

Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to write the foreword for this publication of teaching and learning tools produced by the BICPA project.

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.

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.

During the three years of the funding programme the National Disability Team have worked alongside the Higher Education Academy and its subject centre network. In a needs analysis that was undertaken it was identified that academic staff require a variety of resources in order to increase their awareness of how best to support disabled students. It was also recognised that, due to the busy nature of life in academia, resources need to be tailor-made and focus on specific elements of the work that academic staff are engaged in. I hope that the teaching and learning tools presented here (alongside the case studies published by the project), which give a range of examples across key aspects of the higher education experience, 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

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It was identified that academic staff require a variety of resources in order to increase their awareness of how best to support disabled students. The teaching and learning tools presented here give a range of examples across key aspects of the higher education experience, can be of use to other staff on similar courses within the CADISE network and in the wider sector.

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The contents matrix provides details of the themes and guidelines within each Learning and Teaching Tool and the tabs can be used for quick referencing.

Enabling all students to take part in an activity is not just about whether they can complete and submit for assessment, but is also about whether the student feels valued and supported.

Accessible curriculum

Keywords

Course Design, revalidation, course requirements, audit, staff input, expectations, student consultation, removing barriers, staff development, accessibility

1. Introduction

If students are to access the curriculum they need to be able to take part in the learning activity, to understand what is expected of them, to be in a position to access a range of resources and to present their outcomes for assessment in a format that demonstrates their skills and abilities. This guide contains cross references to the guides on Assessment, where the discussion focuses on the development of inclusive learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and on Physical Access. The BIPCA case studies have highlighted the following additional key areas of enquiry and recommendations relating to the accessibility of curriculum.

| Issue | Recommendations |
|---|--|
| Designing inclusive programmes | <p>Involve disability experts in programme design</p> <p>Support programme teams in reaching shared understanding of expectations and language</p> |
| Designing and delivering inclusive projects | <p>Review possible barriers with the student in advance</p> <p>Modify where necessary</p> |

2. Designing inclusive programmes

Considering inclusivity at the point of design ensures that programmes are more likely to be accessible to a diverse student population. To design an inclusive programme, (i.e. a programme which offers the best chance of being accessible to a diverse student population) it can be useful to involve disabled practitioners and/or those with experience of teaching disabled learners in the programme design. Disability Officers within HEIs have experience of working with disabled people and can bring their knowledge to bear in programme design alongside academic staff. These models can be a way not only of expressing the programme in terms that are inclusive, but also in stimulating debate among teaching staff about their definitions and expectations, as well as

generally raising their awareness of the particular ways in which students with different types of disabilities might creatively respond to project proposals. These issues are further discussed in Assessment and in Professional Relationships.

Such debates within programme teams can lead to a robust and shared understanding of the issues and highlight the potential barriers to inclusivity and will enable staff to be aware of, and open to, the range of outcomes that might be presented by a diverse student group. Team discussion will also encourage a more assured response to future problems as they arise.

To build in inclusivity at design stage is an important goal, but it is important also to recognise that individual students with disabilities may challenge the programme team to adapt or redefine their approach further. In such cases, staff should feel confident in being able to respond positively and to work with the student to find out what the issues are and what can be done by them together to help remove any barriers. The KIAD case study demonstrated clearly that students were highly appreciative of staff who were prepared to listen to the issues and to try and work around problems with them.

3. Designing and delivering accessible projects

Many creative arts programmes will use projects as a main vehicle for learning; projects will often be revised annually, often in response to changes in the industry or to take advantage of opportunities to take part in external events or to work in external venues. This dynamic approach to content design ensures that students learn in an environment that is professionally relevant. The fact that projects change regularly presents staff with both a challenge and an opportunity; the challenge is to ensure each time that the new project is accessible by disabled students, and the opportunity is to seek out venues and design activities which are accessible to changing student groups.

The lessons learnt from the BICPA case studies include the importance of talking to any disabled students in the group in advance of a project activity which might present a barrier, preferably before the project is fixed. By talking it through, staff and student can determine whether barriers can be removed by making adjustments, or whether the project proposal is always going to exclude that student. Enabling all students to take part in an activity is not just about whether they can complete and submit for assessment, but is also about whether the student feels valued and supported.

This is particularly evident in group work projects where to not take part is to be clearly excluded from the peer group and to have your self worth devalued.

In many cases, some modification to a project enables a disabled student to take part and to use their skills to meet the learning outcomes. As above, staff need to ensure that their willingness to modify an activity or assessment is not constrained by their expectations that every student must do the same thing. As long as every student can demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes, and assuming that those outcomes are expressed in a way which does not limit the expectations, then it will not matter if some students reach this point in a different way from others. In creative arts programmes, many projects will emphasise the need for individual students to interpret a brief and to determine a set of priorities within a framework provided by the brief. Where this is the case, 'modifications for the disabled student' cease to be a relevant approach and are replaced by opportunities for diverse responses by all students. Further detailed discussion of these points can be found in the Assessment guide and in the case study from Rose Bruford College.

The interview or audition remains the primary means of selecting students and consideration needs to be given to admissions policy and interview practice.

Admissions

Keywords

Entry requirements, auditions, qualifications, staff development, interview, policy, disability awareness

1. Introduction

The BICPA case studies have highlighted the following key areas of enquiry and recommendations relating to admissions:

| Issue | Recommendations |
|---|--|
| Effective use of the interview as primary means of selecting students of creative arts programmes | <p>Consider developing admissions policies and procedures which guarantee interviews for all</p> <p>Provide training for admissions tutors to ensure that interviews provide an equal opportunity to all applicants for the demonstration of their strengths</p> |
| Promoting HE programmes to disabled learners | Liaison with community sector groups can be an effective way of encouraging applications from disabled learners |

2. Effective use of the interview as primary means of selecting students of creative arts programmes

For the majority of creative arts programmes, the interview or audition remains the primary means of selecting students and consideration needs to be given to admissions policy and interview practice.

The case study carried out by The Arts Institute at Bournemouth evaluated a development to their admissions policy which offered an interview to all suitably qualified disabled applicants. Within the context of an institutional Disability Statement the institute has extended the Positive About Disability scheme, initiated by its Human Resources department, to student admissions. As a result of guaranteeing interviews to all suitably qualified job applicants, the institute has seen a significant increase in the number of people with disclosed disabilities being offered employment.

The introduction of such a scheme for student applicants aims to increase the number of interviews that need to be carried out

by admissions tutors. This increase in workload needs to be anticipated and managed, although it should also be noted that in the case study the workload increase was not felt by staff to be significant.

The development of an inclusive framework within which interviews can take place needs to be supported by a well developed understanding by admissions tutors of the criteria that they are applying in considering applicants.

