One of the developments that we are frequently asked for are case studies of disabled students and how the barriers are overcome by academic staff on the ‘shop-floor’.

Being Inclusive in the Creative and Performing Arts

Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to write the foreword for this set of case studies produced by the BICPA project.

The project was ambitious in its remit encompassing so many institutions and I know that the project team was able to utilise the strong links that already existed across the CADISE network. I would like to congratulate Gill Capewell on her efforts in driving the project forward and James Hitchins for his enthusiasm in completing the project’s objectives when Gill left.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England funded the project through the Improving Provision for Disabled Students 2003–2005 programme. One of the aims of the programme was to develop and disseminate resources relating to the teaching and learning of disabled students. Often the key to the success of these resources is a subject specific element and the BICPA project has incorporated this idea into the work they have undertaken.

During the three years of the funding programme the National Disability Team have engaged with a number of sector wide organisations and many of the higher education institutions up and down the country. One of the developments that we are frequently asked for are case studies of disabled students and how the barriers are overcome by academic staff on the ‘shop-floor’. I hope that these case studies (alongside the teaching and learning tools published by the project), which give a range of examples across the arts subject areas, can be of use to other staff on similar courses within the CADISE network and in the wider sector. I’m sure they will act as a catalyst for the development of more inclusive teaching practise in years to come.

Mike Wray
National Coordinator, National Disability Team
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 1</td>
<td>Disabled student interview guarantee</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 2</td>
<td>Enhancing staff, students and facilitators relationships</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 3</td>
<td>Making music technology accessible for visually impaired students</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 4</td>
<td>Mobility and learning in practical drama</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 5</td>
<td>Profoundly deaf student working in studio context</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 6</td>
<td>Ripples on the pond</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 7</td>
<td>How working with a disabled theatre company has changed the curriculum</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 8</td>
<td>A year in the life of a student with physical disability</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study 1

Disabled student interview guarantee

1. Abstract

At the beginning of the academic year 2004–2005, the school of media at The Arts Institute at Bournemouth introduced a pilot policy whereby it guaranteed an interview to disabled students who met the minimum essential entry requirements as stipulated within the prospectus. The policy was based on a similar scheme run by the institute’s Human Resources department for a number of years. The case study evaluated the experiences of staff involved in implementing this policy.

2. Institutional context

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth is a small and specialist HEI, offering FE, HE and postgraduate level programmes in creative industry subject areas within art, media and design.

The Arts Institute has over 2000 students, and the latest figures indicate that approximately 21% of these have a disclosed disability. The majority of the disabilities are categorised as ‘unseen’ (44%), closely followed by students with dyslexia/learning difficulties (42%). Of the remainder, 3% have multiple disabilities, 2% have mobility difficulties (including wheelchair users), 2% have mental health issues and 1% have hearing impairments.

The institute has a Disability Statement which sets out the following aims:

- To provide students with access to a wide range of high quality and flexible, art, media and design programmes
- To remove obstacles which might impede students’ progress
- To provide a high level of student support to aid learning and personal/professional development

The statement sets out specific arrangements provided which cover:

- Advice and guidance to prospective students
- Learning support
- Assessment arrangements

We now aim to accommodate all disabled applicants who apply on the course and it feels like the right thing to do.
• Complaints and appeals
• Other areas of support available
• Physical access to the institute
• Costs of the service

A similar scheme called ‘Positive about Disability’ has been successfully operating within the Human Resources department of AIB for many years. The Positive about Disability scheme offers a guaranteed interview to disabled applicants applying for jobs within AIB, providing they meet the essential requirements as advertised for the role. The Human Resources team vets the job applications and identifies those candidates who have disclosed a disability; those who are responsible for short-listing are therefore aware of the criteria which apply for these candidates. As a result of the introduction of the scheme, the number of disabled people being interviewed has been steadily increasing. This has resulted in a significant increase to the numbers of people with disclosed disabilities being offered employment by AIB.

This pilot study also embraces the ethos of ‘Positive Action’. Positive action refers to a variety of measures designed to counteract the effects of discrimination and eliminate stereotyping by encouraging members of equality target groups to take full and equal advantage of opportunities in jobs, education and training. This type of action is lawful and should not be confused with the term ‘Positive Discrimination’ which describes instances when someone from an equality target group is treated more favourably than someone not in that group, regardless of whether they have the relevant skills and qualifications. Positive discrimination is unlawful.

3. Activities
The pilot policy was developed by Donna Blanche, Disability Co-ordinator, and Liam Scanlan, Director, School of Media, building on the existing policy operated within the Human Resources department. Other similar models as used in local government were also reviewed. A verbal briefing was given to admissions tutors before it was introduced. Following the introduction and implementation of the policy, relevant staff were asked via an impact questionnaire to respond to four main questions and to make any other comments they felt relevant to the issue of offering all disabled students who met the minimum entry requirements specified within AIB’s prospectus a guaranteed interview.

4. Learning achieved

4.1 Impact questionnaire

Were you given enough information and guidance about implementing the pilot scheme?

Members of staff were briefed on the pilot scheme by the director of the school of media. At this time, an evaluation and study of the introduction of this policy had not been anticipated hence no written guidance on recommended policy and procedures were provided to staff. The results, which can be seen from the chart, clearly indicate that this would be of value for the progression of the scheme in future years.

Did you feel confident about interviewing disabled applicants?

Despite the experience of the interviewers it is encouraging to note that the majority recognise that they would benefit from further training and guidance to support their approach with disabled students. The chart clearly indicates an ongoing need for staff development in this area.
Were you worried about the potential increased interviewing workload?

Responses were split with respect to initial concern over the potential impact a guaranteed interview would have upon workloads with results leaning slightly towards the negative (see chart).

Did your interviewing workload increase because of the pilot scheme?

The results of the actualities exactly mirrored the anticipation of interviewers with just over half noting an increased workload. (see chart).

Overall the response of the staff members conducting student interviews to the introduction of this pilot was positive. Comments included, ‘We now aim to accommodate all disabled applicants who apply on the course’ and ‘it feels like the right thing to do’. Concern expressed over increased workloads was only marginal with the increases in workload described as ‘only slight’ and ‘interviews this year had increased anyway.’

In addition to the responses to the impact questionnaire, the Institute has found that the pilot scheme has provide a very positive focus within the HEI and that it has acted as a catalyst to reviewing staff development needs.

4.2 Defining admissions criteria

The case study stimulated consideration of the ways in which admissions criteria are defined and described and the types of evidence that admissions tutors are looking for to demonstrate meeting the entry threshold, both to shortlist for interview and at interview.

Discussions took place about the point in the process at which a decision should be taken as to whether or not an applicant met the minimum criteria in order to be included in the scheme. This debate included consideration of whether registry staff might be in a position to make this initial decision. It was concluded, however, that the specialist nature of programmes and the distinct entry criteria required that all selection decisions be made by academic staff.

5. Action taken by the Institution

Following the pilot, the institution has revised its interview forms to ensure that common principles and criteria are mapped across the institution and has been reviewing the selection criteria to confirm that they are objective and inclusive and that the language used to express the criteria is clear and accessible.

The institution is confident that the pilot points to a scheme which could offer a positive and practical method for increasing the number of applications from disabled candidates and for increasing the number of disabled students accepted onto programmes of study. It has committed to developing the policy more fully before rolling it out as a standard component of the institution’s Admissions Policy. In particular, the institute proposes to market the scheme clearly and to provide an opportunity for applicants to opt in.

Following completion of the recruitment cycle for entry in 2005, the institute plans to review the application data to determine the extent of the impact of the pilot scheme on the number of disabled applicants and entrants.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations arise from the case study and are discussed further in the Learning and Teaching Guides:

- Recognise that adjustments to policy and procedures for admissions can have a positive impact on numbers of applicants
- Brief staff fully before they implement the policy
- Recognise the staff development needs that emerge from the new policy
- Review admissions criteria, the way they are expressed, and the way in which they are understood by admissions staff and the types of evidence sought to demonstrate fulfilment of the criteria
- Pilot new policy developments to enable evaluation before wider roll-out
The disability support manager at KIAD has encouraged academic teams to involve the facilitators in team meetings as a way of sharing expertise, not in discussing individual cases, but in developing mutual awareness of and respect for their respective professions.

The case study set out to explore the ways in which student, academic staff and facilitators work together to enable access to teaching and learning. The decision to carry out this case study emerged from the institution’s review of student feedback which indicated varying levels of satisfaction (and of expectation) regarding support for students with disabilities. Anecdotal evidence from the facilitators indicated that some felt integrated within some course teams, while in others they felt that they were operating at the margins of the teaching and learning teams.

A series of interviews were carried out by a researcher. Staff, students and facilitators were interviewed using a standard set of questions. The interviews have highlighted a range of core questions about the relative professional roles of teacher and facilitator and about the often complex relationships between learners and the professionals who support their learning.

The case study has served to highlight the importance of clear communication between student, tutor and facilitator as well as to identify some of the barriers to achieving this.
students with a wider range of disabilities, the institution has built
on its practices with dyslexic students.

Again, like many art and design institutions, KIAD employs a
high proportion of sessional staff and faces the consequent
challenges in ensuring that they have access to effective training
and staff development.

3. Activities

The institution carried out a series of interviews with teaching
staff, students and facilitators, asking a standard set of questions
(see Appendix 1). The two members of staff (both from the design
faculty) had both been working at KIAD for at least a year and
had had experience of working with students with disabilities and
their facilitators. Three specialist facilitators were involved, one
from each campus. The two students were enrolled in the fine art
faculty, one full-time, the other part-time. The interviewees were
not directly connected with each other, i.e. the facilitators were
not employed to work with the particular students interviewed.

The interviews were carried out by Anya Nydal, who has
experience of KIAD as a student, a sessional member of staff,
and also as a member of the support team. The research
supervisor was David Kirk.

The outcomes of the case study will be considered by Equality
and Diversity Sub-Committee, a senior level committee chaired by
a member of the Directorate and on which all major departments
and academic schools are represented. E&D sub-committee
can direct other committees, such as Teaching and Learning
or Personnel, to take action where relevant.

4. Learning achieved

4.1 Boundaries between teaching and support

In addition to the core team of support staff, the institute also
employs a number of hourly-paid disability facilitators who work
with individual students providing support specified by their
assessment and funded by their Disabled Student Allowance
(DSA). Although these staff are highly experienced in working
with a range of disabilities, there have been a number of issues
which have emerged in the relationships between the role of
these staff and the role of academic staff.

The disability facilitators working at KIAD have, in many cases,
developed their skills through working in FE Colleges and have
less experience of a higher education environment. At many
levels of FE study, students and staff expect to work within a
much more managed environment where, for example, it would
be common for a tutor to call a student at home if they were
absent from class. The HE environment places a far higher
emphasis on the development of independent learning skills.
Some HE tutors have felt that the level of support provided by
the facilitators undermines the student’s ability to evolve the
necessary independence.

The institute has been able to support many of the disability
facilitators in undertaking training leading to formal HE-level
qualifications and has found that, as the team has become more
qualified and more experienced in working within HE, both as
learners and as facilitators, so the response of HE staff to their
role has been more positive.

4.2 Authenticity of student work

Some of the concerns about the boundaries between the role
of academic staff and that of the facilitator relate to questions
of authenticity of student work. Interviews with academic staff
revealed their concerns; however, interviews with facilitators
demonstrated that they had a well developed understanding
of the boundaries of their role, being clear that it did not extend
to advising the student on academic matters. For example, in
supporting a dyslexic student in essay-writing, the facilitator would
advise on organisation, structure, clarity of expression, but would
not comment on content. Students also appeared in the interviews
to share the clear understanding of the facilitator’s role and it is
evident that explaining the role from the outset is important.

4.3 Communication between student, tutor and facilitator

Communication between academic staff and specialist facilitators
can be difficult in many ways. In specialist institutions, many
academic staff are professional practitioners, employed on an
hourly-paid basis or in fractional posts; in some cases, academic
teams can have very small numbers of full-time staff. The
facilitators are also not typically employed on a full-time basis
and so opportunities to meet can be limited. The disability
support manager at KIAD has encouraged academic teams to
involve the facilitators in team meetings as a way of sharing
expertise, not in discussing individual cases, but in developing
mutual awareness of and respect for their respective professions.
Where this has happened it has had a positive impact on the
relationships, but it is not always possible.

Student interviews reported cases where communication
between the three parties had been highly successful and where
all had been flexible in their arrangements so as to make three-
way meetings possible. Tutors who were prepared to change
tutorial schedules to enable the attendance of a part-time
facilitator were acknowledged by students as having a positive
impact on their ability to learn.
One of the problems caused by the difficulties in regular communication is that academic staff may not be aware of the difficulties that a student is experiencing in a particular type of work and may not therefore be in a position to acknowledge and applaud progress even where the result is still below the expected standards. For example, one facilitator cited a case where a dyslexic student had struggled long and hard with an essay and had made progress. However, when the essay was assessed, the negative result and the disparaging comments written by the assessing tutor were very demoralising to the student. More significantly, it is possible that this lack of awareness results in a lack of consideration of alternative submission models more suited to the student’s abilities.

Conversely, within the interviews there were examples cited by students of close working relationships between them, their tutor and their facilitator which, over time, led to subtle understanding of the ways in which the student was best able to work. In one case the student talked about these discussions having led to a significant increase in his/her ability to be independent and make decisions about his/her own work.

4.4 Information management
The Institute operates a clear policy of confidentiality in relation to information about the individual student’s disability and needs. The process ensures that every student who declares a disability meets with the disability support manager to discuss their needs. Where appropriate, DSA will be applied for and managed by the disability support manager. Where a disability facilitator is needed, they are appointed and provided with hours to work with the student. The onus to tell the facilitator about the specifics of the student’s needs lies firmly with the student themselves. The same policy applies to the flow of information to academic staff; i.e. if the student chooses not to tell their tutor or course leader, then that information will remain confidential between the student and the disability support manager. This policy empowers the student to manage the extent to which staff in the community are informed of their circumstances. However, it can lead to uncertainty among tutors and facilitators as to the needs of the student.

Although some facilitators would prefer to have access to the reports prepared by educational psychologists at the outset, they do however work closely with the student who will usually specify their needs clearly. Interviews demonstrated that academic staff often feel insecure about whether they are meeting the students’ needs. This is particularly difficult given that staff are increasingly aware of the imperative for them and the institution to ensure that the students have equal access to the learning opportunities.

Staff can be highly aware of their obligations, but also concerned about the potential increase in their workload in responding to a range of needs.

The case study highlights the importance of ensuring that academic staff know where to go or who to talk to about the adaptations that they may need to make to their teaching or to learning materials in order to enable a student with a disability to access them.

4.5 Personal relationships
It is evident from the interviews that the success of the support for the student can depend to a significant extent on the attitudes and practices of a small number of individuals. While some student interviews applaud particular staff for making time to work with them and for understanding their perspective, others speak about difficult relationships which had led them to feel unsupported.

