

DISABLED STUDENTS STAKEHOLDER GROUP MEETING (2005/02)
Tuesday 1st March 2005 at 9.30am, Donaldson House, Edinburgh

AGENDA

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising	Discussion
2. Update: Quality Indicators Toolkit	Discussion
3. Introduction: 'Review of Provision for students with disabilities' project	Introduction- FFL Discussion
4. Payment of Needs Assessment costs for students	Discussion
5. The future of the group and future agenda items	Discussion
6. Any Other Business	

**MINUTES OF THE DISABLED STUDENTS STAKEHOLDER GROUP MEETING
(2005/02): TUESDAY 1 MARCH 2005**

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting & Matters Arising

1.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the last meeting.

Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) for Postgraduate Students

1.2 The group were updated on the progress of the submission which went to the Minister earlier this year. DSA will be extended to full and part-time self-funded postgraduate students from academic year 2005-06.

ELS/DPG 18 Assessments

1.3 SFEFC proposed to email the group to gauge interest in forming a sub-group on this issue. Any group members with an interest in FE could become involved.

Non Medical Personal Help

1.4 FFL confirmed that they are liaising with SAAS and the OU in order to develop a paper on this. FFL plan to carry out a light-touch survey of institutions to gather information on current practices and procedure in relation to NMPH. The group

agreed that issues such as maternity leave, sick pay, and training for helpers would be particularly important issues for inclusion in the survey. FFL confirmed that they intend to draft this survey in consultation with the group, and that comments on the completed draft will be welcomed.

2. Update: Quality Indicators for Needs Assessments

2.1 The sub-group developed and sent a self-evaluation form to all institutions. FFL received 15 applications and five notes of interest by the deadline; these will be considered by the sub-group at a validation session on 8th March. No date has been set as yet for the next validation session, however the group considered that setting a date for 3 months hence would offer institutions sufficient notice to submit. FFL to report back at the next meeting, and SAAS to monitor the backlog of DSA applications.

3. Introduction: 'Review of Provision for Students with Disabilities' Project

3.1 The group discussed the Project Initiation Document (PID) for FFL's upcoming Review of Provision for Students with Disabilities, and outlined the scope of the project. The project will examine the two systems of support (FE and HE) to establish the differences between the two systems and the reasons for this, and will also consider options to improve the effective long-term use of the existing financial resource. Comments and feedback on the PID are welcome, and should be forwarded to FFL.

3.2 The group agreed that the project should focus both on funding to the student, and on institutional funding, and should address whether or not this method represents the most efficient use of funds. The group also suggested that issues around travel and eligibility for Disability Living Allowance (e.g. students with dyslexia/dyspraxia are not eligible to receive DLA) could be raised within the context of this project.

4. Discussion: Payment of Needs Assessment costs for students

4.1 NUS outlined the situation of a 2nd year HND student who believed they may be suffering from dyslexia. The student approached their college to pay for an assessment, however the college refused to pay. NUS are aware of such instances at more than one institution, and are seeking clarification on this.

4.2 The group discussed the issue and concluded that it is important to distinguish between diagnostic assessment and needs assessment. Institutions do not pay for diagnostic assessment, although it was suggested that Hardship Funds are sometimes used to cover this. To be awarded DSA, a diagnosis is needed as an evidence-base, although colleges should provide ELS for students who need this support. The group felt that this particular case was an example of bad practice, however they raised the point that diagnosis is a particularly useful thing to have, and that the student would have benefited from receiving confirmation of this. The group suggested that these issues could be addressed within the scope of the review of provision project, as a large percentage of DSA is paid for dyslexia support.

5. Discussion: the Future of the Group and Future Agenda Items

5.1 FFL outlined the fact that the group has no new issues to raise, and that the agenda will consist mainly of on-going work. The group was asked to consider the future in terms of whether we should continue meeting with the same frequency, to meet less often, or to disband. The group felt that a great deal of the on-going work was important, and that some significant matters, such as evaluation and monitoring of the Toolkit of Quality Indicators, have still to be completed and resolved.

5.2 The group felt that the sector requires a tangible reference group with whom issues and concerns can be raised, while a forum for issues and the exchange of ideas is a valuable resource. The general feeling was that the group should continue meeting, although less frequently, and that each meeting could focus on an individual issue, or consider a standing agenda with additional items being raised on an ad hoc basis. The group considered that the next meeting should focus on issues surrounding quality assurance in relation to the Toolkit.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 The issue of DSA for self-funding and international students was raised, and the group discussed this. The group considered that international students would have to apply to their home country for additional support, however the institution should still provide support and access to equipment for such students.

6.2 With regard to self-funding students, the group agreed that as the DSA is not means-tested, self-funded undergraduate students may still be eligible to receive DSA. Self-funded postgraduate students will be eligible to access DSA from academic year 2005-06, as outlined at paragraph 1.2 above. The group agreed that for further information and advice, students should be directed to SAAS.

6.3 No other items were raised for discussion.