Secretary is the Senior Disability Advisor.

The University's recognition by both the Disability Rights Commission and the Equality Challenge Unit in 2007 as an exemplar of good practice has led to requests from other Universities and organisations for the Senior Disability Adviser to share good practice on meaningfully involving disabled people, including the existing collaborations with Oxford Brookes University, Oxford City Council and Oxford County Council.

Presentations and workshops delivered by the Senior Disability Adviser at conferences and events throughout the UK included an acknowledgement of 'consultation fatigue' by disabled people and their organisations which is clearly a feature throughout the sector. To mitigate this fatigue the University has adapted its approach when engaging with disabled people: one example is a move to more frequent but shorter engagement events (lasting an hour or so) where public bodies, disabled individuals and groups meet to share information and examples of good and bad practice.

This approach has been well received by existing participants and has encouraged both fresh participation by groups such as Mencap and continuing involvement from the Oxford City Access Forum, which the University has found to be most beneficial.

#### **1.5. Equality Impact assessments at Oxford University**

The University is currently undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) project. The first stage of the EIA project has involved developing an EIA methodology suitable for the University via a series of three pilot EIA reports, covering recruitment and selection within Oxford University Library Services (OULS), flexible working, and undergraduate student admissions (focusing on the work of the Undergraduate Admissions Office in the first instance). The results of the reports will be used as models for good practice in order to assist future impact assessment work, and will sit alongside EIA guidance (the *EIA Tool Kit*) and training as part of a wider structure of support for those required to complete EIA reports in their respective policy areas.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The *EIA Tool Kit* will be consulted on with targeted user groups in order to maximise its relevance and usability.

Disabled people were consulted during the pilot EIAs on recruitment and selection within OULS and flexible working. Consultation has taken the form of including disabled people when conducting interviews/surveys, and in the formation of EIA working groups.<sup>2</sup> The pilot EIA on undergraduate student admissions did not entail primary research, and therefore disabled people were not directly consulted, although the needs of disabled people were considered from existing evidence. Given the scale of undergraduate admissions, the pilot EIA report took a different approach and instead focused on plans and recommendations for future EIA work in this area. Recommendations noted the importance of engaging with disabled people and/or representatives when undertaking research and evaluation activity. The EDU fully endorses the need to include disabled people within plans for EIA, and will continue to work on developing better communication links with disabled staff and students in order to assist the new EIA process.

The EIA project has developed with the notion that a fully sustainable EIA process requires EIA reporting to be devolved and conducted locally. To this end the EDU is awaiting the results of a 'policy mapping' exercise (for centralised policies) that will assign 'policy owners' to respective policies, thus allowing the EDU to target information, training and support in the rollout implementation of the EIA process.

It is recognised that the legal duty to conduct EIAs also relates to procedures and practices. Using the existing governance structure of the University of Oxford, the EDU is working towards identification of high priority procedures and practices within governance structures, and will develop plans to initiate EIA work in these areas.

Alongside conducting three pilot EIA reports, the EDU has also been exploring ways in which the EIA process could be incorporated more flexibly into existing mechanisms of review. It is intended that a formal structure for EIA will continue (i.e. by completion of report templates). However it is recognised that some flexibility of approach may be required in order to have a wide influence across the institution. Exploring flexible approaches to EIA will continue to be developed as part of a general shift towards greater focus on building evidence for EIAs, and achieving practical and useful outcomes that are locally relevant.

## **2.0 Updating and Reviewing Baseline Data and Current Barriers**

Since the publication of its first DES, the University has fully implemented its centralised student database. The Oracle Student System (OSS) is used throughout the University and has made redundant many of the other databases described in the first DES. Furthermore, specifically relating to disabled student data, the DAS has recently installed the StudentRelate system which is a specialist database enabling the DAS and the wider University effectively to monitor increasingly diverse disabled students with complex needs, and to communicate with them in a much more efficient and beneficial way. The underlying data for StudentRelate comes from OSS, which ensures HESA and other statutory data is mainstreamed.