Students were particularly grateful to those staff who had been prepared to be flexible – altering tutorial schedules so that the facilitator can attend to take notes, e-mailing work to the student so that assistive technology can make access possible, etc.

Students have a lot of control over how the funding from their DSA is used and for negotiating hours with the facilitator. In some cases, this has evidently led to a flexibility between student and facilitator to ensure that the support is provided at the right time and with clear purpose.

For example, one student spoke about the process of mounting an exhibition and the recognition that s/he did not need the facilitator’s support in presenting the work, but was able to arrange to meet with them at a specified time to produce price lists and a personal statement to accompany the exhibited work. This way of working supports the development of independent working and helps the student to achieve a learning experience similar to that of students without disabilities. For example, a student wishing to attend an exhibition independently, can arrange for the facilitator to accompany them on a mutually convenient day, rather than only being able to attend exhibitions for which the institute has arranged a trip for the whole student group.

The Equality and Diversity sub-committee will be considering the findings of the case study. It is hoped that this will inform the Institute that there is a need to provide ongoing specific disability awareness training to academic staff which will in turn support students who wish to disclose/discuss their disability.
In March 2005 the Institute appointed a full time disability support manager thus affording more time to be spent on advising and consulting with academic staff.

The process for disclosure is now addressed through a disclosure consent form. This enables the student and disability support manager to identify:

i. staff who could give support
ii. which staff to extend disclosure to. Identified staff are then approached and informed initially by the disability support manager and student.

The case study highlights a number of areas of recommendation; these are expanded upon in the accompanying Learning and Teaching Development Guide.

### Effective Communication

- Identify opportunities for academic staff and disability facilitators to meet in order to understand and have respect for each others professions.
- Ensure that students have the ability to manage the support resources in order that they receive what they need when they need it.
- Opportunities for the student, tutor and facilitator to meet and discuss progress with learning can reap significant dividends, leading to understanding, flexibility and trust.
- Recognise that in giving students the responsibility for telling staff about their needs, it can increase staff’s sense of uncertainty about the best way to help the student.

### Defining the Role of the Facilitator

- Ensure that the facilitator explains their role clearly to students, specifically to clarify their role in enabling the student to express and communicate their own ideas.
- Consider strategies for ensuring that academic staff are also aware of the role of the facilitator, perhaps through meeting but also by publishing clear guidelines.

### Questions to students

1. To what extent do you feel that your needs as a disabled student are being met? Do you feel that support staff and lecturers have sufficient knowledge about you in order to provide the right support?
2. Could you tell me about areas where you feel it is particularly important for the support worker to assist/help you? What kind is important to you?
3. Tell me about the support you receive from lecturers?
4. For example, in a situation where there are conflicts between a lecturer and yourself, in what way do you feel the facilitator should be involved or not involved?
5. Are there any areas where you have experienced conflicts in your relationship with your facilitator?
6. What would you do, for example, if your facilitator seems to want to support you in areas you feel support is not needed?
7. If a facilitator seems unsure about what your needs are – in what way would you be able to guide him/her into knowing what needs you have?
8. Have you experienced situations where lecturers have communicated messages via your facilitator and not directly to you? What would you do in such a situation?
9. How well would you say that you communicate with your facilitator?
10. How much dialogue is there between your lecturer and your facilitator?
11. How do you think facilitators and teaching staff could collaborate to help your learning process?
12. Have you encountered situations where you have had to defend your disability to any members of staff? And if so, could you tell me a bit about it?
13. How important would you say that it was for support staff and lecturers to be delivering the same message to you when it comes to reviewing the progress of how you study?
14. Do you have any final comments to make?

### Questions to lecturers

1. To what extent do you feel that you understand the needs of the student’s disability, that you have sufficient knowledge about him/her in order to provide appropriate support?
2. Tell me about the support areas that you think are important for you to assist the student. Are there any areas of support that you think you should not get involved in?
3. Students can often be quite demanding, how do you cope with the extra demands of ‘disability’ students?
4. Are there any areas where you have experienced conflicts in your relationship with your students (to do with their disability)?
5. How do you see your role, for example in a situation where there are conflicts between support staff and student? What role do you take?
6. Tell me a little bit about how you see the role of the support worker in assisting the disabled student?
1. To what extent do you feel that you understand the needs of the student’s disability, that you have sufficient knowledge about him/her in order to provide the right support?
2. Tell me about the areas that you think is important for you to assist the student.
3. Are there any areas of support that you think you should not get involved in?
4. What would you do, for example, if one of your students seems to expect your support/assistance in areas you believe support is not needed?
5. How do you see your role, for example, in a situation where there are conflicts between teaching staff and student? What role do you take?
6. Are there any areas where you have experienced conflicts in your relationship with your students?
7. If a student has no experience of receiving support and does not seem to know how to direct you as to what s/he needs, how would you approach such a situation?
8. What do you think is your role in a situation where the lecturer uses you as a messenger for all information to the student?
9. Tell me about how you see the role of the lecturer in assisting the student?
10. Are there any areas that you have encountered any conflicts in your relationship with the teaching staff?
11. How much dialogue do you have with the teaching staff?
12. How do you think the support staff and teaching staff can collaborate to enhance the student learning experience?
13. How important would you say that it was for support staff and lecturers to be delivering the same message to the student when it comes to reviewing the progress of how they study?
14. Are there any benefits in asking the lecturer’s advice about the student’s progression?
15. Do you have any final comments to make?

The re-validation process has proved to be a useful opportunity to stimulate the debate across academic and support staff about how to design and deliver the curriculum in ways that achieve accessibility for all as well as achieving and maintaining high standards.
Case Study 3

Making music technology accessible for visually impaired students

Trinity College of Music
James Hitchins, Disability Project Officer
ICT, training, alternative submission arrangements, involving students

1. Abstract

The college set out to consider ways in which two modules in Applied Music Technology (AMT 1, 2 and 3), components of the BMus programme, could be made fully accessible to students with visual impairments. The modules ‘teach contemporary recording techniques and [enable] composers to realise acoustic and electro acoustic works’. The college’s composition suite is equipped with Macintosh workstations, which run a range of composition software packages including Pro Tools and Logic.

The difficulty for students with visual impairment arises from the fact that from September 2003, Logic Audio software was no longer available for PCs and yet the leading screen-reading and related accessibility software is designed for PC alone. The college initially responded by making adjustments to the assessment requirements to ensure that no student was disadvantaged by a poor grade in these modules and subsequently by offering these modules as elective options rather than as core, mandatory modules.

The college set out to determine the extent to which existing specialist assistive software for PCs could allow students with visual impairment to achieve the learning objectives of the modules to the same extent that others are able to achieve them using the Apple-based software on which the college’s composition suite is based.

The case study also set out to review the technical instruction required by students to make full use of the assistive technology. As a result the college has developed a ten-point ICT protocol to assist IT staff in planning and implementing ICT provision for students with visual impairment.

The case study concluded that the majority of composition-based intended learning outcomes of the modules could be met through use of a PC. The studio-based intended learning outcomes can be met with the benefit of additional supervision.

The college identified that two students with visual impairment had not been able to participate in the Applied Music Technology modules. This was brought to the attention of the disability officer who liaised closely with the head of department to develop alternative assessment criteria methods and with ICT staff to research relevant assistive software. In this case the disability

2. Institutional context

Trinity College of Music has a clear strategic commitment to widening access to specialist music provision in higher education. This is evident in a range of activities with partners in the local and regional communities and from developments in the curriculum designed to offer higher level music learning to students with a wider range of prior experiences.

The college has benefited from investment through HEFCE’s Improving Provision for Students with Disabilities, Strands 1 and 2. Strand 1 funding has enabled the institution to appoint a disability officer.

The two students taking part in the case study were the only 2 students with visual impairment in the 2003/4 academic year and in previous years our other visually impaired students have enrolled at the college.

3. Activities

The college has become more confident in its ability to provide high quality learning experiences for students with visual impairments and this has been reflected in the enrolment of a student who composes using Sibelius Speaking to Junior Trinity.

The college’s developments have been promoted through their collaboration with RNIB and through the disability officer’s attendance on Musicians in Focus course at the Royal College of Music as well as through liaison with other specialist charities. This external awareness has enabled these agencies to refer students to the College and this has led to further students applying to the college and being offered places for the 2004–2005 academic year.

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officer had previous experiences of developing alternative assessment criteria to enable access by students with disabilities and was able to achieve this in the case of this specialist module; in other cases it may be that this role would fall more to the academic programme leader or module leader.

Having identified the remit of the case study and undertaken preliminary work, the disability officer was able to employ an external consultant to interview the students and staff and to prepare the case study report. The two students were interviewed to assess their IT skills and attitudes towards IT, then training and support was supplied to enable them to undertake the alternative module assessment.

3.1 Dedicated IT provision
In 2003, the college provided a PC dedicated for use by students with visual impairment. The PC, located in the college’s library, is available during normal library opening hours and was installed with the Microsoft Windows 2000 operating system and standard Microsoft Office programmes. In addition the following software was installed:

- JAWS for Windows 4.51 (Screen reading software)
- Sibelius 2.1 (Music notation software)
- Sibelius Speaking 1.3 (Talking scripts for Sibelius)
- Lime 7.25 (Music notation program that allows Braille Music)
- Cakewalk Pro Audio 9 (Midi and audio recording software)
- CakeTalking 2.25 (Talking scripts for Cakewalk Pro Audio)
- Goodfeel 2.6 (Software for making Braille Music)
- Nero Express 6 (CD burning package)

Additional equipment comprised a set of stereo headphones, an external CD reader-writer, a four-octave synthesizer keyboard for MIDI input, and a Braille printer.

3.2 Student IT skills audit
The case study engaged the two students with visual impairments studying on the BMus programme in the 2002/3 academic year. The students were initially interviewed (by the disability officer) to determine their prior experiences of using assistive software and worked with college staff as they undertook the modules. Neither student had any previous experience of specialist music-related software, either in the context of the specific modules that are the subject of this case study, or in their general music study. In both cases they had experienced some previous IT training which had not been effective.

At the time of the case study, the students had only just begun their training on the assistive software and the college hopes to follow up this case study by reviewing the impact the of training.

The high cost of assistive software and the problems of compatibility with standard PC software can mean that students with visual impairment have not been able to access this specialist software prior to entering HE. It can also mean that these students have not been able to develop their general level of IT skills to the same extent as their peers.

Of the two students involved in the case study, Student A had almost no prior experience of using computers at all with the exception of some attempts to work with early versions of Sibelius Speaking. Student B had a little more experience, including use of an early version of Cakewalk, but was otherwise not familiar with standard Microsoft software or the accompanying screen-reading scripts. Student A experienced a high level of anxiety in beginning to use the computer and became quickly frustrated at the limitations of the screen-reading software, but has since become much more confident and is using the software much more frequently.

Student B benefited from a higher level of confidence as a result of more prior experience and was able to approach the learning of assistive technology more positively as a result.

Both students expressed a keen interest in using e-mail and the Internet and were motivated to develop these skills.

3.3 Training and support provided
Due to the low levels of previous experience of IT and the consequent anxiety surrounding the learning of new IT skills, a high degree of close supervision was required to enable the students to develop their skills. Before the use of specialist assistive software was possible, it was necessary to train students in basic navigation skills. In this initial stage students needed close support from IT trainers, but it is hoped that once the navigation skills are developed their ability to learn more independently will increase.

The dedicated PC was placed in the library and library staff provided general instruction and support in the use of the PC. A member of academic staff, himself with a visual impairment, undertook training in the use of the PC and its assistive software and began to provide training for the students from spring 2004. Through his training he was able to identify a number of inadequacies in the screen-reading software and,
through collaboration between IT staff and the disability officer, adjustments were made to improve the functionality before rolling out training to the students.

The case study demonstrated that students with visual impairments may have had very little previous experience of using computers – for either general use or for specialist music-related use. As a result, students can be anxious about developing new IT skills and become easily demotivated. However, it should be noted that the case study students were motivated to learn how to use e-mail and to access the Internet.

By the time the training was developed, an additional three students with visual impairment had enrolled in the college and hence the training was delivered in a group of five with some individuals choosing to spend additional time working independently from home. It proved useful to have audited prior experiences as this allowed the tutor to tailor the training to individual needs.

Both students were able to resource specialist software for their personal computers funded by their Disabled Student Allowance (DSA).

The college was able to access specialist support from a range of national and pass relevant information onto students. These included:

Dancing Dots Braille Music Technology – a US company founded in 1992 by a blind musician to develop and adapt music technology for the blind. The company provides adapted software, technical support, a Braille music transcription service and textbooks on learning to read Braille music notation (R. Taesch, B. Krolick).

Musicians in Focus1 – a consultancy and research organisation based at the Royal College of Music which serves as an information ‘clearing house’ for visually-impaired musicians and offers a series of open days and workshops each year to introduce musicians of any age to the latest developments in music-related assistive technology. Musicians in Focus also offers remote tutelage on music technology via an e-Learning scheme, and maintains advice and message boards for its members.

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)2 – offers tutorials in the use of Microsoft Windows, the Internet and Microsoft Word. RNIB is also able to answer or refer enquiries on specific areas relating to accessibility as appropriate, and has been particularly proactive in encouraging computer accessibility.

Outside the UK, there are a number of government, educational and charitable organisations devoted to visually impaired musicians who are able to provide advice and information on developments in assistive technology and techniques for working with music technology. In the USA, the Music Education Network for the Visually Impaired (MENVI) located at the Southern California Conservatory of Music and the National Resource Centre for Blind Musicians located at the Music and Arts Centre for Humanity (MACH) [formerly the Music and Arts Centre for the Handicapped] offer information services for visually-impaired musicians, including updates on relevant technological developments.

4. Learning achieved

4.1 Software currency

The rapid developments in IT software result in key packages frequently being updated, superseded and replaced. In addition to changes in individual packages, updates can affect compatibility with existing hardware and other software. Inevitably, the high capital and consumable costs involved in establishing and operating specialist resources mean that an HEI cannot always update software immediately a new version is available. However in the case of ensuring access for students with visual impairment, these changes can mean the difference between full access and no access3. The HEI has located the responsibility for reviewing the changes in software and for making purchasing decisions, which take full account of the needs of students with disabilities with the disability officer.

As a result of the on-going liaison between the college and specialist software providers, these companies have begun to contact the college pro-actively to inform them of new developments.


More generally, Musicians in Focus are currently running a pilot scheme with the Royal College of Music Junior Department to increase accessibility to music tuition for visually-impaired musicians aged eight and upwards.