Interviews and auditions are not only an opportunity for staff to review the work of a candidate but also enable staff to consider the applicant's suitability in relation to a wider range of criteria. As such it is essential that all students have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their suitability in relation to the criteria. This can be a complex challenge and admissions tutors can lack confidence in their ability to respond to the specific contexts presented by a range of disabilities. Institutions need to ensure that, as well as training their admissions staff in equality legislation, they provide capacity for staff to understand the particular characteristics of the disability presented by an applicant and to think about how they may need to adapt their approach accordingly.

For example, a deaf student who uses British Sign Language is not going to be able to engage in a conversation about their visual work in an interview. Involving a signer in the interview enables communication between the candidate and the tutor, but if the tutor is unfamiliar with talking to a deaf person they may not have a conversation that is as complex as in other circumstances. The consequence of this could be that the applicant does not have the opportunity to present their full potential in the interview. Tutors need to have the confidence to think clearly about the selection criteria and whether their approach is providing the candidate with an effective opportunity to present their range of strengths.

3. Promoting HE programmes to disabled learners

Increasing the number of disabled applicants can be achieved by strategies such as the scheme described above and, more fully, in the Arts Institute at Bournemouth case study. Another approach adopted within the project was liaising with community sector groups who have experience of working with disabled practitioners and students. In the case study carried out by Rose Bruford College, academic staff developed links with a theatre company who specialise in working with disabled performers. One of the positive outcomes of this link has been increased interest in the college's programmes among disabled students involved with the theatre company.

As institutions develop their approaches to inclusivity, they should aim to design and develop programmes that offer the greatest potential to be inherently inclusive, rather than requiring modifications.

Assessment

Keywords

Learning outcomes, curriculum design, exams, criteria, deadlines, presentations, alternative forms of assessment, inclusivity, communication

1. Introduction

The BICPA case studies have highlighted the following key areas of enquiry and recommendations relating to assessment:

| Issue | Recommendations |
|---|---|
| Modification of intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria | <p>Review curriculum at design stage to ensure requirements are inclusive</p> <p>Involve academic staff, disability officers and professional practitioners with experience of working with disabled learners in curriculum review</p> <p>Be prepared to respond to individual needs and modify assessment criteria and methods as required</p> |
| Assessment of work undertaken by or with the help of a studio assistant or disability facilitator | Academic staff, student and support worker need to discuss and clarify their relative roles |

2. Modification of Intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria

The modification of learning requirements is a well-established and accepted component of inclusivity. The CADISE case studies offer some views about when and how these modifications may be made.

As discussed in Student Support, the earliest opportunity to consider changes that the student may need comes at interview and in the early stages of the programme. At this point an individual learning plan can be drawn up and can specify certain types of adjustments which the student may regularly need in order for them to have an opportunity to work to their potential. These might include recognising the need for an additional

tutorial at key points in the project process, or the extension of deadlines on those types of activity which are likely to take the disabled student longer to complete than their peers. Some such adjustments can be anticipated and agreed at this early stage, although they will need to be reviewed regularly throughout the programme to ensure that they remain relevant and useful. Other adjustments may not be so easily anticipated and the need for academic staff to remain alert to the possible need for adjustment and to be flexible in their approach is discussed below.

However, as institutions develop their approaches to inclusivity, they should aim to design and develop programmes that offer the greatest potential to be inherently inclusive, rather than requiring modifications.

For example, the case study carried out by Rose Bruford College involved an audit of the curriculum and programme documentation for the BA (Hons) Acting, undertaken by staff and actors from a theatre company who specialise in working with disabled actors. This audit identified changes that could be made to learning outcomes which did not fundamentally change the intended outcome of a module, but which offered a wider range of ways in which students might demonstrate their achievement of the outcome.

Specific examples of recommendations arising from the audit include a recommendation that British Sign Language (BSL) should be recognised as an alternative to oral presentation and the learning outcome which states that ‘Students...will possess the ability to present themselves with confidence and communicate effectively in writing and through oral and practical work’ be amended accordingly.’

The audit served to raise questions and to stimulate debate around the expectations and assumptions built into the language used to describe outcomes. For example, one module talks about ‘Voice classes [which] introduce a series of exercises designed to develop a technically sound vocal instrument’. The discussion here recommended replacing ‘technically sound’ and references to the ‘muscularity’ of voice with ‘wide ranging vocal instrument’ to make it clear that the definition was broad enough to include a range of different vocal skills and strengths. The debate also highlighted the fact that the terminology used in a learning outcome is in a sense only the surface issue – the underlying factor of importance is that academic staff need to ensure that they have a well developed and shared understanding of their definitions. If this is achieved then the terminology does not need to be exclusive.

The audit also served to identify areas where learning outcomes and expectations were expressed in very inclusive ways already, as in the statement that “Students are encouraged to present their work through a variety of media as appropriate to the best means of communicating ideas”.

The process of auditing a programme at Rose Bruford involved externals who had direct experience of working with disabled performers. The use of professional practitioners with these experiences to develop the HEI’s knowledge and understanding is also discussed in Staff Development. An alternative approach was demonstrated by the case study carried out at Trinity College of Music where the disability officer worked closely with programme leader and them to review the B(Mus) documentation.

The Trinity case study started by examining two modules in the programme which were raising questions about the capacity of visually impaired students to participate fully in the course. During the case study the disability officer was able to bring his experience to bear and worked with academic staff to review and revise the module descriptions, learning outcomes and assessment methods and criteria. As a consequence of this work, the disability officer is now involved as a matter of course as a member of any programme review or re-validation team.

In this way the accessibility of the programme to disabled students is considered at the design stage. This achieves a framework for learning that is designed to be more inclusive and so fewer reactive modifications are needed. This is not only better for disabled students, who are less often put in a position where they need to identify a problem and negotiate an adjustment, but also reduces the pressure on academic staff to be recognising problems, making changes and seeking advice in doing so.

There will, however, still be times where a particular student identifies a barrier and where a particular disability presents difficulties that have not been anticipated. In such cases academic staff need to be flexible and prepared to make necessary adjustments which, in turn, will be easier to do if the module description is accessible as described above. It is also a reality that most creative arts programmes use projects as vehicles to deliver the intended learning outcomes of a module; in many cases these projects will change regularly in order to retain their relevance to professional practice. Again staff will need to be alert to the accessibility of individual projects as they design them.

The ways in which staff can be supported in making judgments about adjustments to programmes is discussed further in

Professional Relationships and issues relating to physical access are discussed in Physical Access and External Visits.