Baseline data for staff is more of a challenge but one that is being addressed by the ongoing implementation of the HR Information Systems programme (HRIS). The current HR system, *OPENdoor*, is the source of staff data and is running on out-of-date technology and reduced support. *OPENdoor* is unable to meet the changing needs of the University and has an insufficient analysis and reporting capability, which is a significant challenge to producing a full and accurate picture of numbers of staff with

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<sup>2</sup> EIA working groups were developed during the pilot stage to oversee the progress of the EIA Project.

disabilities. The University has recognised that it is essential to improve its ability to comply with statutory reporting requirements such as the REF and HESA

In June 2009 Council<sup>4</sup> approved the selection of Core International as providers of a new HRIS system. Core International had been selected as the recommended supplier following a comprehensive supplier selection exercise involving representatives from many interested areas across the University. The needs of disabled people in terms of systems access (e.g. compatibility with voice recognition software) and the ability to capture and monitor data about disabled people in a useful and confidential manner were factors which were taken into consideration when reaching this decision.

Implementing the Core system during 2009-12 will enable all staff in the University to update their records in a 'self-service' mode and will therefore create a further opportunity to disclose a disability in addition to the various current routes for staff. Recruitment monitoring will also be automatic and thus greatly enhanced.

## **2.1. Encouraging Disclosure**

Students are encouraged to disclose disability information at a variety of stages both pre- and post-admission. Undergraduate and graduate prospectuses carry information on the benefits of disclosure and reinforce the University's position that applications from students with disabilities are viewed on the same academic grounds as those from other candidates. Clear data on student diversity is presented as part of information for applicants.

The DAS has a presence at the University's regional conferences and open days in order to send a clear message to schools and colleges that the University actively encourages disabled students. Teachers and parents are approached at these events to ensure that accurate information on the benefits of disclosure is passed on. The DAS signposts students to SKILL (the national bureau for students with disabilities) for independent advice on the benefits of disclosure pre-admission. Current students can also get advice on disclosing to employers via the Careers Service, which runs information sessions on the benefits of disclosure.

Information on applying for employment at the University lays out clearly the possibilities for adjustments at interview not just in terms of physical access but in other arrangements such as providing materials in audio format. Current staff have the opportunity to disclose in a variety of ways including their annual Personal Development Review or appraisal.

The Commission for Disabled Staff in Lifelong Learning report published by NIACE in March 2008 looked at Disabled Staff in the Higher Education sector. One area of focus was staff disclosure and fear of discrimination resulting from disclosure. Responding to this and other issues in the report, the EDU commissioned a consultant to interview a range of disabled staff at the University to identify qualitative data about experiences of disclosure. The findings of this report, coupled with Personnel Services and the DAS' project to engage with local groups to explore whether it is a perception that disclosing a disability as part of the application process to employment at the University may lead to discrimination. It is hoped that this will provide an evidence base from which to enable the University to encourage disclosure and promote positive attitudes towards disabled staff. Earlier recommendations in the DES annual report of 2008 for a parallel 'Disability Contact' system for staff are timely.

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<sup>4</sup> The Council of the University is responsible for the academic policy and strategic direction of the University, It operates through five major committees: Education; General Purposes; Personnel; Planning and Resource Allocation; and Research.

# Monitoring and Information Gathering

## 2.2 Undergraduate Admissions Data

Table 1 (below) shows that applications for undergraduate course by students disclosing a disability remain at 4% of total applications over the last three years. This year is the first year that success rates for disabled students have dipped below the acceptance rate for non-disabled students, and monitoring will continue to ensure that any further downward trajectory is addressed.

Table 1: Undergraduate Applications

Year of Entry	2006	2007	2008
Total number of undergraduate applications	12,614	13,639	13,388
Applications from disabled students	490 (3.9% of total)	594 (4.4% of total)	537 (4.0% of total)
Acceptances of disabled applicants	137	151	126
Success rate of disabled applicants (vs non-disabled applicants)	28% (25.3%)	25.4% (23%)	23.5% (24.7%)

Source: Oxford Colleges Admissions Office Statistics 2006~2008

## 2.3 Graduate Admissions Data

Table 2 outlines applications for graduate courses for the previous three academic years. Disability data is based on the information currently held in each applicant's OSS record. Some applicants do not declare a disability at the time of applying, but may subsequently acquire or 'emerge' with a disability after gaining admission to the University. This may account for why the proportion of admitted applicants with a disability (4.3%) is slightly higher than the proportion of applicants in general (3.8%). Increasing engagement with graduate students should enable an understanding of why students might withhold disclosure and how the University may further promote positive attitudes thus creating a positive environment for disclosure.