3. For example, when Apple Computers purchased eMagic, the German company that produced Logic software, it announced that from September 2003 Logic would no longer be available for use on PCs. Since TCM’s Composition Suite is built around Macintosh software and since at the time Apple was not offering screen reading scripts for Macintosh-based software, students with visual impairments were excluded from access to the AMT modules which required the use of music composition software.
4.2 Developing a 10-point ICT protocol
The case study has led to the development of a ten-point ICT protocol:

i. Ensure that a member of staff has a specified responsibility for maintaining knowledge of current assistive technology and for liaising with IT staff to determine purchasing priorities.

ii. Prior to purchasing any assistive technology, ensure that specialist support is easily accessible where required.

iii. Training on the use of specialist equipment needs to be given as early as possible and well before assessment or deadlines. Some specialist software can be very complex and a thorough understanding of applications is needed before undertaking work that is to be assessed.

iv. Some specialist software is very sensitive to changes; the installing of new software, changing the computer specifications or software updates can render previously well running software unusable. Regular checks need to be carried out to avoid this and these checks need to be comprehensive.

v. If software is being used directly for assessments staff need to be on hand who are familiar with the software being used in case of problems arising.

vi. When sourcing software it is important to consider whether the software can meet the curriculum outcomes. The software specifications need to be checked closely with course learning outcomes. Where they cannot be 100% met through the use of specialist software human support alternatives should be considered.

vii. When sourcing equipment and/or software for students, their previous use of specialist equipment should be taken into account and equipment they are familiar with used. This also applies to mainstream software they may be familiar with that can be accessed with specialist software that runs parallel with the mainstream product.

viii. In some cases several pieces of specialist software will have to run at the same time and be used in conjunction with each other. The compatibility of this software is something that needs to be investigated before any purchasing decisions are made.

ix. The number of workstations with specialist software needs to reflect the number of students with the specific conditions. Having one specialist workstation for a specific condition when you have 100 students with that condition would obviously be unacceptable, when the workstation to student ratio throughout the institution is, for example, one workstation for every 10 students. The number of specialist workstations for students with disabilities needs to match, or be greater than, the general workstation to student ratio.

x. Mandatory profiles can be a problem for disabled students. They may have set-up preferences that will be overwritten the next time they visit a computer. A solution to this problem is to give disabled students local access rights to the computer, sometimes known as power user settings, so that their particular configurations are saved.

4.3 Developing alternative assessment criteria and submissions
The Music Technology module is based around the task of copying a piece of music from its written form and this is normally carried out in a group teaching session with tutors using whiteboards in an ICT suite to demonstrate. Visually-impaired students may find this inaccessible due to difficulties in seeing the demonstrations and also because of the additional time it takes to copy a piece of music either from Braille or from hearing the composition.

The alternative method developed was to work with the visually impaired students as a smaller group and to provide instruction and specialist assistive software. Before the assignment can be undertaken, students need to develop sufficient competence and confidence in using the technology.

The Music Technology modules had previously been deemed optional, partly in order to address the problems of accessibility. However, the focus given to them has led to a position where they are now able to be identified as core modules for visually impaired users. For the students undertaking the module, this change has provided an early opportunity in the programme to develop their ICT skills which is of benefit to them more widely in their studies and their lives.

The disability officer worked very closely with the academic staff team and this served not only to reduce the impact of the work on the academic staff but also provided a highly positive example of the benefits to all of such collaboration. As a consequence, the disability officer has been engaged closely in the current revalidation of the BMus programme, looking at every module to consider its accessibility, not only for students with disabilities but for other communities within the college, for example international students. The re-validation process has proved to be a useful opportunity to stimulate the debate across academic and support staff about how to design and deliver the curriculum in ways that achieve accessibility for all as well as achieving and maintaining high standards.
4.4 Welfare and academic staff working in partnership
The college has been able to invest in developing a welfare team in part through access to the HEFCE Strand 1 Disability funding. At the time of writing, the team comprised a full-time disability Officer, a part-time dyslexia officer and an academic support tutor. Collectively, these staff are able to support students in working on written assignments, music reading, sight reading etc.

Academic staff have responded positively to the presence of these relatively new staff and, as indicated above, the case study has served to promote the benefits of working together. Teaching staff regularly pass copies of project briefs to the disability officer who translates them into Braille and agreement has been reached that all written work can be accepted in electronic form.

The disability officer has developed a set of Disability Etiquette guidelines that have been issued to all staff to raise their awareness of the types of disabilities within the student community. He has also developed a set of 23 booklets, each examining a particular disability. Each booklet describes the disability and identifies potential implications for academic performance, social interaction and health. The booklet goes on to describe the support that the college provides, through student services, training, specialist equipment and alternative submission agreements. In preparing these guidelines, the disability officer has worked with academic staff and with representatives from specialist agencies such as the RNIB.

As with many specialist HEIs, Trinity College of Music employs a high proportion of professional practitioners as teachers on a part-time basis. Such staff are not always able to participate in college training and so these guidelines provide an extremely useful alternative source of information and advice.

4.5 Engaging students in promoting the integration of students with disabilities
The disability officer has worked with visually impaired students to produce and circulate some materials to all students which alerts students and staff to practical ways in which they can work and socialise with visually impaired students. This has not only been an effective way of developing materials with a clear student voice but has also highlighted the potential danger that students with disabilities could be excluded from developing social relationships with their peers. The case study carried out by Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication demonstrated the core importance of personal peer friendships in supporting access to the totality of the learning experience in an HEI.

5. Action taken by the Institution
As a result of the implementation of the audit and of the individual case study:
- Organised ICT training for the students
- Developed 10-point ICT protocol
- Increased the College’s stock of Braille texts
- The job description of the disability officer has been amended to include responsibility for maintaining up-to-date knowledge of available assistive software and for liaising with the IT department to inform purchasing and installation decisions
- Updated software packages in college ICT to ensure that students have access to up-to-date programmes
- Loaded specialist software (purchased through DSA) onto students’ personal computers
- Incorporated a review of accessibility within programme re-validation

6. Recommendations
The following teaching and learning recommendations are presented in greater detail in the accompanying BICPA Learning and Teaching Development Tool.

Apply the 10-point ICT protocol
- See 4.2 above

Provide training in use of assistive technology
- Assess the ICT skills of new students with visual impairments to inform training
- Provide training as soon as possible within the programme

Review alternative teaching, learning and assessment methods
- Work collaboratively between academic and welfare staff in considering alternative teaching and learning methods for specific modules
- Review accessibility of modules as part of validation process

Provide practical guidance to teaching staff
- Deliver a programme of training
- Be prepared to be responsive to staff needs prompted by a new student with a disability
- Supplement face to face training with printed materials
- Involve students in developing materials and training

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4. HEFCE strand 1 funding ‘Improving provision for disabled students’
Case Study 3

Appendix

Please see additional research report, available from Ravensbourne College.


“I am perfectly capable of doing everything else it just needs an adjustment to the situation to make me able to do just as well.”

– Student with multiple disabilities
1. Abstract

This case study set out to explore the experiences of a student with multiple disabilities on the BA (Hons) Drama, Education and Applied Theatre programme. The School was interested in reviewing the practical experiences of an individual experiencing physical disability combined with ‘invisible’ disabilities in the context of a programme which includes a significant practical performance component. The research set out to present any emerging good practice, to empower the student to raise awareness of student need and to identify any practice that is discriminatory or not inclusive. The case study explores the student’s practical experiences of accessing the learning opportunities of the course and considers the impact of difficulties on the individual student’s capacity to learn. Key issues from the case study include the importance of a partnership between student, academic tutor and disability officer; the value of Learning Agreements which set out the learning experience and identify any access difficulties and the emotional impact on the student of not being able to participate in certain activities of the programme.

2. Institutional context

Central School of Speech and Drama is a specialist HEI with 711 students enrolled on programmes from pre-degree to post-graduate and research degrees. Like many specialist institutions the School has received funding to develop its infrastructure to improve access for students with disabilities at the same time as funding to consider learning and teaching issues related to disability through HEFCE’s Improving Provision for Disabled Students, Strands 1 and 2.

The school’s Equal Opportunities and Widening Participation units have driven a focus on access to the curriculum and the needs of individual students, stimulated by a commitment to respond positively to SENDA legislation. A disability officer has been appointed to work directly with individual students as well as to provide specialist advice within the school. In addition to institution-wide training to raise staff awareness of SENDA requirements, Student Counselling Services, the department within which the disability officer is located, has developed and delivered a range of small-group training which has been accessed by a range of staff. A disability working group has been established which reports to the academic board and the strategic planning group.

3. Activities

The subject of the case study was in the second year of a three year, full-time BA (Hons) Drama, Education and Applied Theatre programme. The course has mixed modes of delivery, including theoretical study and practical workshops. The student was invited to take part in the case study in part due to the fact that she experiences both visible and invisible disabilities and because she had been keen to express her experiences of the programme and of the school. The case study was led by the head of professional development and lifelong learning unit who, with the head of programmes and academic registrar, has been active in developing access and inclusion within the institution.

An interview was carried out between the student and the head of professional development and lifelong learning and this was used as the primary means for recording the student’s review of her experiences at the school. The full transcript has been edited to produce the case study documentation; the edit process allowing the student to be frank in her comments and enabling the school to identify those aspects and issues which could be effectively evaluated.

In the interview the student was asked to think about the totality of her experiences with the school, including her expectations prior to attending and the admissions and selection process.

4. Learning achieved

4.1 Partnership and planning

Before entering Central School of Speech and Drama, the student had completed a BTEC National Diploma at sixth form college. In the interview she highlighted the fact that her expectations of CSSD were that it would be matched to her experience of FE. In the large FE college, she was studying in an environment with well-developed strategies and resources for supporting students with a wide range of disabilities. She expected a small institution to be able to make flexible adjustments for her as an individual, yet acknowledged that in such a small community she was the only student with her condition and was working with staff with no prior experience of supporting students with similar disabilities. This situation is common context for the majority of specialist institutions which are, by definition, relatively small.

The prioritisation of specialist HEIs within Strand 1 funding acknowledged the difficulties that these typically small institutions have had in funding developments to buildings and infrastructure
to support inclusivity. The fact that specialist HEIs have often received both Strand 1 and Strand 2 funding simultaneously has meant perhaps that some of the teaching and learning developments that might be made cannot in fact be fully progressed until investment in infrastructure has been realised.

At the outset of the course, the student met with the disability officer to review the support that she was likely to need; this was successfully completed and took account of recommendations made by the LEA. The case study has highlighted the importance of embedding the Learning Agreement more fully within teaching and learning.

If academic tutors are to be in a position where they can address the individual’s needs and make appropriate adjustments where necessary, they need to be partners in a dialogue about the student’s condition and the implications of it for their learning access. This would enable tutors to recognise more clearly areas where the student might be disadvantaged and to work with the student to make the appropriate adjustments.

Preparing a Learning Agreement at the beginning of the course sets a picture of need and adjustment in broad terms. It is necessary to refine the process of agreement in relation to individual projects. It may not be necessary to complete a formal Learning Agreement before every project; the majority of courses have a relatively limited range of types of learning experiences, e.g. lectures, tutorials, small group workshops, practicals, performances, field trips etc. Each type of experience raises a set of potential problems and if these are explored with the individual for one project they can often be readily applied to the next project of similar type.

Staff should therefore be making time to talk to individuals before the start of new projects, to explain the expectations of the activity, to discuss any adjustments necessary to enable the disabled student to participate and complete the assignment. Where this discussion is undertaken proactively, in advance of the activity, it is more feasible to respond to problem areas and make adjustments than if they are only noticed once the project is underway. Inevitably there will be some occasions when unanticipated difficulties will occur and a partnership approach between the student and institution staff is going to be effective.

The interview with the student raised a set of issues about how she brings concerns and problems to the notice of staff. She was concerned that in raising difficulties and asking for additional support or extensions to deadlines, she might potentially be viewed as a difficult student. The relationship between student and tutor is by definition a ‘power relationship’ and students can feel anxiety about the way in which they present themselves to the tutor.

The student in this case study identified the disability officer as playing a key role in liaising between herself and academic staff members. The disability officer was able to raise questions and concerns on behalf of the student to avoid her anxiety that she was seen as always having a problem. The disability officer was also in a position to clarify the student’s needs and to encourage staff to adapt activity for her. However valuable this liaison role is, it remains important that communication between the student and the academic tutor is managed in such a way as to ensure that needs are identified and adjustments made without resulting in student anxiety.

‘I am perfectly capable of doing everything else it just needs an adjustment to the situation to make me able to do just as well.’
– Student

4.2 Professional practice

Tutors working in specialist HEIs are, typically, professional practitioners in the subject that they teach as well as experienced teachers – bringing to the learning environment their experiences of professional practice. Academic tutors are not typically experts in disability and are not readily equipped with the knowledge needed to assess the needs of individuals with particular disabilities. The relationship between the academic tutor and support staff becomes essential here, enabling academics to access information needed to help them understand the student’s needs. As discussed above, the case study recommends the establishment of a proactive system for undertaking Learning Agreements involving the academic tutor, the student and the disability officer.

Where a Learning Agreement identifies the need for significant adjustment to teaching activity, it may challenge the tutor to review their approaches to teaching. It may require that a well established project, run successfully for many years, may need to be fundamentally adapted in order to enable a student with a particular disability to participate. Staff need to be supported in making such changes, with practical advice from the disability specialist and the student about what changes are necessary. Staff also need to be encouraged to see the positive potential of such revisions, both to the experience of all participating students and to the tutor’s professional practice.

The challenge of involving a student in a wheelchair in a performance without a disabled character is complex, yet
demands a response. In some cases it may be that tutors have no experience of considering such debates or of being engaged in professional productions involving disabled performers. One of the recommendations emerging from the case study is that drama HEIs involve disabled performers in teaching and activity within the institution, both to offer positive models to students and staff of what disabled performers can achieve and how they can contribute full to performance.

4.3 Access to performance
As with the majority of specialist creative and performing arts programmes, the BA (Hons) Drama, Education and Applied Theatre includes a significant proportion of practical performance work. In this particular case study the student experienced difficulties in participating in drama performance activities. On occasions she found herself observing practical work; on others she was able to find a way to engage but not fully enough to develop character within the performance. She reported that she felt on occasions that the responsibility for finding a way to become involved lay with her rather than with the tutor.

‘I was thinking about the start of the course. It was totally practical. I mean literally you were just running around which I [obviously couldn’t do] and so I ended up staying by myself [away] from the group…I was always sitting on the sidelines and I challenged that. I approached a member of staff…and the response…was that I needed to be responsible for my own disability. But these issues need to be changed.’ – Student

On a particular field-trip to an open-air theatre, the student was unable to participate due to the physical access problems on the site. The prospect of field trips emphasises the importance of discussing, before the activity, the realities of access.

Conversely, the student had an extremely positive work-placement in a special school for disabled children, where access was easy and the environment was entirely designed for learners with mobility difficulties.

4.4 Participation and enjoyment
Throughout the interview, the student repeatedly used examples of where she had felt excluded emotionally as well as practically. Her ability to develop social relationships with other students was undermined by her inability to participate in group activities. She found that she was more comfortable engaged in the solitary aspects of the course, such as play-writing modules which could be completed from home and which also offered an opportunity to express personal opinions and emotions.