The case study carried out by Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication presented an example of where modifications to deadlines or to learning outcomes were not sufficient to ensure that a deaf student was not disadvantaged by his difficulties with written assignments. During the case study it was recognised that the student, who communicated using BSL, was having difficulty with written assignments. Initially the approach was taken to offer him additional support and time to complete the assignments and this worked reasonably well for short written requirements. A learning and teaching development co-ordinator worked with the student to help him develop strategies for recording and developing his ideas in writing and visually.

However, when the student reached a point in the programme when a more substantial written assignment was required, it became evident that an alternative submission would need to be agreed. Discussions took place between the student, the academic tutor and the L&T development co-ordinator and the project was broken down into clear stages and the submission requirement adapted to allow a more visual presentation of ideas. Essentially the discussions recognised that the learning outcomes were about the student’s understanding of the work of chosen designers, rather than about his ability to write a 1,000 word essay.

2. Assessment of practical work undertaken by or with the help of a studio assistant or support worker

The relationship between student, academic staff and support staff is explored in greater detail in Professional Relationships. The element of these relationships which relates directly to assessment is the potential for concern about the authenticity of work submitted for assessment.

One such example is where students with dyslexia work closely with disability facilitators employed to support the student in developing their work. At The Kent Institute of Art and Design a number of external disability facilitators are employed, and these staff have developed effective working relationships with staff and students. There have, however, been some concerns expressed by academic staff at times about the extent to which written work has been guided by the facilitators. Discussion between these staff has confirmed clear boundaries in their roles and reassured academic staff that, in these cases, facilitators offer advice about research methods, structure and expression rather than providing content.

The Wimbledon School of Art case study offers a different discussion on the role of support staff in the context of an

examination of the experiences of a student with physical disability undertaking a MA in Drawing and working closely with a dedicated studio assistant. The student in the Wimbledon case study will be assessed on his completed works, in the same way as his non-disabled peers. Although the student has gone about creating these work collaboratively and by directing others, it is recognised that the student has to go through the same creative and theoretical processes as other students in order to produce his work, therefore the student's work is authentic. This progressive approach to assessment taken by Wimbledon has enabled a student in need of 24 hour support to complete a postgraduate qualification meeting. It should also be noted that Wimbledon's recognition that drawing is in a constant state of renewal and is not fixed discipline has lead to an environment where such developments possible.

Academic staff need to think not only about the learning outcomes of the activity but also about the location in order to identify any potential barriers and to consider changes to either that may need to be made.

External visits

Keywords

Mobility, access, support staff, independent learning, barriers, trips, performances, galleries, museums, communication

1. Introduction

The BICPA case studies have highlighted the following key areas of enquiry and recommendations relating to external visit:

| Issue | Recommendations |
|---|---|
| Access barriers presented by external locations | Plan carefully and assess barriers, make adjustments where possible, but be brave enough to change external venue where necessary |
| Visits to galleries, exhibitions, performances etc. are central to creative education, but travel and access can be problematic | flexible support staff can enable the student to lead independent learning |
| Extended trips can highlight barriers to socialisation experienced by disabled students | Anticipate the needs of the student during the leisure hours of an extended trip as well as their learning needs |

2. Access barriers presented by external locations

Where a programme includes an extended visit or field trip that is a required component of the programme, due consideration needs to be given to the extent to which the activities and venues are accessible to disabled students. The principles of adjustment that are described in Accessible Curriculum and Assessment apply equally to modules or projects which take place beyond the HEI's campus.

Academic staff need to think not only about the learning outcomes of the activity but also about the location in order to identify any potential barriers and to consider changes to either

that may need to be made. The case study carried out by Central School of Speech and Drama highlighted the importance of discussing the forthcoming activity with the disabled student so that s/he is able to prepare appropriately for it and to raise any concerns that they may have.

In some cases a certain venue may have become accepted as part of the core curriculum, but may in fact present significant barriers to a student with a particular disability within the group. In such cases, academic staff with responsibility for planning the activity should be brave enough to change the project and the venue in order that all students can participate.

3. Visits to galleries, exhibitions, performances etc.

Visits to galleries, exhibitions, performances etc. are central to creative education, but travel and access can be problematic. In addition to visits organised by staff, students benefit from independent visits to galleries, exhibitions, performances etc. to support research and idea development. The case study carried out by Kent Institute of Art and Design focused on the support provided by 'disability facilitators' (see Professional Relationships for further discussion). The institution works towards giving the student control over how their support is organised and resourced and, when interviewed, disabled students spoke about the benefits of this independence. In relation to visits, they valued the ability to make arrangements directly with their support worker. This enabled them to visit galleries and events at times convenient to them and at points in their learning when the visit would be relevant.

4. Extended trips can highlight barriers to socialisation experienced by disabled students

The importance of peer group support to learning and to a positive experience of HE is evident; barriers to socialisation that can be experienced by disabled students are discussed in Social Integration. Any extended trip offers both an opportunity for learning and for socialising among a student group and, as such, highlights the difficulties that can be experienced by disabled students in developing social relationships.

The case study carried out at Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, for example, included a consideration of the experience of a deaf student during a week-long visit to Paris. During the visit he was supported by his communication support worker for eight hours for each equivalent college working day. The student used British Sign Language and communication with his peers was problematic. This limited communication meant that during the evenings of the trip, after his communication support worker had finished for the day the student was isolated.

Information technology

Keywords

Training, PC, Mac, software, specialist software, assistive technology, computers, accessibility, IT provision, policy, responsibility

1. Introduction

The BICPA case studies have highlighted the following key areas of enquiry and recommendations relating to the uses of information technology.

| Issue | Recommendations |
|--|--|
| Use of assistive technology to support students with visual impairment | <p>Follow the 10 point protocol to ensure that software purchasing and set-up is inclusive</p> <p>Audit the IT skills of disabled students on entry and provide training where applicable as early as possible</p> <p>Ensure that disabled students have ready access to computers equipped with specialist software and that they have clear routes to source technical support when needed</p> |

2. Use of assistive technology to support students with visual impairment

Developments in IT software and hardware offer opportunities for disabled students to use technology to support their learning. The case study carried out at Trinity College of Music explored the ways in which assistive technology could be used by students with visual impairment. The case study considered the uses within a particular module of a BMus programme, but raised a number of wider issues.

As a result of its work, the college developed a 10 point protocol which provides guidelines to IT staff to ensure that in their planning, purchasing and setting-up of resources, they can be confident that they are meeting the needs of disabled students. The full protocol is presented in the TCM case study.

A number of the key recommendations embedded in the protocol derive from the rapid rate at which new software is introduced

Although the particular software was being introduced to ensure access to a module of the programme, it also became evident that the training and skills had a wider impact on the ability of the group of students to work independently and to communicate using e-mail and the internet.

and modified. Trinity College of Music found that having a named member of staff with a responsibility for maintaining awareness of new developments in assistive technology and for liaising with IT staff, helped to drive purchasing priorities.