Table 2: Graduate Applications

Year of Entry	2006	2007	2008
Total number of graduate applications	11,536	12,492	13,551
Applications from disabled students	387	457	514
Acceptances of disabled applicants	199	161	170
Success rate of disabled applicants (vs non-disabled applicants)	51.4% (51.06%)	33% (44%)	46.9% (44.6%)

Source: Oxford University Graduate Admissions Office 2008

## **2.4 Current Students Declaring a Disability**

Current student disclosures rose in 2008-9 as shown in Table 3. This is in part a result of a doubling in the number of students disclosing mental health difficulties. There may be several reasons for the doubling in this category, including a shift in society's perception of mental health difficulties, OSS self-service function as opposed to completing a 'matriculation form' viewed by others and the reducing of stigma around mental health difficulties within the University by information and training.

Table 3. Current Students Declaring a Disability

Academic Year	2006-7	2007-8	2008-9
Total known students with a disability (vs Disability Office active case files)	1079 (836)	1223 (988)	1273 (1028)
HESA return (students in receipt of DSA)	329	373	440

Source: Disability Office Database 2005-2007 / Oxford University HESA Return 2006-2009

## **2.5 Current Students' Disability by Category**

Current student disclosures by disability category are shown in Table 4 below. All students now have an opportunity to update their disability disclosure on OSS 'self-service', an online feature of the central student database, which provides the underlying data for the Disability Office Database (rather than disclosure forms or UCAS data alone). Since this opportunity has become available, the number of students wishing to categorise their dyslexia / dyspraxia as '7: an unseen disability' rather than the '1: dyslexia, dyspraxia and other Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs)' may indicate a concern amongst that group about perceptions of SpLDs. Two current reviews by the University on 'Experience of Disabled Students at Oxford University' (sponsored by the Director of Student Services) and the 'SpLD Review' (sponsored by the Education Committee) will help to understand the rationale for this shift in disclosure.

Table 4. Current Students by Category (2008-9)

Disability Category	Number disclosed	Disability Category	Number disclosed
1. Dyslexia*	616	6. Mental health difficulties	95
2. Blind / partially sighted	53	7. An unseen disability e.g. diabetes, epilepsy	177
3. Deaf / hearing impairment	41	8. Two or more disabilities	37
4. Wheelchair user/ mobility difficulties	56	9. Other disability / health condition	85
5. Personal care support	1	10. ASD / Asperger's syndrome	39

\* Including students with dyspraxia and other SpLDs Source: Disability Office Database 2008/9 figures

## 2.6 Student Retention

Following ongoing engagement with a number of consultative groups at the University it was suggested that the available figures should be revisited to ensure accuracy. This work was duly requested by the DAS and undertaken by the Student Data Management and Analysis team. Table 5 reflects this work and therefore differs from data in the relevant table of previous DES reports and annual reports. This is a good example of engagement being valuable and assures the University that the data we have is rigorously reviewed and correct. Oxford has the lowest dropout rate in the UK: latest figures show that only 1.4 per cent of students discontinued their course, compared with the national dropout rate of 7.2 per cent. Following the extensive data checking undertaken we can be assured, therefore, that the figures below are accurate and show that disabled students do not seem out of line with the figure for the student body as a whole.

Table 5: Student Withdrawals. Disabled vs Non Disabled

<b>2008-2009</b>	<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>Postgraduate</b>
Total Students	11,734	8101
Total Student Withdrawals	114	170
Total Disabled Student Withdrawals	18	9
<b>2007-2008</b>	<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>Postgraduate</b>
Total Students	11,917	7580
Total Student Withdrawals	128	141
Total Disabled Student Withdrawals	8	10
<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>Postgraduate</b>
Total Students	11,716	9,684
Total Student Withdrawals	179	159
Total Disabled Student Withdrawals	26	9

Source: University of Oxford Student Data Management and Analysis team

## 2.7 Staff Recruitment Monitoring Data

Mindful of the challenges outlined in section 2.0 (above) the data in Table 6 shows recruitment monitoring statistics for the past 3 years. The devolved nature of the University's recruitment procedures, where departments undertake their own recruitment of personnel, contributes to the current 54% participation in the scheme and figures for 2007-8 should therefore be viewed with this in mind. Implementation of the University wide HRIS system will go a long way to ensure data is accurate and that effective monitoring can be accomplished.