‘As a human being I was shattered, as a learner I felt incompetent; it highlighted a lot of insecurities for me when I thought I was progressing quite well…I didn’t really have much confidence for a while… I feel quite isolated, I feel I have had to struggle every single day from the way the building is situated; from the lack of disability access you know it was a constant struggle which in turn if you think just about your mental state is trying, it makes the learning more difficult because you are unhappy in yourself and you are constantly struggling to fit in with everyone else, I mean you do that as a peer anyway but on top of disability and other issues that are coming up, you are trying just to get on with it and you can’t because you are constantly worrying about how people are taking you and I felt like I was a burden on people so that wasn’t good for having just a good educational brain or mind. I wasn’t there, I wasn’t focused a lot of the time because I was more worried about other things.’ – Student

5. Action taken by the Institution
The work will inform future staff training. The work will be discussed at appropriate committees eg: Equal Opportunities. The work has impacted on our outreach and short courses and has led to staff adapting their teaching and learning.

6. Recommendations
• Ensure that every disabled student has a Learning Agreement which specifies the adjustments required during the course.
• Undertake the Learning Agreement with student, disability officer (or equivalent) and academic tutor.
• Review and revise Learning Agreement annually.
• Ensure that adjustments made in Learning Agreement are notified to relevant bodies within the HEI, e.g. an agreement to extended deadlines for all written assignments needs to be communicated to tutors and to examination boards.
• Discussion to take place between tutor and student prior to all new major learning units to review any specific adjustments; to include disability officer where specialist support is required.
• Engage disabled performers in the school to offer models of what disabled performers can achieve as professionals.
It also became evident that Chris was not able to benefit from the many informal conversations that go on between staff and students in a studio environment. Although quick, these points of contact are often very significant.
2. Institutional context

Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication is a relatively small HEI (Approx 1,000 FTEs) specialising in FE, HE and post-graduate programmes in design and broadcasting. It is located on a single campus site in Chislehurst, South London. Halls of residence are on the same site as are all student welfare resources. Chris was the first profoundly deaf student to attend the college and was resident in the college halls, where his room was equipped with a text phone minicom and a vibrating fire alarm.

In 2003/4 the college was able to allocate the third round of HEFCE capital funding to install hearing loops equipment. At the same time, training was offered in deaf awareness to all staff and 12 members of support staff took British Sign Language Level 1 during the academic year. This resulted in a high degree of awareness and a beginner level confidence with sign language in a significant proportion of staff working in student welfare areas, the learning resource centre, college shop, finance department and reception.

At the time of the case study the diversity officer was new in post and her workload level allowed her to devote a significant amount of time to supporting a single student – including joining a college trip to Paris to provide support for the student during the support worker’s hours off. This level of support has proved not to be sustainable as the diversity officer’s workload has increased and the number of students with disabilities joining the college has risen. This raises questions not only about the viability of such levels of support, but also about the appropriateness of the level of support. For example, it is possible that such ready access to a member of support staff could lead to a dependency that might not be in the student’s best interests in the long term.

3. Activities

The case study was developed by the college’s diversity officer who met with the student eight times over the year for detailed discussions of his experiences. These meetings enabled Chris and the diversity officer to monitor Chris’s experiences at college and to identify areas of the learning that were problematic. The diversity officer was able to progress responses to the problems, acting as a point of liaison with academic and support staff as required.

Prior to entering the course staff did not receive any specific training or induction to the needs of the deaf student. All staff had been able to access training in deaf awareness, but like many art and design courses, the staff team comprises many sessional staff who are less likely to have attended the training than their full-time colleagues.

At his interview, the college assessed his welfare needs and this led to the installation of specialist equipment in his room in the halls of residence and obtaining a free bus pass to help in travelling to deaf clubs. After the first few weeks of the term, it became evident that the fact that Chris’s first language is sign language was presenting him with difficulties in achieving written work. At his interview, he received support from a communicator and a tutor of the north-west of England.

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4. Learning achieved

4.1 Selection and admission

Chris initially applied to the college’s BA (Hons) Fashion programme and was interviewed. He was not offered a place, but it was suggested to him that he might benefit from a Foundation Diploma programme in order to develop his skills in idea initiation and development. As a result Chris opted to attend the Foundation Diploma at Ravensbourne, rather than in his own home town in the north-west of England.

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Initially the college sought a teacher for the deaf and consulted with Deaf Umbrella who came into college to meet with Chris and the diversity officer. Following discussion it was agreed that a CSW would better suit Chris’s needs. The CSW attended classes with Chris, assisting him in understanding briefings and supporting communication between Chris and staff and students.

4.2 Communication

Chris relied heavily on text messages and e-mails from staff, preferring the simple language in a text message. For example, the diversity officer would text Chris on occasions when he was late for college. Chris was keen to use texts between himself and staff but this raised questions of the appropriateness of sharing
mobile phone numbers. It has been suggested that key members of staff working with a deaf student might be provided with mobiles by the college for this purpose.

4.3 Role of support staff
At the time when Chris joined the college, the diversity officer was new in post and had a reasonable amount of time to dedicate to Chris. Largely because she was carrying out the case study, she became the main focal point for his support needs, although this is a role that would normally be in the remit of the welfare officer. As this was the first and, at the time, only student in the college with profound hearing impairment, the diversity officer was able to allocate a significant amount of time not only to meeting with the student but to providing on-going support during the year. For example, when Chris took part in a trip to Paris, the diversity officer was also able to take part and therefore to provide support during the week.

Chris was also supported by the learning and teaching development co-ordinator who provided support for academic work and was instrumental in helping Chris to develop strategies to complete written assignments, liaising with academic staff to consider alternative learning outcomes and submission formats.

4.4 Relationships with academic staff
The Foundation Diploma programme begins with a rotation enabling every student to explore a range of specialist areas before selecting an area for specialism for the remainder of the programme. The rotation stage serves to assist students in diagnosing their areas of specialism, develops understanding of a range of working methodologies and builds core skills such as research, drawing, idea development etc. During this period students are organised into groups who move through the rotation to work in a range of studio and workshop areas, with different teams of academic, technical and support staff. Each rotation also introduces students into different working methods, different materials and different types of outcome. The majority of staff leading projects during the rotation phase did not have previous experience of working with deaf students or any knowledge of BSL and therefore used primarily verbal methods to provide briefings and feedback. In this early stage of the course, before his CSW had been allocated, Chris felt that he was not able to interact fully with teaching staff.

Once the specialist area is chosen the student groups are re-structured, a stable studio space is allocated and a specialist lead tutor becomes the main point of contact complementing the range of specialist tutors who lead individual projects. In Chris’s case, the lead tutor for the fashion specialism had previous experience of working with students with disabilities and had received deaf awareness training. As a result she was able to speak with very clear lip patterns, clear body language (points etc). She utilised flip charts and bullet points and learnt some basic BSL signs and alphabet, which she used to communicate directly with Chris.

‘The teacher was brilliant because she knew that I am deaf.’ – Chris

By this time Chris’s confidence had grown, not only because he was now in the specialist area of choice and where his skills best suited the project work, but also because as the course developed, like most students, he became more confident about approaching staff and asking for support and information. He was also by this time supported by the CSW.

Chris developed an effective way of working and at the beginning of each project, generally delivered by a new tutor, Chris would arrange to meet with the tutor early on in the project to check that he was on the right track with his work rather than having to catch up later on in the project when the tutor saw his work. This provided a good opportunity for feedback and support from the tutor at an early stage.

The fashion group in this specialist stage was particularly large in this academic year and this presented problems for the staff in taking the necessary time to work with Chris who needed the additional one-to-one time as described to clarify the brief and to review regularly.

4.5 Studio location
The open plan studio area caused a number of difficulties for Chris. In particular the sound of tables and chairs moving noisily on a hard surface reverberated around the studio.

When a video was shown in the space, there was not enough light for Chris to see the lip patterns of the tutor, the CSW, or the other students and he had to stand at the back of the area to gain natural light from the corridor, which was a hindrance for him. When working in his studio space, the CSW often had to interrupt Chris if the tutor was wandering around the studio whilst explaining and talking as, otherwise, Chris would miss valuable points.

4.6 Group work
For Chris, group work was difficult as conversations could become hard to follow. Students did not ask him directly about his ideas and involvement. Chris found it hard as he had to watch his ideas and involvement. Chris found it hard as he had to watch
have time to think about his own ideas and contribute towards the discussions. Furthermore, when students were talking through their ideas, they often looked down at their work. Times like this were a hindrance as Chris could not look at the work or the students as he had to focus on the CSW at all times. This was also quite intensive for both Chris and the CSW.

‘Nobody in the group signed, Chris got a bit left out and lost sometimes.’ – Course Leader

4.7 Class discussion and critiquing
The hindrances to Chris’s full involvement with critiquing were similar to those described in group work above. It also became evident that Chris was not able to benefit from the many informal conversations that go on between staff and students in a studio environment. Although quick, these points of contact are often very significant, allowing students to ask questions which nevertheless can be pivotal to their ability to progress with a piece of work and enabling staff to offer positive feedback and to recognise where difficulties need to be addressed.

As a result the college arranged a deaf awareness training session for Chris’s peer group at the beginning of term two. With Chris’s input (and a BSL tutor) the group learnt the alphabet and some useful every day signs. Chris commented that this helped him to integrate with the group. After this session a number of students tried to sign to Chris. They also made more of an effort to involve him, not talk amongst themselves, and have more interaction. However, throughout the course, Chris relied on a few students that he could talk and communicate with.

‘Chris has a great sense of humour and is a confident, sociable and charming man. He is not shy and is willing to contribute to group discussion and make vocal his opinions.’ – Tutor

4.8 Language-based work
Within Chris’s initial learning contract, he was offered up to one hour per week support for written work through the foundation learning skills teacher. He decided not to take advantage of this, possibly because they were delivered in small groups.

As the course progressed, studio project reports indicated that Chris’s written and visual support material for his projects was poor. At the tutorial at the end of Chris’s first term, it was agreed to appoint the CSW. He was also encouraged by his tutor to keep all notes and to start writing BSL notes each day as part of his learning journal. This would demonstrate the development of his ideas and encourage him to be more visual.

Sessions with the learning and teaching co-ordinator were also arranged to offer English language support for Chris. This provided him with assistance on the up-keep of his learning journal and completion of 200-word report on the evaluation of his final major project. In particular, the sessions encouraged Chris to use more words in his visual presentations to help demonstrate his understanding and the development of ideas. He found this to be of great support in helping to shape his ideas and in developing his cognitive and comprehension abilities.

In light of the fact that Chris was initially rejected by the BA (Hons) Fashion course due to lack of evidence of conceptualisation, this raises questions about the extent to which admissions tutors depend on written text to support visual images in giving voice to the students’ ideas, particularly to demonstrate evaluation of options and to show external references. When considering an application from a deaf student it is important to recognise the potential for the applicant to be disadvantaged both by the interview discussion form and by the presentation of their visual portfolio.

‘I am a strong supporter of Chris and am pleased to be able to say that he has worked extremely hard, struggling to grasp many new concepts and learning to really begin to access his creativity and make visual his ideas.’ – Tutor

Chris often found it difficult to understand written projects and handouts. In such cases the CSW would break it down to help him understand the concept to ensure that everything was clear and he would translate what the tutor said into BSL terminology (hearing students would often talk amongst themselves to gain this clarification). It was really useful that the CSW was the same throughout the duration and that he understood the course in its entirety, knowing and understanding the projects and deadlines. It was also useful that the CSW had had an experience of studying art and design at a similar level.

Chris’s regular tutor eventually put all project briefs into bullet points with clear simple English. Chris felt that he benefited from the actions of his tutor including changes to coursework requirements to accommodate his needs and being flexible with deadlines where appropriate.

‘The handouts are good, full information on what I need to do.’ – Chris

The project set for the trip to Paris presented the first occasion where significant written elements were required on the course. Through discussion with the tutor, Chris and the L&T development
co-ordinator, it was agreed that Chris should complete a mood board/design board rather than an essay. The project was broken down into three key areas and he was asked to describe his ideas and opinions about the designers, the history of the designers, and to look at other artists with similar work. He was asked to write short sentences to describe and attach them to the design board. Chris received support from the learning development co-ordinator about how to structure the assignment.

4.9 Overseas trip
Socially, and in terms of providing support, the trip was difficult as the CSW was only employed for a certain number of hours each day. As this was early on in the term, friends had not been established and Chris found it quite difficult to integrate with the students due to his deafness as well as being in a foreign country. The diversity co-ordinator was able to take part in the trip and supported Chris in the evening, ensuring that Chris was not isolated or left alone, although this did mean that Chris often accompanied staff in the evenings, further distancing him from social relationships with his peers.

As mentioned above, the diversity officer was able to attend the trip only because she was new in post and Chris was the only student with these intensive support needs. In different circumstances it would not be possible for a member of college staff to provide this support and more sustainable strategies for ensuring that the student is able to take part in aspects of the programme need to be developed.

4.10 Developing social relationships
Chris experienced a number of difficulties in forming social relationships during the course and this forms the main theme underpinning this case study. Clearly the main factor was the communication barrier, but other factors influenced Chris’s position.

Chris had moved from home in Liverpool to attend Ravensbourne College and in doing so had removed himself not only from his friends and family but also from the deaf support group networks that he was connected to at home. Chris was allocated a room in the college’s halls of residence, but because the majority of foundation diploma students reside at home for the year, he did not have many foundation course peers in the halls to socialise with in the evenings. Chris did go into the students union bar in the evenings sometimes but found that after quick ‘Hellos’, no one was able to communicate with him.

As discussed, the studio environment and project-based working, often in groups, provides students with plenty of opportunities for interaction. The problems of communication in groups and in the studio meant that Chris was not able to access these opportunities and so was not able to forge friendships as quickly as the majority of students. Chris did establish a small group of friends and these were very important to him.

As the only male member of the fashion specialist group, these difficulties in integrating with the group were exacerbated and he felt that many of the girls would talk amongst themselves and not be inclined to involve him at first.

5. Action taken by the Institution

5.1 Organised communication support worker (CSW)
A CSW was allocated by the beginning of the second term of the three term programme. In reviewing the case study, it is clear that Chris benefited from the support provided by the CSW and that it would have been beneficial to have this in place earlier in the course.

5.2 Training for students
In light of difficulties experienced by Chris in integrating with the group, the college offered a workshop for students at the beginning of the second term. The workshop was jointly delivered by a BSL tutor and Chris, and enabled students to learn the BSL alphabet and some useful every day signs. Chris commented that this helped him to integrate with the group. After this session a number of students tried to sign to Chris. They also made more of an effort to involve him, not talk amongst themselves, and have more interaction. However, throughout the course, Chris relied on a few students that he could talk and communicate with.

