E10. Disability Policy

Policy Statement on Disability in Educational Services

1. Introduction

1.1 The University will implement a range of measures to ensure that its procedures and practices comply with the requirements of the Special Education Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001. Action will be taken to achieve compliance by the required deadlines but the University recognises that a longer term process of cultural change will also be required. In achieving this it will build on the commitment and good practice set out in its Disability Statement to ensure that in all areas of operation it is open and welcoming to disabled people and creates a culture that supports disclosure. It will also utilise the expertise and experience of the Student Disability Service and extend and strengthen the working partnerships between that Service and academic Schools and other support services that sustain our current provision for disabled students.

1.2 Our approach will be one of “continuous improvement” and review, recognising the importance of using our experience with disabled people to inform pro-active, anticipatory measures with respect to relevant adjustments to services and arrangements for learning and teaching.

1.3 The University will keep up to date with any developments that may affect the Act’s provisions.

2. Action Plan

2.1 A survey of current practice in Academic Schools and service Directorates will be undertaken under the direction of the Student Disability Service to identify areas where adjustments and changes to operational activities are necessary, as well as identifying good practice that can be shared. Each School and Directorate will be assisted by the Student Disability Service to draw up an action plan for implementing the necessary changes. The survey will be completed by July 31, 2003 and action plans will be drawn up by November 30, 2003.

2.2 The University’s Learning and Teaching Strategy, submitted to HEFCE in December, 2002, states that SENDA 2001 commits the University to developing an inclusive curriculum and learning environment (including on-line learning environments) in which the needs of students with disabilities are considered. The University will provide access to training and guidance for course teams on good practice in curriculum design.
and course delivery (including placements and collaborative provision) in the light of the requirements and implications of SENDA. Responsibility for development and implementation of this will lie with OCSLD.

2.3 The University will ensure that the need to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students is consistent with an individual student’s request for confidentiality. Procedures will be specified for disseminating disclosed information about students’ needs and for obtaining students’ permission to pass on information necessary for making reasonable adjustments to meet these needs. This will be reflected in the University’s Policy on Student Confidentiality. This Policy will be the responsibility of the Academic Registrar and submitted for approval by December 2003.

2.4 The University’s Estates Strategy will include, subject to the availability of funding, a rolling programme of improvements based on an estates audit informed by an understanding of the needs of disabled people. It will also emphasise the need to make use of any opportunities to alter premises in ways that will benefit disabled people. New estates projects and buildings will comply with the requirements of legislation.

2.5 The University’s Admissions Policy will ensure that it supports the recruitment and admission of disabled people. Amendments to the Policy will be the responsibility of the Academic Registrar and will be submitted for approval by 31 July, 2003.

2.6 A review of the University’s system of governance will ensure that committee responsibilities for taking a strategic approach to disability issues and for consistently progressing them are clearly defined. This will be undertaken by the Director of Academic and Student Affairs and be implemented by October 2003.

2.7 Staff development for teaching staff and support staff will be supplemented by specialist input provided by or through the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development in order to maximise awareness of disability legislation and the required pro-active and anticipatory mindset towards compliance. The staff development programme will be under the general direction of the Equal Opportunities Officer and will commence in June, 2003.

2.8 Recruitment and information materials published by the University should emphasise to prospective students the benefits of disclosure of a disability and how this information will be used to assist them. Responsibility for implementing this will lie with the Head of the Student Disability Service and the Head of Creative Services; materials will be reviewed annually.
3. **Monitoring and Review**

3.1 Responsibility for ensuring compliance with the legislation will lie with the Learning and Teaching Committee with respect to teaching, learning and assessment activities within study programmes, recruitment and admissions procedures and learning resources; and with the Executive Board with respect to all support matters and service facilities, including estates, childcare facilities, residential accommodation, and graduation events.

3.2 The Student Disability Group (SDG) will be responsible for monitoring implementation on behalf of the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Executive Board. It will provide annual reports for these bodies and will advise them of any action that is required.

3.3 The SDG will carry out its monitoring activities by receiving annual reports from:

- The Systems Office and Careers Centre on Recruitment, Progression, Achievement and Employment of disabled students
- The Academic Policy and Quality Unit on disability issues identified and addressed by Approval and Periodic Review Panels and annual programme reviews
- The Advisers within each School and Directorate with specific responsibility for equal opportunities (see section 3.5 below) on disability issues identified and addressed by School Boards, Field Committees, School Learning and Teaching Committees, and Directorates
- The Directorate of Estates and Facilities Management on the implementation of the rolling programme of improvements and the identification of additional opportunities to alter premises to benefit disabled people
- The Student Disability Service
- The Equal Opportunities Officer
- The ‘Technology Working Group’ of SDG
- The Library’s ‘Disability Functional Group’
- The Directorate of Corporate Affairs based on the responses to optional questions on disability included in surveys of the student experience
- The Health and Safety Officer with particular reference to access and egress
- The Disability Representative of Oxford Brookes Students’ Union
- The Administrator (Student Procedures) with respect to student complaints where disability issues have been raised

3.4 Students will have recourse to the Student Complaint procedure where they believe that the University has failed to make, with respect to their particular case, the reasonable adjustments required by SENDA.
3.5 Within each School and Directorate, the Dean/Director will have responsibility for ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation with respect to Equal Opportunities and this will include disability issues. Advisers will be appointed to assist with the design and implementation of action plans to ensure compliance. These members of staff will all serve on the SDG.

3.6 Programme committees and School Boards will monitor the ways in which programmes meet the needs of disabled students through annual programme review. Approval and Periodic Review panels will also investigate the extent to which course teams have considered the implications of SENDA.

3.7 With respect to collaborative provision, the University will ensure through the Chair of ELPAG that partners responsible for the delivery of programmes on behalf of the University adhere to the aspects of this policy covering the curriculum, course delivery and facilities and to any associated guidance on practice.

Keith Cooper March, 2003