Other key recommendations in the 10 point protocol relate to the specialist nature of the assistive software. Where specialist assistive technology is purchased from overseas manufacturers, it is important to ensure that access to support is viable and is not prohibited by, for example, expensive telephone calls to American software companies.

Specialist assistive technology can then present some challenges to the set-up and management of IT suites. There are times when the assistive software can be adversely sensitive to new installations of software on the machine, and therefore Trinity College of Music found that regular checks needed to be undertaken to make sure that the assistive software continued to operate smoothly. In some cases, assistive software needs to operate in parallel with other software and so this compatibility needs to be considered.

The management of IT suites is considered in the protocol, which recommends that IT managers will need to take account of the number of students needing access to assistive software and ensure that it is installed on sufficient numbers of work stations.

One of the benefits that disabled students can accrue from the use of technology is the ability to set up personal preferences which suit their individual needs closely. This can cause a conflict with IT management principles, where the approach may be to restrict student access to preferences. Also, there could be difficulties for the student if their preferences are over-written when the next user accesses the machine. IT staff should consider ways to ensure that the student's particular configurations are saved.

As with all students, disabled students will enter HE with varying levels of confidence and competence in their use of IT. In the Trinity College of Music case study, staff were surprised to find out that the same group of visually impaired students on the programme typically lacked experience of using IT and consequently needed to be encouraged to embark on learning necessary skills. This highlights the importance of auditing the IT skills of students and of doing this as early as possible within the programme so that any training needs and purchasing priorities can be identified and progressed.

Trinity College of Music recognised that this lack of confidence meant that students needed close support and their minimal experience meant that training had to start with basic navigation skills before moving into the use of assistive technology. To ensure that the group of students had ready access, a computer loaded with necessary assistive technology was located in the library and dedicated for use by students with visual impairment. Library staff were trained in order that they could offer general instruction and support.

To manage the specific training on the assistive software, the college was able to identify a member of academic staff, himself with a visual impairment, who undertook personal training and was then able to roll-out training to a small group of students. As a consequence of the training programme, it was evident that the skills and confidence of the student group increased rapidly. Although the particular software was being introduced to ensure access to a module of the programme, it also became evident that the training and skills had a wider impact on the ability of the group of students to work independently and to communicate using e-mail and the internet. Students were also able, through this process, to determine relevant software and to use their Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) to purchase assistive software for use on their personal computers.

Physical access

Keywords

Mobility, buildings, facilities, design, planning, inclusion, timetabling, inclusion

1. Introduction

The BICPA case studies have highlighted the following key areas of enquiry and recommendations relating to physical access:

| Issue | Recommendations |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Assessment of physical barriers | <p>Review accessibility as early in the relationship as possible, giving time to prepare</p> <p>Review accessibility of off-site locations, including field trips</p> |
| Adjustment of learning spaces | <p>Be flexible and arrange alternative locations where necessary</p> <p>Talk to the student about what they need and make adjustments to learning spaces as required</p> |

2. Assessment of physical barriers

From the point that a student begins their relationship with the HEI, opportunities exist for an assessment of the student's needs. These include the ability to access physical spaces necessary for learning, both within and beyond the HEI. It should be remembered that barriers to accessing spaces in which learning takes place can have a highly significant impact on the student's capacity to learn and to take part, particularly when it is for a group activity. In such cases, a student cannot simply use an alternative space because by doing so they are deprived of the opportunity to fully participate. The wider issues of student participation are further discussed in Social Integration.

The Student Support Learning and Teaching Guide explores the process of developing a personal learning plan with the student, which sets out any additional support or adaptations that may be necessary in order to enable the student to fully access their learning. Within this planning process, it is possible to identify places within the institution which may present access difficulties and times in the programme when specialist spaces may need to be accessed.

Despite advance planning and modifications, there may still be occasions when full access is difficult, and in such cases staff will need to be flexible in their approach.

During the case study carried out by Wimbledon School of Art, for example, the student toured the building with the disability officer to consider possible access difficulties and as a result the HEI was able to identify a number of modifications to the physical environment that were needed and which were carried out in advance of the student beginning their programme. These included large areas of work such as repairing the lift and other small, but significant, adjustments such as providing an accessible place for the student to pick up their post.

Where programmes include visits or extended trips to off-site locations, it is important that tutors consider the accessibility of these spaces before initiating the project or activity. This issue is also discussed in Assessment. On occasions, it may be that a programme is accustomed to visiting a particular location for a certain project which proves to be inaccessible for a disabled member of the group. In such cases, tutors will need to work with the student(s) in advance to review whether adjustments can be made, or whether the location or venue needs to be changed in order to enable the disabled student to take part.

3. Adjustment of learning spaces

Despite advance planning and modifications, there may still be occasions when full access is difficult, and in such cases staff will need to be flexible in their approach. For example, at Wimbledon School of Art, the student academic support services, located in an annexe to the main building, remained inaccessible for a student in a wheelchair and arrangements were therefore made for meetings between the student and the disability officer to take place in the student's studio area.

In some cases, it will only become clear during the programme that a modification needs to be made. For example, again at Wimbledon School of Art, the student found that it was very uncomfortable to sit in his wheelchair for long periods and occasionally needed to excuse himself to take a break. This required careful planning and flexibility of approach by the staff to minimise overlong periods without a break. It was also noticed that the student was working at home increasingly and as such was not accessing tutor and peer group support. It was agreed as a result to install a platform in the studio area so that the student could lie and draw and take a break from the wheelchair.

Small, temporary adjustments to a physical space can make a considerable difference to a student's ability to take part. For example, in the case study carried out at Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, staff working with a deaf student were able to think about how they laid out the studio area when

making presentations so that enough light was available to see the tutor to make lip reading possible.

The student at Ravensbourne was enrolled on a programme where the main learning took place in a large open plan space and this caused a number of difficulties for the student. Some of these difficulties were a result of the tutor's movements around the space, talking to the group while moving around the group. This made it very difficult for the deaf student to lip read the tutor, or even to know that information was being given out. In this example, the role of the communication support worker in liaising between the student and the tutor was essential and this is discussed further in Professional Relationships. Tutors worked with the student to develop strategies to assist him and as a result were able to modify their presentations, making greater use of boards and flip charts to display key points in writing and alerting the deaf student before embarking on a discussion. Tutors were also able to support the student in participating in group discussions by allowing time for comments and answers and by encouraging other students to position themselves so that the deaf student could lip read.