**Table 6: Recruitment Monitoring Statistics for 2005-2008**

	Not Disabled	Declined to Specify	Disabled	Unknown	Grand Total
<b>2005-2006</b>					
Total Applied	7391	261	300	0	7952
Total Shortlisted	2017 (27.28%)	64 (24.52%)	94 (31.33%)	0 (0%)	2175 (27.35%)
Total Appointed	540 (7.30%)	15 (5.74%)	20 (6.67%)	0 (0%)	575 (7.23%)
<b>2006-2007</b>					
Total Applied	5572	89	177	0	5838
Total Shortlisted	1356 (24.33%)	19 (21.35%)	46 (26%)	0 (0%)	1421 (24.34%)
Total Appointed	363 (6.51%)	6 (6.74%)	6 (3.39%)	0 (0%)	375 (6.42%)
<b>2007-2008</b>					
Total Applied	3084	24	53	0	3161
Total Shortlisted	718 (23%)	12 (50%)	13 (25%)	0	743 (24%)
Total Appointed	207 (7%)	1 (4%)	3 (6%)	0	211 (7%)

Source: Diversity & Equality Unit Recruitment Monitoring / OPENdoor

## **2.8 Current Staff in Post Data**

Staff disability disclosure in Higher Education is a sector-wide challenge and the University is currently reviewing recent guidance from the Equality Challenge Unit as well as continuing with a University specific project on staff disclosure to address particular difficulties in disclosures. As outlined in section 2.0 (above) the implementation of the new HRIS system will ensure that each staff member has the opportunity to review their staff data and offer an opportunity to disclose. Work will be required to ensure that the facility to disclose is supported by clear information on the benefits of disclosure to the individual and the wider University. The current apparent drop in numbers of disclosed staff is at odds with numbers of staff seeking assistance in applying for the Access to work scheme (AtW).

The Access to Work scheme is government-funded and run by Jobcentre Plus. It provides financial assistance towards the extra costs of employing someone with a disability. AtW offers practical advice and help in a flexible way that can be tailored to suit the needs of an individual in a particular job. AtW does not replace the normal

responsibilities of the employer to implement Health and Safety regulations or replace the responsibilities required by the Disability Discrimination Act. The possibility of effectively monitoring staff who are part of the AtW scheme is problematic as the AtW application is made by the individual and not by the employer and can be done independently.

Table 7: Breakdown of University Staff by Information on Disability

<b>Staff in Post 31 July 2008</b>					
	Disabled	Not disabled	Decline to specify	Not known	Grand total
	332	6930	n/a	2218	9480
<b>Staff in Post 31 July 2007</b>					
	Disabled	Not disabled	Decline to specify	Not known	Grand total
	360	7370	n/a	1259	8989
<b>Staff in Post 31 July 2006</b>					
	Disabled	Not disabled	Decline to specify	Not known	Grand total
Grand Total	375	6883	114	1221	8593

Source: University of Oxford Personnel Services / OPENdoor

## **2.9 Harassment Information**

Disabled employees have been involved in harassment cases over the previous three years but none of the cases relates to that employee, or another employee's disability. Monitoring of this area will continue.

## **3.0 Examples of 'Engagement' of Staff and Students with Disabilities in the DES Process**

Throughout the three-year period a number of procurement processes of large scale IT systems, wholesale process reviews and building projects have been taking place throughout the University; all have involved disabled staff and students to ensure that barriers are not inadvertently created in policy, practice or procedure.

Examples of these have been outlined in the previous annual reports, and include the 'Groupware' procurement exercise now being implemented University wide under the 'Oxford Nexus'<sup>5</sup> brand, and the HRIS system procurement exercise. More recently we have seen extending the involvement process to Oxford University Press in their English online courses, and discussions concerning disabled access to the proposed Humanities building on the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (ROQ) site.

The timely revision of the 'Guidance for the Management of Disabled Employees' is being undertaken with the expert advice of members of staff from the DES working group.