(See recommendation 6.3 Training)

5.3 Provided simplified project briefs
Following Chris’s difficulties in accessing some of the language used on project briefs, the lead tutor developed a model of presenting the requirements and information in bullet point format. This, together with discussion with his CSW, supported Chris in understanding the requirements of the project.

It should be noted that the pattern of introducing a brief was for students to receive a written brief together with a verbal introduction from the tutor and discussion among students, either tutor-led or in informal groups. As a deaf student, Chris had to rely much more on the written instructions since he had difficulties in accessing the discussions. The opportunity to discuss both his understanding of the brief and his ideas for its realisation with the CSW were of critical importance as an alternative to fuller discussion with his peers and tutors.
5.4 Provided comprehensive hand-outs
In many cases, project briefs were accompanied by more detailed information and instruction, providing, for example, initial research texts or stimulating thoughts about materials. Again, in many cases these pieces of information might be gleaned in conversation, but for Chris the written hand-out was a useful resource.

5.5 Arranged tutorials early in projects
Chris evolved a method of working to help him ensure that he had understood the brief and was ‘on the right track’ as he began to work. Arranging to meet with the tutor in the early stages of the project was also a useful catalyst to developing a relationship with a new tutor and ensuring that the tutor was aware of Chris’s needs, as well as an opportunity for Chris to be reassured that he had understood the brief.

5.6 Agreed alternative submission requirements and deadlines
Written assignments presented Chris with difficulties since his first language is BSL. In discussion with tutors it was possible to develop alternative submission requirements which met the intended learning outcomes for the unit of study but which were less dependent on sophisticated verbal and/or written expression.

5.7 Provided additional equipment in halls
Chris’s needs in his room were re-assessed during the programme and in addition to the text minicom and flashing fire alarm, he was provided with a flashing doorbell following an incident when a member of staff needed to wake Chris up to ensure he made the early start for a trip.

5.8 Outreach work
Chris agreed to be a student ambassador for the college going out to schools to promote the college and design education as an option for other deaf students. His friendly and easy going approach was a great role model for the 28 deaf students (four schools) that he visited. This positive experience helped to develop his independence and confidence and was an opportunity for him to share his passion for fashion.

6. Recommendations
6.1 Learning and teaching
The following teaching and learning recommendations are presented in greater detail in the accompanying BICPA Learning and Teaching Development Tool.

Assess need early
• Academic staff need to be centrally involved in determining what support strategies are most likely to be effective for the student.

• Identifying need and planning support needs to happen as early in the programme as possible.
• Take account of the language skills of the student. If they are a user of sign language, it is likely that they will need English language support.

Review student’s experiences and needs regularly
• Some needs cannot be anticipated but will emerge as learning progresses, therefore regular review is required to adjust and develop new approaches as required.

Demonstrate good practice in presentation and communication
• Face the student, keeping mouth visible and using body language to reinforce spoken word.
• Use technology such as mobile hearing loops when necessary.
• Use visual aids (flip charts, OHPs etc.) to complement verbal presentations.

Reinforce verbal project briefings
• Use simple, unambiguous language in writing project briefs, learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
• Provide supplementary guidance materials where possible.
• Provide briefing documentation to the deaf student in advance of the briefing.
• Make time to talk to the student at an early point in the project to ensure that s/he has understood the requirements and has had an opportunity to ask questions.
• Staff need to communicate directly with the student, using the CSW to support the interaction rather than talking to the CSW.
• Encourage the deaf students to ask questions and contribute to discussion by allowing time for CSW to translate.
• Discuss with the student at an early stage to find agreed ways of getting attention of the deaf student in the classroom situation.
• Write any new terminology or jargon on an OHP, flip chart etc.

Agree alternative submission requirements
• In early discussions identify the types of assignments that may require alternative submission formats and/or submission deadlines.
• Develop written learning plan and communicate with academic course team to ensure continuity and avoid student having to have lengthy negotiations for each project.
• For written assignments, if relevant, consider structured visual
presentations with small, explanatory written sections as an alternative.

- Consider allowing BSL users to sign their assignments which can be video taped for assessment.

**Manage physical environment**

- Ensure that the physical environment is suitable for a deaf student including adequate lighting.

### 6.2 Support

- Have an early assessment to gain a clear picture of how the student has coped at school, how they have been taught and what communication modes they used. This can then be used as a basis to plan the communication support they will need. It is particularly important to ascertain the student’s level of numeracy and literacy to ensure that adequate and individual support is in place at the earliest possible stage, reflecting the specifics of the course.

- Recognise that deaf students may require further additional support from their non-deaf peers, especially if their first language is BSL.

- Offer regular contact and support for deaf students – high quality support staff with deaf awareness training is a vital component for deaf students to succeed in a mainstream environment.

### 6.3 Training

- Ensure that deaf awareness training is made available at the start of the academic year for all peer students on the course.

- Ensure that all teaching and technical staff receive deaf awareness training and have a good understanding of practical approaches to aid communication in teaching situations.

- Be aware that the main area of distress for the deaf student was the social interaction with peers and the feeling of isolation attached. In future, where the deaf student is living away from home for the first time, if they have experienced a ‘special’ school or discrete course education before college, it could be beneficial to look at establishing a mentor/buddy system for future deaf students (particularly during their first term). This could be arranged via email/MSN/webcam/videophone or local face to face.

- Ensure that deaf students do not become over dependent on their auxiliary aids that are assigned to them. Alternating two interpreters may be the solution.

- Text messaging is an important facility for deaf students as it can assist deaf students who rely on visual information and should be formally set up as a service for deaf students.

- Invest in portable loops that can be assigned to individual students. Tutors will need to wear a small microphone for the loop to pick up the sound. These can also be used in seminar sessions.

- Evaluate students as individuals. Deaf students are not one homogenous group.

- Foster good relationships and channels of communication between student support services and academic staff to ensure and maintain appropriate support for the student.

- There are great benefits to employing auxiliary aids (note takers, CSW’s etc) who have studied the same discipline as the student that they are supporting.
Case Study 5

References

Please see additional research report, available from Ravensbourne College

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Deaf Student in the Studio Context as part of the CADISE Being Inclusive in the Creative and Performing Arts Project

The process of reviewing the programme in relation to students with disabilities has, on occasions, drawn attention to the needs of other groups of students.
Case Study 6

Ripples on the pond

Surrey Institute of Art and Design, University College
Marion Wilks, Teaching and Learning Co-ordinator

In 2002/3 the institution introduced an audit tool, developed from the RNID's Headstart Tool and aligned with the QAA Code of Practice for Students with Disabilities. The audit framework is used by academic staff to evaluate the position of the programme in providing for students with disabilities. Discussions between academic staff and support staff (including the learning and teaching co-ordinator and special needs co-ordinator) enabled staff to recognise good practice and to receive support in achieving it. The institution reviewed and evaluated the experience of the programme team from BA (Hons) Fashion Promotion and Illustration as they undertook the audit in 2003/4.

The views of two students were also elicited, although students were not directly involved in undertaking the audit. A number of issues with wider relevance to the institution as a whole and to other institutions have been identified through the case study; these include, teaching delivery, staff development, curriculum design and embedding good practice.

The Surrey Institute of Art and Design, University College is a specialist HEI offering FE and HE programmes in art, design, and communication media. In 2003/4 its student population was approximately 3,500 FTE of which 18% have declared a disability. The College has seen an increase in numbers of students with hearing impairments and has developed expertise in supporting students with dyslexia.

3.1 Audit tool developed
The SIAD audit framework is based on a framework, Head Start, developed by the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID), itself designed to assist HE staff in developing inclusive practice for deaf and hard of hearing students. The scope and content of the RNID tool in turn reflects the recommendations of the QAA Code of Practice: Students with Disabilities. The methodology, structure and a significant amount of the content of the 'Head Start' tool has been retained in the Surrey Institute's model.

The audit tool is organised into 11 sections derived from the QAA precepts:
• General principles
• The physical environment
• Applicants and the selection and admission of students
• Confidentiality, disclosure and flow of information
• Induction of students
• Learning and Teaching
• Examination and assessment
• Staff development
• Access to academic-related facilities and support
• Quality assurance

Each section comprises a series of best practice statements and staff use a grading scheme to identify the extent to which their programme represents good practice. An action plan is provided for each area so that staff can plan to further develop their practice and provision for disabled students.

The ‘Head Start’ tool has been modified by Dr. Caroline Davies with the kind permission of the RNID to whom grateful acknowledgement is made. Caroline Davies has considerable experience of auditing higher education institutions using the QAA Code for disabled students as a benchmark. Recently she has conducted disability audits of policy and procedures at a number of smaller HEIs including those specialising in art and design, music and the performing arts.

3.2 Audit Implemented
The Surrey Institute of Art and Design, University College introduced the audit tool in the 2002/3 academic year with a view to engaging six programmes per year, two from each of three faculties (Design, Art and Media, and Fashion and Communication) and ensuring that all programmes have undertaken the audit by 2005/6.

The institution reviewed and evaluated the experience of the academic staff from the BA (Hons) Fashion Promotion and Illustration as they undertook the audit in the 2003/4 academic year.

The use of the audit was approved by the institute’s learning and teaching committee and the executive team. Initially the process was undertaken as a two-day workshop, although over time this has been reduced to a shorter period. Programme teams were invited to work through the audit considering the position of their...
4. Learning achieved

4.1 Engaging staff
As mentioned above, the process of audit was clearly approved by the Institute’s committee structures and funding was provided to clear time for teaching staff to participate. On reflection, it has been felt that although many staff were unenthusiastic about taking part, the majority found it to be a very useful way of focusing on the issues relevant to their teaching responsibilities and their subject specialisms.

In the early stages some were wary about the time it would take and about the risk of exposing inadequacies in their work and of generating additional workloads. The case study demonstrated that using the audit as a vehicle from identifying key areas for development within a programme was more effective than slavishly considering every item. It also demonstrated that enabling staff to work in a group, with the support of learning and teaching staff and others with expertise in disability issues, generated the best results.

4.2 Staff development
The institution had previously undertaken a range of staff development activities to enable all staff to develop their awareness and understanding of the principles of SENDA and other relevant legislation.

The audit tool provided an opportunity for programme teams to focus closely on their own practice as teachers within the specific context of their specialist subjects. Through a discursive process, staff were able to evaluate the position of their programme in relation to the best practice statements in the audit tool and to develop an action plan to address any issues requiring further development.

Discussions were useful in identifying areas where further staff development might be necessary and, in some cases, clarification of issues could be quickly and directly provided by the special needs and L&T co-ordinators. For example, the BA (Hons) Fashion Promotion and Illustration programme team was concerned that providing for dyslexic students by using coloured paper, larger fonts etc. might single these students out among the group. It was possible to reiterate the fact that reasonable adjustments can be good practice for all students and should be applied for all members of the learning group. As a result of this discussion, the institution’s learning and teaching committee (L&T) was able to recognise that repeat sessions of training designed to support staff in providing for students with dyslexia were necessary. Training was put in place for the faculty of fashion in April 2004.

The introduction of a rolling programme of staff development will enable the institution to refresh the knowledge of established staff as well as to ensure that new staff are inducted appropriately.

The audit tool has provided an opportunity for programme teams to work in a group, with the support of learning and teaching staff and others with expertise in disability issues, generated the best results.
CASE STUDY 6

CADISE: Being Inclusive in the Creative and Performing Arts

Inevitably the programme-level audits have identified a range of issues, from those directly linked to teaching and learning, those linked to physical resources, student welfare, technology etc. Some of these can be addressed directly by programme teams where the solutions are local and can be made within programme budgets; others however need to be addressed by other departments of the Institute, either because they are resource intensive or because they have an institution-wide applicability. The challenge is to find effective mechanisms for ensuring that those with responsibility for each of these areas is informed of the issues, that they take action to move them forward and that a mechanism exists for monitoring progress and evaluating impact.

Over the three year period in which the audits have been implemented, the institution has been developing its committee structures and its staffing to ensure that it is resourced to address the requirements of disability legislation and meet the needs of students. The Institute now has a composite Disability Action Plan which has been developed from faculty plans and a SENDA working group with cross-faculty representation.

The L&T co-ordinator is currently developing an overview of issues merging from the audits over the past 2 years and proposes to present this to deans of faculty to engage them in addressing the issues within their faculty and in enlisting the support of other heads of departments, such as resources.

4.4 Academic and specialist support staff working in partnership

As in many HEIs, particularly in specialist institutions, the special needs team has developed relatively recently, with funding for additional support staff through the Widening Participation premium funding and/or through HEFCE Improving Provision for Students with Disabilities, Strand 1 project funding. At The Surrey Institute, the team of staff with remits that touch on areas of disability has grown and now includes a learning and teaching co-ordinator, diversity and equality officer, learning development tutors, FE learning support staff, drop-in learning support facilities, special needs co-ordinator, mentors, classroom assistants, note-takers, signers etc. These individuals are managed from within a number of departments including personnel, academic services and student services.

Although this growth in staff increases the institution’s capacity, it also stimulates the need to be clear about relative areas of responsibility among the team, particularly as work associated with the areas of widening participation, equality, diversity and student welfare can be closely connected and particularly where line management is within a number of different departmental structures.

4.5 Identifying the needs of groups of students

The process of reviewing the programme in relation to students with disabilities has, on occasions, drawn attention to the needs of other groups of students. For example, the programme leader from BA (Hons) Fashion Illustration and Promotion reported that as a result of focusing on the needs of students with disabilities and considering how to provide appropriate access, she found that she was able to apply the process to considering the needs of international students.

4.6 Involving students

Two students were interviewed; one a Level 2 student representative and the other a Level 1 student, both with dyslexia. Both reported that they had experienced difficulties with their academic work at school but had remained undiagnosed until they entered HE. As students on a design programme, both students were mainly involved in practical, studio-based learning where some difficulties were experienced when operating in large groups. Consequently the main area where their dyslexia impacted on their ability to reach their potential is within the Contextual Studies units of the programme.

Once diagnosed with dyslexia at the HEI, each student is allocated a support tutor if required. The Level 2 student had received this support from Level 1 and reported that she has developed a range of study skills to assist her. The development of these skills has increased her confidence and self esteem significantly and, importantly, has helped her to raise her own expectations of what she can achieve. The help that she has received has also played an important part in raising her grades in Contextual Studies assignments from grade Cs and Ds in Level 1 to grade As in Level 2.

The strategies that the Level 2 student has learnt to use in order to identify the value of a text include noting the authors and publisher she has found useful previously, looking at content page, checking for synopses of chapters, using the index, finding key words on a page, reading the opening and concluding sentences of a paragraph to determine its relevance.

As a result of this discussion, a series of workshops entitled Personal and Positive have been piloted. The workshops have...
given students opportunities to learn and practice strategies for developing their self awareness, self-esteem and to encourage high expectations in setting personal goals. These strategies include brain gym, visualisation, positive target setting using Neuro Linguistic programming and many others.