Professional relationships

Keywords

DSA, tutors, academic staff, staff development, support staff, note takers, sign language interpreters, boundaries, studio assistants, authenticity

1. Introduction

The BICPA case studies have highlighted the following key areas of enquiry and recommendations relating to the professional relationships between academic staff and support staff.

| Issue | Recommendations |
|---|--|
| Developing partnerships between academic staff and those with expertise in disability | <p>Engage academic staff with disabled practitioners in their subject area to raise awareness of professional practice and to gain advice about the inclusivity of academic programmes</p> <p>Ensure that academic staff and HEI-based student support staff take joint responsibility for provision for disabled students</p> <p>Involve the student centrally in planning and managing their support</p> |
| Recognising the roles of support staff in developing academic work | Clarify the role of support staff who assist academic work to ensure no ambiguity about the authenticity of student work |
| Supporting students as independent learners | Recognise that support must be appropriate to need and that it is not usually in the student's best interests to become overly dependent on a support worker |

As the majority of creative arts programmes would define themselves, at least in part, as preparing students for professional practice, it is essential that their understanding of those practice areas includes recognition of the ways in which disabled performers, artists, musicians can excel.

2. Developing partnerships between academic staff and those with expertise in disability

Teaching staff occupy their roles in HEIs by virtue of their subject expertise and their abilities to support learning. In creative arts subjects many staff are also professional practitioners in their subject areas. Developing inclusive approaches to learning and teaching may challenge academic staff by identifying areas in which their approaches present barriers to some learners. Responding to this challenge can require significant changes to established teaching practice or to tried and tested methods, projects etc. Where staff are under pressure in their roles, finding the time and space to develop new ways of working can be difficult, but where those new ways of working require an understanding of disability, staff can see it as a problem rather than as a creative challenge.

One of the recommendations emerging from the BICPA project is that academic institutions should consider ways of enabling and encouraging academic staff to engage directly with disabled practitioners and with those who specialise in teaching learners with disabilities. As a practitioner, it may be that staff members are simply not aware of the developments of disabled practitioners in their subject area and if this awareness were raised it would offer insights into the position of disabled learners within education and in professions. As the majority of creative arts programmes would define themselves, at least in part, as preparing students for professional practice, it is essential that their understanding of those practice areas includes recognition of the ways in which disabled performers, artists, musicians etc. can excel.

Examples of ways to achieve this engagement include: the involvement of disabled practitioners in curriculum reviews; the integration of disabled performances within the schedules of the institutions' theatres; links with community sector organisations working with disabled learners. It has been shown in the case studies that these kinds of engagements raise the profile of the institution among disabled communities, develop relationships between practitioners, develop the awareness of academic staff and students and lead to change in programmes. Employing disabled practitioners as lecturing staff is clearly another strategy for developing and presenting inclusive approaches.

Within HEIs, the relationships between academic staff and support staff working in the areas of disability can be developed to bring real benefit to students and to staff. A number of the CADISE case studies demonstrate the outcomes of partnerships between these staff, who bring their different experiences and expertise to bear. One of the key conclusions from the case studies is that academic staff need to be fully involved, along with the student and support staff, in understanding the issues

presented by the student's disability and in developing strategies to reduce or remove any barriers.

Some support required by some disabled students does not connect directly with their academic experiences – for example, the need to provide a deaf student with a flashing door bell for their room in the halls of residence can be identified and put into place through discussion between the student and support staff without any involvement by academic staff. Many other types of support do, however, need to be offered by academic staff. If those staff are not in a position to recognise what might benefit the student or to be party to agreeing it, they are far less likely to either know what to do or to recognise their responsibilities in doing it.

Case studies, such as those carried out at Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication and at Central School of Speech and Drama, conclude that academic staff should work with student and support staff to develop personal learning plans at the outset of a programme and be part of regular reviews of the support provision.

Specialist institutions which, by definition, tend to be relatively small, have traditionally operated a model of support where the academic programme is the main focus of their experience and a range of support functions have been managed by programme teams. As specialist HEIs have been able to develop and extend their student support services, they are challenged to achieve improved, comprehensive student services, without losing the sense of integration between student support and academic programme.

Creative arts tutors are perhaps better placed than many academic staff, to build relationships with individual students and to recognise the connections between a student's work and their identity as an individual. Tutors often work closely with students, seeing them informally many times a week in addition to formal tutorials and assessment. Through these regular contacts, strong trust relationships can be built up in which a range of issues and concerns may be discussed in addition to the straightforward review of academic progress and achievement. These relationships put academic staff in creative programmes in a good position to get to know their students as individuals and to recognise their needs and preferences and thus to be able to listen to the student in ensuring that they have full access to learning. Talking to the individual student about what strategies work well for them and what areas of their programme are causing difficulties is after all the best way to know what they need. Case studies, such as that carried out at The Kent Institute of Art and Design,

show that students are very appreciative of staff who take time to find out what they need and are prepared to be flexible in order that the student can access in the best way for them.

3. **Recognising the roles of support staff in developing academic work**

A range of different roles may be occupied by support staff within HEIs to support disabled students. As discussed above and in the Staff Development Learning and Teaching Guide, partnerships between academic staff and specialist disability officers can lead to joint strategies for working with students which build on the subject specialist knowledge of the tutor and the disability specialist knowledge of the support officer.

A variety of staff are active within HEIs to work directly in supporting a student's learning. These might include support workers appointed to a deaf or visually-impaired student, a personal assistant assigned to work with a student with mobility disability, a facilitator working to support dyslexic students in organising their work etc. A number of the case studies found that there can be concerns held by academic staff about the role of support workers in the production of academic work.

The Kent Institute of Art and Design set out to explore the relationships between support staff working with dyslexic students and academic teams. It found that academic staff raised concerns about the extent to which support staff were helping students with essays, but it also found that support staff had very clear guidelines which enabled them to focus on support in the development of an essay structure, on research strategies and on expression. These guidelines were found to be generally well understood by students. Communication between academic and support staff was difficult to facilitate, especially since both groups tend to work on a sessional basis. However, it was found that where opportunities existed for support staff to join programme team meetings, or to talk to a tutor about the work they were doing with a student, awareness of each others roles was raised and anxieties reduced.

In the Ravensbourne College case study, a teaching and learning co-ordinator working with staff and with a deaf student was able to recognise the barriers that certain types of assessment were presenting to the student and to negotiate alternative submission formats to meet the learning outcomes.

4. **Supporting students as independent learners**

All students entering HE level learning are expected to develop their capacity to work independently, not only in terms of their organisational and time management skills but in terms of their ability to determine their own priorities, to interpret project briefs, to make decisions about progression beyond HE etc. A number

of the case studies presented examples of where a student was the first person with a particular disability to have enrolled in the particular HEI. In such cases, it is predictable that intensive development may need to be done to provide for that student, and learning about what is needed has to happen quickly. HEIs need to be mindful however that the student may not want or need support that in any way reduces their ability to develop as an independent learner. There can be a tendency for support staff to become very involved with an individual in such cases and perhaps to not leave room for the student to make their own mistakes. For example, a disability officer at Ravensbourne talked about her role in liaising with support workers. She described finding herself in situations where she would be sent to wake up a student who had overslept and failed to turn up on time to meet the support worker. Other support staff talked about being asked by disabled students to attend lectures and take notes for them on days when they were late or unwell.