The current reviews by the University of disabled students' experience and the particular arrangements to support students with SpLDs involve evidence provided and anticipated from disabled students (including a survey by OUSU which 110 students with SpLDs participated in) but also are a result of involvement of disabled students in

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<sup>5</sup> The collective name for a suite of IT programmes that help people work collaboratively and share documents and other forms of information. This includes sharing calendars, email applications, shared documents, and document storage.

the DES Working Party and termly feedback to the DAS by disabled students. In the recent QAA audit of the University a feature of good practice identified was 'the consideration given to data derived from student surveys'. Oxford student data from the National Student Survey (NSS) and the International Student Barometer have not provided sufficient statistically significant data from disabled students but this is likely to be addressed by targeted internal surveys focusing on areas pertaining to the relevant reviews mentioned above.

### **3.1 Result of engagement with local groups in DES Process**

As outlined in section 1.3 above, the University's approach to involving local groups has evolved in the light of the sector-wide experience of 'consultation fatigue'. Relationships with local groups such as the Oxford Access Forum have been strengthened to the extent that a launch event for this group will probably be hosted within the University during this academic year. Other organisations (particularly 'by us for us' groups) such as Epilepsy Action have worked with the University on ensuring that guidance material for staff and students is current and suitable. They have also delivered training to areas within the University where colleagues of staff with epilepsy have requested information and guidance.

Examples of collaboration between University departments and national and local disability groups can be found, for example, in the collaboration between the Oxford Autism Research Group, the National Autistic Society and the local charity Autism Family Support. The DAS in particular benefits from the involvement of these groups.

In recognition of the welcome increase in disclosure mental health difficulties work is planned involving 'Headspace' a project hosted by Oxfordshire Mind for students 'feeling the pressure'. In conjunction with the existing mentoring scheme for students with mental health difficulties and the University's Counselling Service this type of engagement is useful for the feedback it affords. A result of this type of engagement has been the work by the University to ensure intermitting students have access to University academic facilities, an issue identified by students with mental health difficulties. Work is continuing with research councils and other DSA funding bodies to ensure that their policies and practices as public bodies, with the same equality duties as the University, do not undermine reasonable adjustments. Recent examples of this include a student with a deteriorating visual impairment being given extended time to complete their course by the University backed up with by accommodation and fee support in light of this extension. However, the inflexible regulations and approach of the funding body meant this was not reciprocated with any extension of grant so the student's Department is then put at a financial disadvantage when supporting the student with further funding to make up for the grant shortfall. Although the funding body is subject to the same duty as the University, the inflexibility creates a potential discriminatory environment in Departments mindful of the current economic climate.

Engagement and involvement have not been restricted to the Disability Equality Strand. The position of the EDU within the University gives rise to possibilities of 'cross-strand' collaboration when engaging with local groups such as the Oxfordshire Multi Agency Harassment Monitoring Group (MANTRA), an Oxfordshire initiative to tackle hate crime which covers all six equality strands. Both the University's Disability and Race Equality functional bodies have been representing the University at steering group and project meetings and enabling the project to get wider feedback and experience by facilitating contact with other groups. The regular DES engagement meetings have included MANTRA representation for example. This cross strand work is also helpful in helping the DAS to consider other 'identities' (including race, gender, religion and belief etc) in our work with the growing numbers of non-UK graduate students with disabilities.

## 4.0 Revised Action Plan

### General

<b>Action Area</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Success indicator</b>
<b>General</b>	The University seeks to ensure all its existing committee structures are not discriminatory, and promote positive attitudes towards, and encourage participation by, disabled people. This will be set out in a proposal from the EDU for consideration by Council to ensure diversity in committee membership.	Pro-Vice Chancellor Personnel & Equality /EDU	<b>TT2010</b>	An effective policy and practice in place to monitor committee appointments.

### Student / Staff

<b>Action Area</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Success indicator</b>
<b>Student / Staff</b>	<p>The Disability Advisory Service ensures that Disability Contacts in both Colleges and Departments understand their role by providing guidance notes supported by training via the Oxford Learning Institute and the Oxford Bursars Training Group. Guidance notes to be revised in 2009/10 academic year</p> <p>In response to the NIACE report by the Commission for Disabled Staff in Lifelong Learning early findings of a recent report by a consultant for the Equality and Diversity Unit on experiences of disabled staff at the University raised awareness of the need for Disability Contacts for staff. The second part of this work will take the form of an engagement event with local disability groups and enquiry into their experience relating to the Universities in Oxford as employers.</p>	<p>Senior Disability Adviser / Deputy Head of Oxford Learning Institute</p> <p>Senior Disability Adviser / DES WP Personnel Services representative</p>	HT2010	Revised Disability Contact Guidance distributed and gaps in contacts in Departments and Colleges filled with all new contacts encouraged to attend training.