5. Action taken by the Institution

As a result of the implementation of the audit and of the individual case study:

5.1 Made commitment to audit process at senior level
The senior management of the institution demonstrated a commitment to undertaking the audit in every programme, setting a deadline, identifying a number of programmes per year and providing funding to release teaching staff to participate.

The development of committee structures has begun to consider how to effectively ensure that issues relating to provision for students with disabilities are drawn together.

5.2 Extended the audit to service departments
The Library Learning Resource Centres (LLRC) developed an audit framework by interviewing a wide range of stakeholders.

5.3 Provided training as required
The programme-level audits identified areas where training updates were needed to maintain staff awareness. For example, training was repeated for admissions tutors in the procedures and principles relating to admissions, interviews and selection. Training was also repeated for academic staff in making adjustments for the teaching and learning of students with dyslexia.

Personal and Positive workshops were introduced to provide dyslexic students with study skills.

5.4 Developed committee structure
The institution has established a SENDA working group with a cross-faculty membership to review the strategies required to meet the requirements of the legislation.

The following teaching and learning recommendations are presented in greater detail in the accompanying BICPA Learning and Teaching Development Tool.

6. Recommendations

Maintain a rolling programme of training
• Ensure that key training sessions are repeated regularly to enable new staff to participate and to refresh the skills of established members of staff.

• Audit training needs of new staff to ensure training programme is appropriate.
• Establish baseline for disability training and ensure that all staff work towards it.
• Ensure that all academic staff with responsibility for admissions, interview and selection receive adequate disability awareness training.

Make a commitment to carrying out the audit
• Senior management commitment gives credibility and secures resources.
• Make time for staff to prepare for the audit workshop.
• Use the workshop as an opportunity to consider teaching materials.
• Involve students in the audit process and/or connect outcomes of audit with responses to existing student questionnaires.

Incorporate programme audit into existing planning and review activities
• Embed the review of provision for students with disabilities within annual monitoring, programme validation and periodic review frameworks.

Review the outcomes of programme audits
• Develop mechanisms to ensure that the outcomes of audits are drawn into action plans at programme level and institution level.
• Develop mechanisms to ensure that progress with action plans is reviewed at appropriate intervals.
• Involve students in reviewing the outcomes of the audit and feedback action plans to student groups.

Review the terms of reference of committees to ensure clear responsibility
• Consider ways of ensuring that issues relating to provision for students with disabilities are integrated into all major committees.
• Identify a committee location where institution wide disability issues are drawn together.
Some of the students who took part in the study have expressed interest in making an application to the college. Should their applications be successful, this will increase the number of disabled students studying at the college. This will, in turn, have a beneficial effect in increasing future applications from disabled applicants.
Act (SENDA) 2001 which makes it unlawful for schools, colleges and other education providers to discriminate against disabled people. In May 2004 the college began a major review of disability provision with the aim of embedding it into college wide practice. The college disability policy is based on the QAA Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education, Section 3, Students with Disabilities (1999).

‘The college is small and friendly which means that staff have a close relationship with students and can respond to their needs quickly and flexibly.’ – Extract from Rose Bruford College Policy on Students with Disabilities 2004

In 2001 the college moved into new purpose built teaching and performance spaces which has made it possible to be more fully inclusive in terms of access. There is a lift accessible to wheelchair users in the new Courtyard Building and Stable Block. There are disabled toilets in both buildings and a loop system is installed in the Rose Theatre.

In light of the enhanced accessibility of the site, this case study was designed to investigate the curriculum changes that might need to be put in place to ensure the inclusivity of academic programmes. It was decided that the study should focus upon the BA Acting programme whilst recognising that changes to its curriculum would probably also apply to many of the college’s other programmes.

The Graeae Theatre Company is Britain’s leading professional theatre company of people with physical and/or sensory impairments and has a national and international reputation for producing theatre of artistic excellence that is pioneering in both its aesthetic and content. Support from the Arts Council England (London), Department for Education & Skills and the Regional Arts Lottery Programme means Graeae can explore artistic accessibility in new work, new writing, young people’s theatre and education work, and performance training. Its aim is to redress the exclusion of people with physical and sensory impairments from performance, an aim which parallels the intention of Rose Bruford College to ensure that performance training becomes more fully inclusive.

3. Activities
The proposal was that the Director of Learning, Teaching, and Curriculum Development, the Disability Advisor and the tutors who teach on the BA Acting programme should work with the Graeae Theatre Company in a variety of ways. A record and notes should be kept of each meeting and ensuing changes to the curriculum and advice to tutors identified.

The process of undertaking the case study was organised into four stages. Stage one involved members of the Graeae Theatre Company carrying out an audit of the curriculum of the BA (Hons) Acting programme. Stage two engaged academic staff in a one-day workshop led by Graeae Theatre Company actors and directors. Stage three was a visit to the college by students on an access programme run by Graeae and Stage four was a visit by Graeae staff and students to a signed performance at Rose Bruford.

3.1 QAA precepts
Four precepts from the QAA Code of Practice: Students with Disabilities were fore-grounded at the beginning of the work:

Precept 1 – Institutions should ensure that in all their policies, procedures and activities, including strategic planning and resource allocation, consideration is given to the means of enabling disabled students’ participation in all aspects of the academic and social life of the institution.

Precept 8 – Programme specifications should include no unnecessary barriers to access by disabled people.

Institutions should consider establishing procedures which ensure that:
• the setting and/or amendment of academic and other programme requirements during approval or validation processes includes well informed consideration of the requirements of disabled students;
• programme specifications and descriptions give sufficient information to enable students with disabilities and staff to make informed decisions about the ability to complete the programme.

Precept 10 – The delivery of programmes should take into account the needs of disabled people or, where appropriate, be adapted to accommodate their individual requirements.

Institutions should consider making arrangements which ensure that all academic and technical staff:
• plan and employ teaching and learning strategies which make the delivery of the programme as inclusive as is reasonably possible;
• know and understand the learning implications of any disabilities of the students whom they teach, and are responsive to student feedback;
• make individual adaptations to delivery that are appropriate for particular students, which might include providing handouts in advance and/or in different formats (Braille, disk), short breaks for interpreters to rest, or using radio microphone systems, or flexible/interrupted study for students with mental health issues.
Precept 13 – Assessment and examination policies, practices and procedures should provide disabled students with the same opportunity as their peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes.

Institutions should consider implementing procedures for agreeing alternative assessment and examination arrangements when necessary that:

• allow flexibility in the conduct of the assessment;
• protect the rigour and comparability of the assessment.

3.2 Four stage project

Stage 1 – Audit of BA (Hons) Acting programme by Graeae Theatre Company staff

Rose Bruford BA and MA degree programmes are validated by the University of Manchester. All fifteen of the programme documents had been rewritten in 2001 for a revalidation process and the QAA Code of Practice Section 3: Students with disabilities October 1999, had been referred to. The audit was vital however in highlighting those aspects of the BA Acting document that were not inclusive.

Stage 2 – Workshop for Rose Bruford staff led by Graeae Theatre Company actors and directors

Stage two of the study involved a full day practical workshop taken by members of the Graeae Theatre Company and attended by the BA in Acting and BA in Actor Musicianship programme teams, the college disability advisor and the director of learning, teaching and curriculum development.

The workshop was led by the Artistic Director of Graeae, a performer from Missing Piece 3, and the Associate Director of Graeae. During the workshop, support was provided through a Sign Language Interpreter and from a personal assistant who provided voice over for one of the tutors with a different speech pattern.

The programme for the day involved warm up games, sign names, audio described sign names, the adaptation of tutors movement exercises, and work on improvisations and solutions. The afternoon focussed on exploring the language of Shakespeare for deaf people and those who have differing speech patterns; creative casting, and the incorporation of audio description.

During the day participants completed a questionnaire identifying areas of confidence and areas of uncertainty in relation to teaching for inclusivity and they recommended a number of action points for the College to consider. These are discussed further in section 6 below.

Stage 3 – Graeae students visiting Rose Bruford

Stage Three of the study involved arranging for students of the Missing Piece 4 Theatre Access Programme run by Graeae to visit Rose Bruford College. This has enabled them to see student productions other than their own and to learn about the 15 theatre based undergraduate programmes the college runs as well as the degrees in Music Technology, Sound and Image Design, Opera Studies and the MA in Theatre Practices.

The Missing Piece Performance Training Programme

Graeae set up the Missing Piece Performance Training Programme in response to the acute lack of career and training opportunities in professional theatre for people with sensory or physical impairments. The programme was launched in 1999 with an Arts for Everyone Arts Council of England grant of £250,000. The first two programmes were five-month training courses based at Sadler's Wells, London and Manchester Metropolitan University. Since 2003, Missing Piece 3 & 4 have been run in partnership with London Metropolitan University, supported by the Arts Council of England, the Learning and Skills Council, the Department for Education and Skills, the Bridge House Trust, Regional Arts Lottery Programme and City Parochial Foundation.

Successful completion of the programme, entitled Access to Performing Arts: The Missing Piece, enables students to apply for degree programmes at London Metropolitan and other HE institutions. As London Metropolitan has its own Performing Arts Degree, visits have focussed on the wide range of theatre related degrees at Rose Bruford, other than the BA Acting that Missing Piece students might apply for.

Following the visit, students and Graeae tutors provided feedback and recommended a number of actions to enhance the college’s inclusivity. These are discussed in 4.3 and 6 below.

Stage 4 – Attendance by Graeae students and tutors at a signed performance at Rose Bruford

Students, tutors and the disability advisor attended a performance of Our Country’s Good by Timberlake Wertenbaker. This production was signed.

On previous occasions such as this, students have attended a welcome seminar before the show at which the Principal and members of staff talked about the programmes at Rose Bruford. The President of the Students Union also talked about
the College. On this occasion, the welcome seminar included a welcome from the Principal but descriptions of the programmes this time were given by students. The seminar was also attended by a Rose Bruford student who uses a wheelchair. The group consisted of wheelchair-users, and blind and visually impaired students and tutors. The Rose Bruford design students who attended gave a live audio description of the set before the show which enabled the visually impaired members of the group to gain a good introduction to the show.

4. Learning achieved

Following the visit, students and Graeae tutors provided feedback and recommended a number of actions to enhance the College’s inclusivity. These are discussed in 4.4 and 6 below.

4.1 Programme audit report

A number of generic and specific comments and recommendations were the outcome of the programme audit. In general terms the Graeae readers felt that some deaf students may find the phrasing of the document difficult to understand. It uses specialist vocabulary and is quite dense. A characteristic of BSL is shorter sentences, bullet point ideas. It is not necessary to simplify the content or the meaning, but a simpler sentence structure, less complex vocabulary and use of bullet points can facilitate access. It is important to take account of these suggestions in auditions as well as during the programme.

The readers felt that it was important to point out in the documentation that warming up before movement work was the responsibility of the student and might not take place within the practical session; this is particularly important for students with physical disabilities.

In the section of the programme document which talks about tutorial support, it was recommended that it should be made clear that access to reports held by the college on students’ medical conditions are only accessible by tutors on a need to know basis.

Specific comments included the following, all of which are essentially about ensuring that flexibility and adaptability is built into the way in which the course is specified, i.e. that adaptations may need to be made to enable access for all or that certain language should not be used where it implies a norm that may disadvantage a disabled student.

Learning Outcomes

• ‘Students completing the programme will possess the ability to present themselves with confidence and communicate effectively in writing and through oral and practical work’.

4.2 Staff development workshop

Staff who took part in the workshop agreed that the really significant aspect of this workshop was that they were being taught by skilled professional performers who themselves had physical or sensory impairments. The possibilities of inclusive practice were actually demonstrated in a multitude of ways as the day progressed.

• Recommendation – BSL should be recognised as an alternative to oral presentation.

Module descriptions

• ‘Appropriate range of physical, vocal and performance skills’.

• Recommendation – The use of vocal could be revisited in terms of how a deaf person, or someone with a differing speech pattern, would access the voice course.

Theatre Practice and Radio performance

• Recommendation – You may want to consider how a deaf student or someone with a very different speech pattern would access this course? Perhaps Art House Performance could be an alternative option.

Programme delivery

• ‘Students are encouraged to present their work through a variety of media as appropriate to the best means of communicating ideas.’

• Comment – This is very accessible and inclusive.

• Recommendation – Can a variety of media be an alternative to written papers? Worth debating with tutors.

Module descriptions

• ‘Voice classes introduce a series of exercises designed to develop a technically sound vocal instrument’.

• Recommendations – Change to wide ranging vocal instrument. The mention of ‘muscularity’ later and ‘technically sound’ here does indicate that you need to be clear in your teaching what you mean by this. Is this about a prescribed notion of muscularity, a traditional voice, or is there an acceptance of a range of bodies and voices. If you are clear, and your tutors are clear about what they need an actor or performer to show, then this terminology does not have to exclude anyone.

• Concentrating on alignment, posture, balance and stamina.

• Recommendations – Change to ‘exploring alignment.’ Again, the above comments on voice refer in this case to movement work. It would be good to acknowledge in the document a range of body shapes and vocal skills.

4.3 Programme delivery

The readers felt that it was important to point out in the documentation that warming up before movement work was the responsibility of the student and might not take place within the practical session; this is particularly important for students with physical disabilities.

In the section of the programme document which talks about tutorial support, it was recommended that it should be made clear that access to reports held by the college on students’ medical conditions are only accessible by tutors on a need to know basis.

Specific comments included the following, all of which are essentially about ensuring that flexibility and adaptability is built into the way in which the course is specified, i.e. that adaptations may need to be made to enable access for all or that certain language should not be used where it implies a norm that may disadvantage a disabled student.
At the close of the workshop key words were volunteered by the participants to describe the work. They included: integrity, imagination, interpretation, choice, vocal health, spontaneity, work into a group, responsiveness, clarity.

Certainly the day was vital in enabling staff to begin considering the planning required by QAA Precept 10 in order to:

- plan and employ teaching and learning strategies which make the delivery of the programme as inclusive as is reasonably possible;
- know and understand the learning implications of any disabilities of the students whom they teach, and are responsive to student feedback.

The questionnaire session on the day gave staff an opportunity to acknowledge areas where they were uncertain by writing down two things that they did not know about disability or inclusive teaching and to confirm areas of confidence by writing down one thing they did know. The comments demonstrate the fact that tutors who are themselves experienced performers and experienced teachers, but who are not disabled themselves and have little direct experience of working with disabled performers, are asking for practical advice about how to adapt their established teaching and learning styles to enable disabled students to participate fully. The opportunity to work directly with disabled performers was clearly highly valuable in supporting academic staff to recognise the ways in which disabled performers participate in the profession and to reflect this contemporary experience within their teaching.