Social integration

Keywords

Support networks, barriers, integration, communication, well being, disability awareness, student experience, group work

1. Introduction

The BICPA case studies have highlighted the following key areas of enquiry and recommendations relating to social integration:

| Issue | Recommendations |
|---|---|
| Barriers to the development of social relationships | <p>Recognise the barriers to socialisation and try to put support in place as early as possible</p> <p>Support student in establishing contact with external support groups where appropriate</p> <p>Train staff and students in communication strategies</p> |
| Impact of limited social relationships on learning | <p>Develop strategies to include all students in group work and group discussions</p> <p>Consider the social element of trips, visits etc.</p> |

2. Barriers to the development of social relationships

Students entering HE join a community within and around their programme and many students experience difficulties in developing and establishing strong social relationships when first joining HE. For many students, entering HE means moving away from home and distancing themselves from familiar support networks. The nature of specialist HE provision means that students may not be able to access the programme they require within their local area. These issues can be felt particularly acutely for some disabled students, particularly if, before entering HE, they have been educated in special provision or have been supported by specialist network groups.

A deaf student, whose experience of joining the Art and Design Foundation Diploma programme at Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication was reviewed within their case

Although the HEI cannot be responsible for all of these factors, they can make efforts to provide useful support which reduces the negative impact on the student's well-being and on their learning.

study, experienced a number of difficulties in forming social relationships. Although the most obvious reason for this was his dependence on sign language in a community where there were no other deaf students, there were a number of additional factors which contributed to these difficulties. These included the fact that he had left his home in Liverpool and moved to London, thus distancing himself from his familiar support networks, the fact that he was the only student on his programme to be in the halls of residence, and the fact that he was the only male student within the fashion group of the programme. All of these factors could have been experienced by any student but, combined with a use of sign language, they amounted to a significant barrier to developing social relationships.

The Ravensbourne College case study demonstrated that, although the HEI cannot be responsible for all of these factors, they can make efforts to provide useful support which reduces the negative impact on the student's well-being and on their learning. Ravensbourne College was able to help the student to establish a link with a deaf support group in South London to replace the group that the student regularly accessed in his home town. The college also introduced basic sign language training for students in the group so that they could begin to communicate and this complemented the fact that a number of support staff at the college were undertaking a sign language course.

In the case study, the majority of these actions were taken after it was realised that the student was experiencing difficulties. The message from the case study is that, wherever possible, staff should anticipate these barriers and put strategies in place from the outset.

At Ravensbourne, the sign language training for students was a catalyst to improving social interaction within the group. At Trinity College of Music, the disability officer worked with visually-impaired students to produce and circulate some materials to all students which alerted students and staff to practical ways in which they can work and socialise with visually impaired students.

3. Impact of limited social relationships on learning

Social relationships at HE do not only develop during leisure time, particularly in creative arts subjects with their emphasis on group work and on studio-based practice and peer learning. A number of the case studies raised issues about the impact of barriers to socialisation on learning and about barriers that can be experienced within the learning environment.

At Central School of Speech and Drama, a student with multiple disabilities enrolled on the BA (Hons) Drama, Education and

Applied Theatre programme, spoke about times when 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.

At Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, the deaf student, whose case study is also discussed above, experienced difficulties in joining in group work in a design studio environment. In such an open plan space, discussions between students about on-going work is encouraged and students use each other to check that they have understood the project brief and to confirm that they are progressing appropriately. Where these conversations are informal and taking place while working, they are difficult to follow when relying on lip reading. Similarly, in this environment, tutors often have very quick passing conversations with a student which can nevertheless be pivotal to the development of a project and again the student missed out on these. As a result, the student needed additional tutorial time in order for the tutor to be available to check the students understanding and review progress regularly.

The same case study also highlighted the fact that a student who has a communication disability may find themselves isolated when on activities such as extended trips. The issues raised are discussed in External Visits.

Staff development

Keywords

Disability awareness, human resources, training materials, training needs, debate, professional development, trainers, legislation, in-house training, staff induction

1. Introduction

The BICPA case studies have highlighted the following key areas of enquiry and recommendations relating to staff development.

| Issue | Recommendations |
|---|---|
| Focusing staff development on teaching and learning | <p>Establish partnerships between academic staff and disability support staff to help academic staff to adapt their teaching practice to include disabled learners</p> <p>Some training can be offered universally, some can be targeted in response to particular circumstances</p> <p>Support academic staff in undertaking case studies which review the experience and needs of individual disabled students and disseminate the outcomes</p> |
| Identifying staff training needs | <p>Curriculum audits can be a valuable way of identifying staff development needs</p> <p>Training set up in response to a particular programme team's needs can alert other teams to their needs</p> |

Staff development should focus not only on the procedures related to the policy, but also on the practice.

| Issue | Recommendations |
|--|--|
| Delivering effective staff development | <p>Self-determined small groups of academic staff can drive own development effectively</p> <p>Programme of development needs to be on-going so that new staff are included and experienced staff are updated</p> <p>Involve disabled practitioners in designing and delivering staff development for teaching staff</p> |
| Enabling staff to implement inclusive policies | <p>Staff need clear briefings and written guidance notes to support the implementation of a new policy</p> <p>Staff development should focus not only on the procedures related to the policy, but also on the practice</p> |
| Training support staff | <p>Include support staff in training and development and identify specific training needs of support staff</p> <p>Encourage the professionalisation of disability support roles</p> |

2. Focusing staff development on learning and teaching

Disability legislation has been a significant driver in encouraging HEIs to give priority to the development of staff awareness of disability and equal opportunities issues. As a consequence, staff have been introduced to the principles of legislation and to the responsibilities of the institution, and of them as individuals. This legislative context is important, but there are risks that increasing awareness is not translated into developing the knowledge of how practice needs to change and develop. Academic staff can find themselves in a position where they have an acute awareness of their responsibilities, but lack the practical knowledge about how to adjust their teaching practice, their curriculum design or the learning environment.

A number of the CADISE case studies have highlighted the value of developing partnerships between support staff and academic staff and these partnerships can be effective in developing each others' skills. Each group of staff bring a set of specialist skills and knowledge to the partnership – academic staff bring subject knowledge and disability support staff bring knowledge of the barriers experienced by students with particular disabilities. By working together it is possible to develop strategies to support students which achieve ready access to high quality academic provision. For example, a disability facilitator working closely and regularly with a dyslexic student is in a position to help the academic tutor see the barriers and difficulties that the student experiences, to see the successes and achievements of the student in context and to consider ways in which assignments might be adjusted to give the student an enhanced opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

Support staff can provide academic staff with very practical advice on the impact of a disability on learning, especially where the tutor may not previously have worked with a student with a particular disability. A simple recognition that, for example, a deaf student who relies on British Sign Language (BSL) may not have developed written English language skills, can enable adjustments to be made.