<b>Student / Staff</b>	The DES Working Party endorses the work of the BESC Sub-Committee on access and its continued involvement of disabled staff and students in consultation over plans for new and existing buildings particularly on the ROQ development.	Pro-Vice Chancellor Personnel & Equality	<b>Termly (Review HT10 onwards)</b>	Termly meetings taking place and positive feedback from students about physical adjustments implemented.
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### Student

<b>Action Area</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Success indicator</b>
<b>Student</b>	The DES Working Party endorses the ongoing review by the Director of Admissions of the possible barriers that arise from the 'pooling' of undergraduate disabled students and requests the Director of Graduate Admissions and Funding to keep under review disabled students with accommodation needs admitted by a Department but who find difficulty in seeking suitable College places.	Director of Undergraduate Admissions / Director Graduate Admissions and Funding	<b>END MT10</b>	Information on en suite accommodation available with Access Guide. A system to ensure Graduate students, on admission, do not encounter difficulties securing accessible or appropriate accommodation.
<b>Student</b>	The DES Working Party endorses the ongoing formal development and review of mentoring systems for students with mental health difficulties, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Asperger's syndrome.	Pro-Vice Chancellor Personnel & Equality / Head of Counselling / Professor of Autism / Senior Disability Adviser	<b>TT10</b>	By TT09 a care plan template to be developed with regard to mental health mentoring support.
<b>Student</b>	The DES Working Party endorses the proposal that the Oxford Learning Institute and the Disability Advisory collaborate as follows: i) The OLI website will provide a link to resources for academic and support staff which will signpost to information and advice and course descriptions for 'Teaching students with SpLDs', Managing challenging behaviour of students with Aspergers' and 'Disability Contact Training'. ii) Further work will be undertaken by the DAS and OLI to	Senior Disability Adviser / OLI Head of Educational Development / DES WP Personnel Services representative	<b>i) HT10 ii) End TT10</b>	

	explore ways in which the various University training providers can provide timely and relevant training.			
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### Staff

<b>Action Area</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Success indicator</b>
<b>Staff</b>	The DES Working Party endorses the current work by the Equality & Diversity Unit to ensure participation in the recruitment-monitoring scheme in order to monitor recruitment more effectively.	Pro-Vice-Chancellor Personnel & Equality	<b>HT10</b>	An increase on the current participation
<b>Staff</b>	The DES Working Party endorses the proposal that Staff Disability Disclosure Forms be reviewed regularly to target specific training for departments.	DES WP Personnel Services representative Senior Disability Adviser / OLI Head of Professional Development	<b>Termly (Review from HT10)</b>	Termly meeting / discussion on training for departments
<b>Staff</b>	The DES Working Party endorses the revision of the guidance currently entitled 'Guidance for the management of disabled employees' with input from members of the Working Party with disabilities.	Senior Disability Adviser / Personnel Services Representative / Occupational Health colleague	<b>HT10</b>	Revised guidance produced and widely circulated to line managers via Departmental Administrators

### 5.0 Looking Ahead

The University has demonstrated its commitment to disability equality by its continuing progress. There is more work to undertake, but the recent provision by the University of dedicated premises for the DAS from early 2010 makes a clear statement about the importance the University places on its equality work.

The DES Working Party will continue to meet on a termly basis. It is giving particular attention to the current challenges experienced by disabled undergraduates and graduates as far as funding bodies are concerned. The Working Party and senior offices within the University will continue to ensure that the major functional bodies and committees of the University are aware of the value of positive attitudes and sharing good practice in this area, and the continuing challenges that a devolved organisation can raise.

The Strategic Plan of the University undertakes to strengthen the collegiate University's commitment to Equality and Diversity, and commits the University to deliver the objectives of the Equality Schemes including the DES. In addition, the reconstitution of the University's Committee on Student Health and Welfare and the Integrated Equality Policy reinforce this. The continued commitment by the University to the meaningful involvement of disabled staff, students and individuals and groups, locally, nationally and internationally, means that delivering disability equality at the University of Oxford is a key objective.