The ‘don’t know’ comments were:

- how to train disabled actors
- how to adapt my work to allow a disabled student to participate
- how to fully include students who have voice box communicators
- about techniques used to clarify meaning for an audience
- the key to good audio description
- how interpreters can express the emotion of a text to an audience
- how to cater for the complexity of performance with deaf people
- how to audio describe dance and movement
- how to teach BSL users voice and breathing in a way that is not voice therapy
- how to develop physical characterisation with limited movement
- the difference between being politically correct and offensive or patronising
- how best to communicate with a disabled person who has a speech impairment that means I cannot understand what they are saying
- how you centre the breath for speaking if your muscles are too tense to speak at all
- how to explore the movement range of physically disabled students
- what worries a physically disabled student when applying for an acting course
- what the chances are of a disabled actor being cast in a non-disabled part
- whether disabled students can be taught to play musical instruments or dance to the level of skill they themselves want to achieve
- how to co-ordinate improvisation work with deaf and blind students
- how far I can push a disabled student

The ‘do know’ comments were:

- disability is not an illness
- training disabled actors is possible
- disability is not a barrier to a career in the theatre
- deaf students are wonderful listeners
- it is important for training to be inclusive in order to change the culture of contemporary theatre
- inclusive teaching is about knowing the aim of the exercise
- you should not give up if you don’t understand what the student is saying, ask for repetition
- there is a lack of opportunity for disabled people to participate in theatre activities
- disabled children are in mainstream education, why are disabled students not in mainstream training?
- there is always a way

4.3 Visit to Rose Bruford

Participation in this case study has been very valuable in raising an awareness of inclusivity issues at Rose Bruford. Visits of staff and students from GRAEAE have made disabled people much more visible on campus. They have given staff and students who may previously have had little contact with disabled people, the opportunity to meet and work with them professionally.
Feedback from the Graeae students who visited the College included:

- The variety of courses is very impressive. The facilities and theatre all look amazing. The production was fantastic, the standard of acting was great and the costume. I was bowled over.
- We were made extremely welcome by both students and faculty members. I felt they would do all within their power to accommodate a severely disabled candidate.
- I was impressed by the quality and range of the courses on offer.
- I would welcome the chance to study at RB should they offer a degree course or a master’s course specifically and exclusively designed for those with physical and/or sensory impairment.
- Could we meet more students – they just weren’t there.

4.4 Signed performance
The first signed performance in the Rose Theatre was a very visible reminder to Rose Bruford staff and students and the general public, of the different needs of members of the audience and the way in which the interpretation could fit into the performance.

Feedback from the Graeae students and tutors who attended the signed performance included:

- Very much impressed with the skill level of student actors
- Your students really made the degrees come alive
- I am always very impressed with how welcoming everyone is when we come to Rose Bruford. It is rare that a mainstream college shows such interest in inclusion

5. Action taken by the Institution
At the time of writing the case study report is due to be considered by the college Teaching and Learning Development Committee and by the college Disability Committee. It is anticipated that these committees will recommend the implementation of the action points.

Working with disabled artists in the GRAEAE workshop gave staff the opportunity to think very practically about how and why they should adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of disabled students. As such it will inform future curriculum design and teaching and learning. The collaboration has also enabled staff and students to see the practical necessity of adaptations, for example, brochures in Braille or enlarged font, wheelchair access, audio description and signed performances.

Some of the students who took part in the study have expressed interest in making an application to the college. Should their applications be successful, this will increase the number of disabled students studying at the college. This will, in turn, have a beneficial effect in increasing future applications from disabled applicants.

As the audit has been positive the college is now in the process of piloting curriculum audits for other programmes.

The action points arising from the case study when fully implemented will do much to further enhance inclusivity within the College.

Many suggestions are already in place and the links with Graeae have been further consolidated by three initiatives.

- A tutor from Graeae will now be working as a director on the MA Theatre Practices programme in 2005.
- Graeae will present a seminar at the Rose Bruford Symposium Many Voices in April, 2005. This, significantly, is Phase Two of a five year project at the College on multicultural and intercultural issues in the theatre and theatre-related arts. Issues of disability in the theatre form a part of this work.
- The Missing Piece Performance Training Programme is to have its production week at Rose Bruford College in July 2005.

The following recommendations were made by staff and students of the Graeae Theatre Company who took part in the case study:

6. Recommendations

6.1 Pro-active marketing
The programme should be advertised to disability organisations such as RNID and RNIB. Links should be created to charity websites. The college prospectus should also be available on audiotape for access by blind applicants. Students with disabilities should be featured in the college prospectus in rehearsal situations. A signed performance should be included in the public performance schedule each year and local community groups should be informed of this. One production each year to have a recorded audio description prepared in advance.

6.2 Admissions
The college should run workshops with Disabled Youth/Theatre groups to encourage prospective applicants and show that the college welcomes applications from disabled students. Students applying to Rose Bruford throughout the year from the Missing Piece Access course should still be guaranteed an interview or audition on late application.
6.3 Staff development
Professional development work should be continued with Graeae. Staff should be encouraged to apply to the Staff Development and Research Committee for extra training expenses. Tutor ‘swops’ with Graeae to be put in place for staff development.
All members of front of house staff to go through basic disability equality training so that they are aware of the appropriate terminology and the need to talk directly to the disabled person rather than to their PA or interpreter.

6.4 Student support
Graeae practitioners should be invited to work with acting students in order to change students’ perception of disability. Braille, BSL and audio recordings of play texts should be available. College should ensure that there is adequate student support for disabled students.

Working with an assistant is not unique within an art practice – there is a long tradition of artists working in a symbiotic relationship and also of artists using assistants in an employer/employee role. In this case, both models are operating in a changing and dynamic relationship.
Case Study 8

A year in the life of a student with physical disability

The key objectives for the study were:

- To clarify the learning and teaching issues for a student severely physically disabled, within a fine art context
- To understand the needs of the student so that the course can be made fully inclusive
- To make it possible for the student to experience positive postgraduate study as an artist

Academic and support staff have found this a genuine learning experience as Colin has progressed through the course. The degree of Colin’s disability has led to an innovative model of support, which, it is hoped, will serve as a model for future provision.

When Colin was first approached by the project manager to discuss participation in the case study, he asked ‘How did you find me?’ He had correctly predicted that his unique status and the degree of his disability might make him a target for (possibly unwanted) attention. Having been found, Colin was happy to be the subject of a case study, for which CADISE is very grateful.

It is hoped that the learning achieved will inspire and assist other institutions to find imaginative and groundbreaking approaches to the support of disabled students – maybe even to the extent that the seeking out of ‘special cases’ will instead be replaced by universal good practice.

1. Abstract

The case study focuses on the needs of a student with a physical disability and the issues for learning, teaching and curriculum design. The study tracked progress over the first two of the three terms of the MA year – from October 2004 to May 2005. The student was the first severely physically disabled student to be accepted onto the MA Drawing course at Wimbledon School of Art.

The student, Colin, is enrolled full-time on the course. Colin has a condition known as Arthrogryphoses which affects the muscle and bone structure leading to severe physical disability. Colin uses a wheelchair to get around at all times and receives assistance in carrying out most daily routine tasks such as eating, drinking, and getting in and out of the wheelchair. Colin has three personal assistants (PAs) working on a rota basis to provide support for 24 hours a day.

Colin’s primary education was at a special school in Coventry, and dual registration at both special and comprehensive for secondary level. Colin did a Fine Art Foundation course at Hereward College then went on to do a BA Fine Art at Coventry University, graduating in 1997. Following graduation, Colin obtained a studio space in his home town where he continued to develop his art practice until deciding to apply for the MA course.

Colin is able to draw by holding tools with his mouth. Previous art practice had included using the PAs (who are not art trained) to assist with the execution of the works – for example, by enlarging Colin’s drawings onto acetate by means of projection. Whilst a student at Wimbledon, Colin has been able to employ a trained artist to act as a studio assistant who has had an impact on his way of working as well as challenging the traditional models of support available to physically disabled students.

1. The student and assistant have given their permission for their names to be used

2. Institutional context

2.1 Facilities

Wimbledon School of Art (WSA) is a small specialist institution in south west London with 950 students. The school is located at two sites – the main campus at Merton Hall Road where courses in Fine Art and Theatre Design are offered at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and the campus at Palmerston Road where Foundation and Orientation courses are offered. The library and learning resource centre and lecture and seminar rooms are located at the main building. New studios for postgraduate students have recently been completed at the main site and these studios are fully wheelchair accessible. On other parts of the site, great efforts have been made to ensure wheelchair accessibility – the repair of the lift and installation of ramps – but there are still some rooms which are inaccessible and this requires that events are planned carefully to enable Colin to participate.

There is a great commitment to supporting disabled students at the school. There is a disability officer (0.5), initially funded as part of the HEFCE ‘Improving Provision for Disabled Students’ initiative, Strand 1, and this post has now been extended to cover dyslexia administrative support and the post is now 0.8.
2.2 Case study methodology

Colin took up his place at Wimbledon School of Art in October 2004. The idea for a case study as part of the BICPA project emerged during October. In November, the project manager held the first meeting with the pathway leader to agree on the nature and scope of the study. It was agreed that the key people to be involved would be the student, the studio assistant, the academic tutor, the disability officer and the pathway leader herself. Other tutors, support staff and Colin’s student peer group, would necessarily be involved, but it was left open as to whether or how their input would be collected. Permission was gained from the student to conduct the case study and then the key people were briefed that the study was in process.

It was initially planned that the information for the case study would be captured by means of:

- Evidence presented to the pathway leader and other academic staff (tutors and visiting lecturers) as well as support staff
- Meetings with the student (and studio assistant as appropriate)
- Assessments

However, in February of 2005, it was agreed that the project manager would become involved and would conduct a series of interviews with the key people and subsequently write up the case study. Although this change was precipitated by the too heavy workload of the pathway leader (whose post is part-time for two days a week), it was also felt that there would be advantage in having an independent ‘interviewer’ to lend a degree of objectivity to the process and the study would also act as an evaluative process.

The project manager then set up and conducted interviews with the student, the studio assistant, the academic tutor and the disability officer through February, March and April. (The questions and meeting dates are at Appendix 1). The project manager and pathway leader kept in touch throughout the process and met again in May.

3. Application and interview process

3.1 Application and interview process

Colin’s first contact with WSA was to enquire by telephone about the MA courses; the disability officer returned his call and forwarded a timetable of open days. He attended the MA course Open Day in January 2004. He notified the school that he would be coming and asked about access arrangements. The school was therefore able to ensure that ramps were in place where appropriate and it was arranged that a small group of students would assist Colin with a tour of the facilities. At the open day, Colin was made aware of the Student Academic Support services (SAS) should he decide to make application. During the site tour Colin met both the pathway leader, students on the course at the time and the disability officer. This provided the opportunity for a discussion of the school’s facilities and Colin’s needs.

After making application to WSA, Colin revisited the school for an interview in February 2004 and then made contact with SAS to enquire about the prospects of getting adapted accommodation should he be a student there. Colin was offered a place on 10 March 2004.

During the interview, Colin explained to the panel his working methods, which included using his PAs to execute his ideas in accordance with his instructions. Out of this emerged the idea that Colin would benefit from having an art trained studio assistant to work with him.

3.2 Action between offer and take-up of place

3.2.1 Accommodation

Initially, information was gathered about accommodation locally (WSA having no adapted accommodation of its own). Organisations approached included Family Housing Association, Care Connect and Skill, and the information was passed to Colin and his social worker in the Midlands. Unfortunately, this did not produce the accommodation needed.

Contact was then made with the accommodation office at the University of the Arts. WSA have an arrangement with the University for 35 units of accommodation to be available for WSA students, but none of these was adapted for wheelchair use. However, a new block of accommodation in Wandsworth was in the process of being built which would contain some adapted units and it was agreed that one could be made available for Colin. This was then arranged and the unit was specially adapted to cater for Colin’s needs and was ready for him to move into at the start of the academic year. An adjacent unit was also made available for Colin’s personal assistants who work on a rota so that 24 hour support is available.

3.2.2 Adaptations at WSA

Over the summer, a number of adaptations were undertaken at the school:

- The lift was repaired
- The entrance to the MA unit was adjusted
- The disabled toilet was improved and brought up to standard
- A ramp was built for access to the seminar rooms and learning resource centre on the top floor
• A number of door adjustments were made
• The studio assistant was organised to support Colin’s studio practice
• A post facility was organised in Colin’s studio rather than the usual pigeon hole elsewhere in the building

3.2.3 Studio assistant
The pathway leader approached an artist who had graduated from the MA Drawing course the previous year and she agreed to take on the role of ‘studio assistant’ for five hours a week.

3.2.4 Contact with student
The various adjustments referred to above, together with the organisation of accommodation and other support arrangements, meant that the disability officer was in touch with Colin on a number of occasions during the summer months before the start of the academic year. Colin commented that the contact from the school had been enthusiastic and frequent – possibly receiving a little bit more attention than he would have liked.

4. Learning achieved

4.1 Working with a studio assistant

4.1.1 Getting started
Colin is able to draw using his mouth to hold the drawing implement. He had developed methods of working which included, for example, drawing onto acetate, projecting the drawing onto a suitable support and instructing the PA to ‘trace’ the projected image. This allowed the image to be enlarged according to Colin’s wishes. Colin’s studio practice also includes working with found images and his PA would assist with the cutting out and placement of such images according to Colin’s instructions. Having a studio assistant who is art trained had the potential to transform this passive working relationship into a dynamic one. As Colin acknowledged, ‘I would need to exploit the difference with Carolyn doing the work.’ Carolyn had herself done the MA Drawing course the previous year and, therefore, understood very well the significance of mark making and would bring this experience to the relationship. She also came to the role with an interest in working with artists and also with experience of teaching within a special educational needs (SEN) setting.

One of the first things that Colin and Carolyn did together was to make a film of them exploring ways of working. Carolyn tried simulating Colin’s working method – drawing with her mouth, lying on the floor – to try to gain some experience and understanding of the physicality of Colin’s approach. She was also able to copy Colin’s drawings freehand, which helped her to get a feel for the way that Colin worked – the weight, direction and energy of the marks. This experimentation and instance of collaboration had an immediate impact on Colin’s way of working and he recognised that the ‘assistant’ role could also have a collaborative element.

Another instance in which Colin collaborated was to send images/texts through the post to Carolyn. As an assistant she responded, for example, by positioning the material in various layouts, and then photographing the arrangements. The different juxtapositions then suggested other readings.

4.1.2 Studio assistant role
The role that Carolyn has to perform is a very complex one. A list of the key activities that she is involved with is at Appendix 2. Carolyn is very aware of the potential for creating difficulties by crossing boundaries. Sometimes she finds that she is operating as friend and other times as studio assistant and she understands the need to define these boundaries. Carolyn is also sensitive to the perceptions of other students and is anxious to ensure that the support she gives to Colin does not appear to give him an ‘unfair advantage’. She is also aware that the time they spend together should, in no way, affect his friendships with fellow students, and his place within the student group. In fact, Colin has integrated well with his peer group and when neither Carolyn nor a personal assistant is present, the students will give Colin every assistance.