When these partnerships also include the student, then the strategies are all the more likely to be successful. Conversations with the student will reveal their personal responses to situations and will be an opportunity to recognise the successful strategies that the student has developed over time and which need to be recognised.

The needs of a disabled student are not defined entirely by their disability – any individual student will have preferences which will mean that different tactics will be more likely to be successful. Information leaflets which describe the main issues that are experienced by students with a particular disability, or the outward 'symptoms' of the disability, can be very useful in raising awareness of the barriers often experienced. Such guidance should, however, be used as a starting point only and staff need to be alert to the fact that, for example, not all students with a visual impairment will have the same level or type of impairment and may not therefore respond positively to the same type of support.

The Student Support Learning and Teaching Guide examines the use of personal learning plans for students with disabilities and recommends that they be compiled and reviewed by the student with their tutor and a disability support worker. This can provide

a useful catalyst for discussions about student needs which support the development of a partnership approach.

Staff development can clearly be achieved in a wide range of ways, sometimes through delivered training and other times through engagement in activity and debate. Within delivered training, institutions will decide that there are priority areas where universal training needs to be delivered to all staff, and very often these priorities include equal opportunities. As discussed above, this can sometimes fail to address the practical guidance needed in order for academic staff to be confident in their ability to teach in ways which enable all students to learn. In some cases, training might be offered reactively, targeting staff who most need it. Supposing a tutor is leading a group that is to include a disabled student, perhaps with a disability that the tutor has no previous experience of, then that tutor can be provided with some very practical advice about how to adjust their approach. For example, a tutor leading a group which includes a deaf student will need to know that they must be conscious of where to stand when addressing the group so that the lip-reading student can see their mouth. Also important would be the use of written presentations as well as verbal, and remembering to talk directly to the student rather than to their facilitator etc. Trying to engage all staff in this kind of training, when many of them may not need to use these skills in their practice at that time, is likely to be less effective than engaging a member of staff who knows that they are going to need to work effectively with an individual in the coming academic session.

The methodology adopted by the BICPA project was the use of the case studies, many of which examine the experiences of an individual student or a small group of students engaged in learning on a particular programme within the host HEI. This approach can offer an effective way of engaging staff in thinking about the inclusion of disabled students from a position firmly within the context of their academic role and of their discipline specialism. The learning achieved through these small, localised case studies have been valuable to the individuals involved, and from them, the broader issues can be extrapolated and lessons disseminated to a wider community.

3. Identifying staff training needs

Where the objective is to identify training needs of academic staff, curriculum audits have been shown to offer a way of engaging staff in defining their own needs. For example, at the Surrey Institute of Art and Design, University College, the staff in the BA (Hons) Fashion team who took part in the audit of their programme's provision for disabled students, identified areas where they lacked confidence and needed training. The HEI

responded by arranging training which was then taken up by a wider range of staff who shared the same need.

Where such audits are integrated within the HEIs' quality assurance processes, it will achieve an institution-wide picture of training needs as well as programme-specific needs.

At Rose Bruford College, the academic staff from the BA (Hons) Acting invited professionals experienced in teaching disabled performers in a community-based organisation to help them review the programme modules and intended learning outcomes. This process was able to identify aspects where inclusion was well supported and others where adjustments could be made.

4. Delivering effective staff development

As discussed above, training determined and delivered by the institution can be very valuable, but development driven by academic staff themselves can more closely target need and can engage staff more fully. At Central School of Speech and Drama, they found that after a significant push by the HEI to raise awareness of disability issues, groups of staff began to set up small independent working groups to further the debates stimulated by the universal training. The disability officer was able to work with these groups to support their work.

HEIs need to be aware of the need to ensure that training, both at institution level and at programme level, is delivered as a rolling programme. New staff entering the HEI will have development needs and experienced staff may need their skills and awareness updated.

One of the most powerful staff development models used in this project, was the approach taken by Rose Bruford College, who worked closely with a theatre company which specialised in working with disabled performers. The development of this relationship benefited college staff in a variety of ways. Representatives of the theatre company took part in the curriculum audit and stimulated debate about how the curriculum could be designed to be more inclusive and how the language used in programme documentation could be more open to disabled students. The relationship between the college and the theatre company also led to performances by disabled actors being incorporated within the college's theatre programme and to visits by disabled students engaged on an access course run by the theatre company. All of these activities opened up lines of communication with college tutors, the majority of whom are also practitioners, with professionals working with disabled performers. Disabled staff from the theatre company are now included in the teaching teams within the college.

In addition to stimulating this productive dialogue, the relationship also led to a specific piece of staff development. A day-long workshop was led by members of the theatre company and attended by academic teams and other college staff. 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 focused 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. 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. 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.

5. Enabling staff to implement inclusive policies

Where institutions introduce new policies or procedures to improve inclusivity, attention needs to be given to the development of staff responsible for implementation. At The Arts Institute at

Bournemouth, for example, a revised admissions policy was piloted. During the pilot, admissions tutors were asked to give their views through a questionnaire, including an evaluation of the policy's introduction in its pilot phase. One of the outcomes of staff evaluation was the need to ensure that as well as verbal briefings, staff need written explanations to guide them in applying the policy in practice.

The area of admissions is an example of where the relationship between policy and practice is complex. A policy which guarantees an interview to all suitably qualified applicants achieves its goal of increasing the number of disabled applicants; its ability to achieve the goal of increasing the number of disabled students will depend to some extent on the ability of admissions tutors to carry out selection and interview in ways which all students have equal opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

Such a policy raises questions about how 'suitably qualified' is defined in the case of disabled students and within a wider recognition of the importance of objective, published criteria. It also raises questions about how subject specialist staff who lead interviews and selection are able to recognise the range of ways in which applicants might be best able to demonstrate their suitability. Interviews, for example, are a way of talking to an applicant and 'viewing' practical work, be it a portfolio, audition etc. For example, if a tutor is interviewing a deaf student with the help of a signer, the tutor needs to be confident in their ability to communicate through a signer and to give the student opportunity to express their responses to questions.

A close analysis may demonstrate that, in certain subjects, certain abilities and skills may be more difficult to evidence for students with certain disabilities. For example, a deaf student who depends on sign language applying for a design programme will be less likely to use text in their visual work and sketchbooks. Admissions tutors who may be accustomed to reading the text to determine the extent to which research is used and concepts developed, may need to recognise that they need to look for other evidence of the same skills.

6. Training support staff

A number of the case studies explored the relationships between academic staff, support staff and students in enhancing the teaching and learning environment; key issues relating to these relationships are highlighted in Professional Relationships Learning and Teaching Guide.

The case study carried out by Kent Institute of Art and Design explored the role of disability facilitators working to support

disabled students. It highlighted issues around the relationship between these staff and academic staff including the extent to which staff understood each other's role and recognised each other's professionalism. The case study noted that as the Institute was able to support disability facilitators in pursuing professional qualifications, so their credibility within the HEI improved.

In relation to staff development, the case study carried out by Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication showed that engaging support staff in learning British Sign Language had a positive impact on the experience of a deaf student, giving him a range of staff across the institution with whom he could communicate, which was particularly important considering that socialising with his peer group was limited because of the communication difficulties. A range of support staff have direct contact with students and are often a more constant feature of the student's experience than individual academic tutors. As such, their role in enhancing access to services and assisting students' inclusion in university life is significant. At Rose Bruford College, for example, front-of-house staff were included in training to ensure that they were able to welcome disabled performers and audiences to the college's theatre.

If a disabled student also has to work without essential support in these early stages their opportunities to learn and to settle in are diminished.

Student support

Keywords

DSA, support workers, dyslexia support, diagnosis, needs assessment, course content, confidentiality, external funding, access centre, planning ahead

1. Introduction

The BICPA case studies have highlighted the following key areas of enquiry and recommendations relating to the identification, planning and provision of student support:

| Issue | Recommendations |
|--|--|
| Assessment of need which leads to funding provision, e.g. DSA | Take care to make sure that the assessment of need carried out for DSA accurately reflects specialist nature of the programme of study |
| Methodologies used by the HEI to identify need and to plan and provide support | Identify the student's needs as early as possible during the study period Review needs regularly to check whether need has changed and/or whether provision is being effective |
| Role of academic staff in planning support | Academic staff should be involved from the outset in planning provision for disabled students Academic staff need to consider the support needs of the student in each new stage of the programme |
| The management of information relating to the student's disability and their support needs | Ensure clear institutional policy for management of personal information and apply consistently Involve the student fully in decisions about who receives personal information |

2. Assessment of need which leads to funding provision, e.g. DSA

Where a student enters Higher Education with a previously acknowledged disability, arrangements may be made by their home Local Education Authority (LEA) for an assessment for Disabled Student Allowance (DSA). In determining the level of funding, the assessors will need to know certain facts about the programme and if errors are made at this stage they can have a significant impact on the student's ability to complete their programme.

The case study carried out by Wimbledon School of Art highlighted an example where a student had been assessed for DSA and an agreement had been made for funding to provide non-medical support for 5 hours per week for the duration of the programme. Part way through the programme it was noticed that the assessment assumed a 30 week period of study when in fact the student was enrolled on a 45 week Masters programme. The DSA assessment had also neglected to recognise the examination requirements of the programme and as a result no additional funding was available to provide the necessary support to the student in the preparation of work for the three examination points during the year and involving an end of year show and submission of an extended research paper. In this example the shortfall was partially met by funds from the school's Access to Learning Fund and other school funds.

3. Methodologies used by the HEI to identify need and to plan and provide support

Opportunities to identify the specific support needs of a student present themselves at a range of points in the relationship between the student and the HEI. HEIs need to have a methodology in place which ensures that an initial identification of need is carried out as early as possible in that relationship, that the required support is then put in place, and that its continued effectiveness is evaluated.

Since the majority of specialist arts HEIs continue to invest in a form of interview as part of the selection process, this offers an early opportunity to discuss any particular support that an applicant might need in order to access the programme fully. Selection of students should take account of the extent of any adjustment needed, to ensure that if the student takes up the programme they are in a position to access the learning as fully as possible.

Many institutions use some form of Learning Agreement which sets out the support needs and the provision that the HEI will make as well as specifying any commitments that the student needs to make in order to access support fully. It can also identify the source of funding for support and clarify the locus of responsibility for allocating the funding and co-ordinating a range of support where relevant. Such an agreement might be initiated even before the

student has joined the course, particularly where adjustments to buildings and/or programme structure need to be made.

The early stages of a new programme of study can be difficult for many students, all of whom are experiencing a range of challenges such as moving away from home, developing new social relationships, tackling the rigours of a specialist programme of study etc. If a disabled student also has to work without essential support in these early stages their opportunities to learn and to settle in are diminished.

Effective early identification helps the HEI to plan support and to provide it in a timely manner. There will however be a need to review the support plan periodically throughout the period of study. This serves a number of purposes; it provides a chance to identify issues that perhaps could not have been anticipated at the outset of the programme; it enables the student and the HEI to review whether the support that has been provided is working well and it enables the support plan to be adjusted if provision needs to change. Opportunities to review the support plan should be built into the period of study by the HEI rather than placing the onus entirely on the student to raise problems. This also ensures that successes can be noted and applauded as well as difficulties being addressed.

4. Role of academic staff in planning support

In many HEIs the responsibility for identifying, planning and reviewing support needs lies primarily with support staff, often the disability officer or equivalent post. Many of the recommendations arising from these support plans will relate to non-academic issues that can be resolved between the student and the support staff – for example, adjustments to accommodation. Many will, however, relate closely to the academic experience of the student. For this reason it is strongly recommended that an appropriate academic member of staff be involved in the process. This may be the programme leader, personal tutor or other member of the programme team. This will ensure that the academic tutor is aware of the student's needs and can work with them and with the support staff to develop effective adaptations that facilitate full access to learning .

The majority of creative subject programmes of study include a varied range of types of activity, e.g. studio practice, field trips, lectures, seminars, tutorials, group work etc. It may be that a student may need particular types of adjustment to access some of these types of work. In addition to the support plan developed early in the programme, it is recommended that academic staff take the time to talk to the student in advance of any new type of learning to explain the forthcoming activity to the student and

together to consider whether it presents any particular barriers that have not been anticipated. For example, a field trip or visit may present issues that are very specific to the location.

5. The management of information relating to the student's disability and their support needs

Certain adjustments may be noted in a support plan that applies throughout the programme of study – for example it may be agreed that the student needs an extension to the deadlines of certain types of assessment. In such cases, the involvement of a member of academic staff will make sure that this information is shared with other staff as needed, and as agreed with the student within the guidelines of the HEI's policy for handling personal information.

In some cases the staff will need to consider how information deriving from a support plan is passed to other areas of the HEI. For example if it is agreed that a student will be given an extension to all assessments of a certain type this needs to be passed to assessing tutors, but may also need to be passed to examinations boards in certain cases.

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