4.1.3 Organisation of time and communication
At first, a pattern emerged where arrangements to meet/work together were made by telephone and usually occurred twice weekly in the late afternoons/evening. As Carolyn works during the day, this arrangement suited them both. As the course progressed, the arrangement became looser and occurred as the need arose. The discovery of the funding shortfall half way through the academic year also temporarily altered the meeting pattern, as time was allowed to seek clarification about the funding available. Colin and Carolyn communicate by telephone, email, text and post.

4.1.4 Benefits of an artist assistant
Colin summarises Carolyn’s role as being ‘sometimes one of studio assistant, sometimes something else’ – a relationship which goes beyond the context of the MA course and adds more depth to Colin’s art practice. Colin recognises that the benefits of this working relationship will not come immediately. He is planning to stay in the Wimbledon area for a year after the completion of the course and hopes to continue to work with Carolyn.

1. Permission has been gained to use real names
Carolyn is clear about the benefits that her relationship with Colin provides. These include:

- Being able to ‘revisit’ the MA course
- Spending time in an art school context, including lectures and gallery visits
- Exposure to different artists that Colin is interested in
- Exposure to different ways of working and thinking

4.1.5 Issues
A major cause of concern for both Colin and Carolyn was over funding issues. Other issues discussed included:

- Fitting in the studio assistant role around other work commitments
- Establishing a reliable communication method
- Balancing friendship and work relationship

4.2 Teaching practice – academic tutor
The academic tutor, Lesley, is responsible for addressing issues of studio practice only. There is a slight pastoral role, but serious or complex personal issues impinging on studio practice would be referred to the pathway leader.

An academic tutor sees their tutees a minimum of twice each term. Students receive tutorials from other staff as well the academic tutor.

Learning Agreements are submitted to the student, which form the basis of working during the course.

At the time of the interview, the course was approximately at the half-way stage, and three tutorials had taken place with the academic tutor. Tutorials are attended by the student only – neither of the personal assistants nor the studio assistant is present. The personal assistant lays out the work in advance of the tutorial in accordance with the student’s wishes. This arrangement is at the choice of the student.

Lesley has previous experience of teaching disabled students and commented that ‘she was not uncomfortable with Colin’s disability’. She therefore thought that she had not needed to modify her teaching practice to accommodate Colin’s needs and continues to take the same approach as with her other tutees. On reflection, she thought that, initially, she had perhaps been unwilling to delve as much into the personal arena with Colin. Often, in discussion with students about their art practice, it is hard to separate the personal from the content. Respect for Colin’s privacy had,

in a small way, prevented her from going too far with these discussions, but now their understanding is such that discussions were possible, when and if appropriate... Also she felt that perhaps she was too respectful of Colin’s immense achievements to date and understands now that she must push him harder as he has the potential to achieve much more. Possibly there had been too much emphasis on process and the formal aspects of Colin’s work, at the expense of discussions on ideas and content.

Lesley had also noted that he did most of his drawing at home rather than in his studio. Colin subsequently was planning to install a platform in his studio on which he could lie and draw and this would be installed with the assistance of students on the Theatre Design course.

4.3 Accommodation
Two units of accommodation were made available from the University of the Arts stock – a specially adapted unit for the student and an adjacent unit for the personal assistant. The housing costs are met by housing benefit. However, it was discovered half way through the academic year that no housing benefit had been received for the PA’s unit. It then became necessary to have the two units assessed as one unit for housing benefit purposes, rather than two separate units and at the time of this year had been referred to Colin’s housing officer.

4.3.1 Support and funding issues
The nature and extent of Colin’s disability entitles him to funding from Social Services and the Independent Living Fund to pay for the three personal assistants. He also makes a personal contribution to the costs. The personal assistants work on a rota system to provide support 24 hours a day.

A grant of £2000 was also received from the Snowdon fund towards tuition fees. A bid for a bursary through AHRB (now AHRC) was unsuccessful. However, it should be noted that these bursaries are highly competitive and the school advises all students that they should additionally seek alternative forms of funding.

The funding for the studio assistant comes from the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA). For postgraduate students the maximum available is £5,500 for a one year MA course. Colin was assessed for DSA by his home LEA before starting on the MA course. However, full information about the course structure was not obtained before the assessment was made and therefore, the disbursement of his DSA was inappropriate to the levels or support needed.
It subsequently emerged that without additional support from the School, (which was awarded) the support levels that had been promised to Colin as a condition of his offer could have been compromised.

Masters’ degree courses at the school operate over a 45 week Academic Year, and because the LEA had assumed a standard Academic Year, a shortfall of 105 hours of studio assistance accrued.

Colin felt that he had been inappropriately advised to ‘spend’ a significant proportion of the DSA on computer equipment and wished that there had been more money available for his studio assistant hours.

Another inaccuracy within the assessment was the assumption that there are no examinations on this course and therefore no additional support needs. As is common with practice based fine art courses, there are, in fact, three examination/exit points involving an end of year degree show and submission of a research paper. The DSA assessment did not take these factors into account and the assessment showed little or no awareness that this MA course is practice based.

When the problems became evident, the school authorities, the disability officer and welfare officer worked with the programme leader to assess the financial shortfall, and this was met from a combination of the Access to Learning Fund and other school funds.

Although this situation was resolved it is clear that a problem with the level of DSA funding arose as a result of a lack of accurate information at the time of the DSA assessment. It is evident that joint planning by all stakeholders in the decision making loop is vital in planning how the DSA is apportioned. This would include the student, studio assistant, academic staff, support staff, DSA assessors and the LEA.

When asked, ‘What has been the biggest challenge for you, doing this MA course?’ Colin was unequivocal in identifying bureaucracy as the biggest obstacle that he faced. He is very frustrated at the amount of red tape involved in applying for the various benefits to which he is entitled, and the fact that errors had been made.

4.3.2 Mobility vehicle
Colin has a specially adapted vehicle which is driven by his PAs. Because of a lengthy delay in processing the application for a mobility sticker, Colin received a number of parking fines in the meantime. This issue had to be resolved by the disability officer and Colin.

5. Action taken by the Institution

4.4 The studio day in a wheelchair
Sitting in a wheelchair for long periods is uncomfortable. Colin therefore has sometimes to excuse himself so that he can rest. This means that Colin and the staff have to plan carefully to minimise overlong periods without Colin being able to take a break.

5.1 The interview process
The interview panel responded imaginatively in suggesting that a trained artist could act as studio assistant. Contact with student services was also made at the time of interview which started the process of identifying Colin’s needs should he be offered a place.

5.2 Accommodation
The disability officer invested considerable time and effort to secure the right accommodation for Colin which was available for the start of the academic year.

5.3 Adaptations
A number of adaptations were made at the school in advance of Colin’s arrival. For a full list of adaptations, see section 3.2.2 Adaptations at WSA.

5.4 Studio assistant
A previous MA Drawing student was approached and appointed to be Colin’s studio assistant. A meeting was held with the student, studio assistant, pathway leader and disability officer at the start of the academic year to explore and negotiate the arrangements. It was important that the detail of how they would work together, and indeed whether they thought they would get on, was left to Colin and Carolyn to decide.

5.5 Gallery visits
Visiting galleries is a key activity within a fine art course. Some galleries are not accessible to wheelchair users. In such instances, arrangements were made for a peer student to video the exhibition for Colin. This arrangement, whilst initially suggested as an alternative to visiting the inaccessible galleries turned into an unforeseen benefit. For example, a visit to one gallery resulted in Colin having a one to one unscheduled discussion with the current Wimbledon drawing fellow in his private studio because Colin had not been able, as anticipated, to access the exhibition.

Care is taken before planning gallery visits to find out about access for Colin and it was generally found that galleries were very accommodating and helpful, for example in arranging parking.
5.6 Health and safety
Key personnel were made aware of Colin’s disability. In particular, the arrangements for evacuating the building were modified to include provision for a member of staff to find Colin if and when the alarm should sound. This procedure has been rehearsed with key personnel and Colin.

5.7 Access to rooms
The Student Academic Support annexe is not wheelchair accessible. Therefore, arrangements have been made for meetings to take place in Colin’s studio or elsewhere, and the disability officer regularly walks through the studio to ensure that Colin is not experiencing any difficulties.

There is a bookable meeting room which is also inaccessible and which is occasionally used for seminars/meetings with students. Care is taken that this room is not booked for a meeting which Colin needs to attend. If a mistake is made, every effort is made to switch rooms with the other party. Only on one occasion has this system faltered, later being substituted with a one to one tutorial with the lecturer concerned.

5.8 DSA shortfall/hardship fund
As discussed above the Access to Learning Fund was used to support Colin with the shortfall in the DSA funding.

5.9 Assessment
There are three assessment stages: certificate, diploma, and MA. At the time of writing, the diploma stage assessment had just occurred and Colin had passed this stage. Students have to pass each stage in order to move on to the next one.

The University of Surrey validates the degree. The certificate stage occurs at the late stage in the first 15 week unit and is described by the pathway leader as ‘a formative stage of art practice’. The diploma stage takes place at the latter stage of the second 15 week unit.

All students are entitled to assistance from a range of technicians and from their peer group in preparing and installing their work for assessments. All students are also responsible for identifying and gaining access to any technical assistance and or equipment. In the view of the pathway leader, Colin’s needs in respect of technical assistance and equipment are akin to his peer group.

6. Recommendations
6.1 DSA assessment
This is the first experience of supporting a student with severe physical disability on a MA course. An imaginative model of support was put in place in anticipation of the student’s needs. It is unfortunate that this model was compromised by the DSA funding shortfall, arising from the inaccurate assessment of the student’s needs.

There should therefore be greater input by the school to ensure that the assessors are aware of the correct information before carrying out the assessment in future cases. If the assessors do not contact the school for the information, the disability officer should establish contact, particularly when the student has complex needs. The student should also notify the disability officer before a DSA needs assessment is made, to avoid the likelihood of misunderstanding.

6.2 Communication
The errors in the assessment were exacerbated by the, at times, inadequate communication within the school. Therefore, a greater level of communication is needed between student support, the academic staff team and the student himself so that any problems are picked up at an early stage and misunderstandings are avoided. Greater communication is needed also between the school and the assessors and the LEA.

6.3 Studio assistant role
In this case, the studio assistant had herself experienced the MA course and she is also an individual with a very mature approach which has undoubtedly contributed to the success of the working relationship. Thought should be given to drawing up guidance on role and boundaries for future use as it may not always be possible to recruit such an experienced assistant.

6.4 Assessment
Working with an assistant is not unique within an art practice – there is a long tradition of artists working in a symbiotic relationship and also of artists using assistants in an employer/employee role. In this case, both models are operating in a changing and dynamic relationship.

At the time of writing, it is not anticipated that Colin’s final work will be assessed as the outcome of this working relationship – that is, not to any greater extent than other students who draw on advice and critical feedback from their peer group, practising artists, tutors, friends and family.

In the meantime, there is awareness by the relevant staff of Colin and Carolyn’s working relationship. There is no notion that this
is any different in principle from the way in which other students receive information and suggestions about their art practice.

It is also acknowledged that there is a need to anticipate Colin’s needs for the MA assessment stage – in particular the level of practical assistance required in what is a very intensive period.

Questions to tutor

Interview 17 February 2005
1. How would you define your role as personal tutor?
2. How has your teaching practice changed/adapted to meet Colin’s needs?
3. What has been successful?
4. What has been the greatest challenge?
5. Are there any unresolved issues?
6. How are issues referred and resolved?
7. Is the process satisfactory?
8. How would you define the working relationship between Colin and Carolyn?
9. What arrangements are in place for Colin’s tutorials?
10. What arrangements are in place for Colin’s assessment, particularly the degree stage assessment and final show?
11. What are your hopes for the future?

Questions to student

Interview 23 March 2005
1. What is the nature of your disability?
2. Where did you do your Foundation course and first Fine Art degree?
3. Why did you want to do an MA at Wimbledon?
4. What was your experience of the application and interview process?
5. Tell me about your art practice and the working methods that you have developed?
6. How would you describe your working relationship with Carolyn?
7. What is the biggest challenge for you in doing this course?
8. What are the financial arrangements for your support?
9. Are you experiencing any difficulties and, if so, how are they resolved?
10. Are you being enabled to fully meet your potential?
11. How would you describe your relationship with students, tutors, technicians, and support staff?
12. What arrangements are in place for your final assessment and degree show?

Questions to studio assistant

Interview 16 March 2005
1. How would you describe your role as studio assistant?
2. How would you describe your current working relationship with Colin?
3. Are the boundaries clearly defined between the different roles that you have?
4. Is the relationship of mutual benefit?
5. What is your understanding of the assessment arrangements for Colin?
Questions to disability officer

Meetings with the pathway leader

Interview 20 April 2005
1. When did you have the first contact with Colin?
2. What actions did you take before Colin took up his place?
3. What are the financial arrangements for Colin’s support?
4. Describe your ongoing relationship/contact with Colin.
5. How are issues dealt with?

Meetings between the pathway leader and the project manager (interviewer) took place on the following dates:

- 17 November 2004
- 16 February 2005
- 4 May 2005
- 3 June 2005

In addition, there was contact by telephone and e-mail.

Working as a studio assistant with Colin Marsh

At Colin’s request I:
- Search and find books, photocopy and use the internet in the library for his research.
- Put up and take down his work in his studio in WSA and his flat.
- Photograph his work, and transfer the images, either onto a CD or into his computer for him to access when he needs to.
- Video record his work and transfer it onto DV or VHS tapes so that he can view it later.
- Take notes of comments made, for example, in Group Crips, and then typed up notes for Colin’s use.
- Open doors and operate the lift for him in WSA. Occasionally I assist him with his mobile and hold his drink but only if he is in his chair. He also will ask me to adjust the back of the chair for comfort.
- Buy and get photographic film developed.
- Cut paper to the required size, and rub out areas in his drawings.
- Supported him through his Certificate and Diploma stages by assisting him at his presentations – operating sides, and reading Colin’s Research Proposal papers.
- Attended an induction to video editing, and under Colin’s direction editing the filmed material.
- Visited exhibitions, discussed artists and their work, etc.
- Attended meetings with Leila Stewart, Disability Officer, Christine Hatt, Pathway Leader MA Drawing and Colin.
- Discussed with Colin our work together/working relationship which we have audio recorded.
- Discussed ideas for developing the work, e.g. a proposal for distance collaboration with artists’ groups – The Royal Oak Lodge, Canada.
- Responded to Colin’s postal idea of sending cut out images and headings to me appropriated from the media (newspapers, magazines). These I positioned/grouped as a work or made drawings, which I then photographed for Colin to view. In turn I cut out and send images, etc. to Colin for his response, a continuing project.
- Worked with Colin, drawing together – documented on video.
- Have worked on drawings and made sketchbooks of my responses to Colin’s work in my studio. These I have shown Colin, often photographing them for him to view on his computer.