

**MINUTES OF THE DISABLED STUDENTS STAKEHOLDER GROUP MEETING
(2006/02): THURSDAY 18TH MAY 2006**

2) Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1 The group discussed paragraph 3.2, the extension of BRITE to the HE sector. The group agreed that there was a desire from a number of attendees at the January dissemination workshops for a one-stop shop resource, similar to the resource base that BRITE provides for the FE sector, and that this was worth exploring further. The group agreed it would be useful to discuss this with Equalities Forward.

2.2 The minutes for the previous meeting were then agreed.

3) Update: Monitoring & Evaluation

3.1 Papers outlining the Monitoring and Evaluation of validated assessment centres were circulated prior to the meeting and the group were asked for comments. Members of the group raised a concern that the emphasis appeared to be on monitoring waiting times and money and that the reference to the student's experience in the process was not apparent in the monitoring and quality enhancement process.

3.2 A concern was raised over monitoring the time taken by the institution between referring the student for an assessment and the assessment actually taking place, as it was felt that it was not an accurate reflection of the situation in many universities. Many institutions now have provision for applicants to test out and borrow equipment in order to meet their needs. This would appear as a delay if statistics were collected as outlined in the report, however this delay is clearly valid as the institution has made improvements to their systems and the support they can offer by introducing a loan system.

FfL pointed out that the original reason for implementing the toolkit was to reduce the waiting time of students before an assessment took place at an Access Centre, not to reduce the overall time of the assessment itself, however it was important that we develop a way for this qualitative information to be collected.

3.3 A concern was raised with regard to the data that SAAS gathered, in that this was broken down into disability types, when there is a move away from categorising students in this way. FfL pointed out that this is what SAAS are able to produce at this moment in time, but that it will change as the process changes.

FfL to reword and circulate paper 02-02. AP

FfL pointed out that there will be a lot of responsibility and activity surrounding the implementation of the evaluation and quality enhancement strategy and that it will be very time consuming, so the idea of forming a subgroup was raised to co-ordinate and monitor the activities and feed back to the main stakeholder group. This sub group may work alongside the current validation panel or subsume the work of that group, FfL would be looking for volunteers for this.

4) Update: Toolkit Applications and Validation

4.1 FFL indicated that there was little to report at this stage, the closing date for new applications was 19th May, and so far 7 applications had been received in total from both the HE and FE sector.

The validation panel would be meeting on the 1st of June to discuss these applications and a further update will be given at the next DSSG meeting. **AP**

4.2 A point was raised regarding as to when institutions that are historically validated to carry out in house assessments will be required to go through the validation process. FFL indicated that a letter will be going out soon to confirm such institutions will have to apply to be validated through the toolkit within the next two years. FFL confirmed that the letter will also be issued to access centres very soon. **AP**

5) Update: Non Medical Personal Help

5.1 FFL explained that following the last meeting, a number of group members had volunteered to take part in a group discussion on this, and a subgroup had been set up on this to meet next week 23rd May

Issues to be discussed include:

- Employment issues
- Information and guidance
- Student survey
- Responsibility for training of support workers
- Disclosure Scotland reports
- Scope of the non medical personal help allowance, including field trips and the overall limit of the allowance

FFL clarified that we are looking at this with an emphasis on DSA, across both HE and FE sectors but that we would also have to consider non advanced students in colleges.

6) Students With Complex Needs: Accessing Appropriate Provision in Scotland

6.1 Skill brought this paper to the table, they had been contacted by two families, where the home local authorities were refusing to help fund students taking courses in another LA area. The group were asked for comments on these cases as it appears different local authorities have different policies. Skill also asked for suggestions on improving and interpreting the available guidance.

6.2 FFL replied that there was a statutory obligation through the social work department of the home local authority to provide continuing personal support. FAED expanded on this indicating that the "Partnership Matters" agreement should be used to determine the roles and responsibilities of the local authority and college. FAED advised that the Partnership Matters documents is about to be revised and cases such as this may form helpful case studies. FAED are also working on raising awareness of the document.

6.3 FFL voiced the idea of a social work representative to be invited onto the group. FFL advised that they will consider the membership of the group and invite additional members, for example a representative from Social Work and from Equalities Forward. **AP**

7) Any Other Business

7.1 FFL proposed that due to all the subgroups and seminars taking place in the next few months, that the stakeholder group become a twice yearly meeting. This was agreed, and the next meeting proposed for October or November.

7.3 FFL also sought volunteers to host part 2 of the next meeting. Interested groups should let FFL know as soon as possible.

8) Action Points

- ❖ FFL to reword the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy, to be circulated to group members again for comments, before being sent to institutions. Group members should also indicate if they wish to join the sub group to take this forward.
- ❖ FFL to update group on outcome of validation panel on 1st June.
- ❖ FFL to send out letter to all historically validated institutions and Access Centres to confirm that they will have to apply to be a validated centre.
- ❖ FFL to consider social work representative for the group and invite Equalities Forward to join

Part 2

1) Group Discussion: Review of the Disabled Students Premium and the Wider Review of the SFC Premiums

1.1 The Scottish Funding Council gave a presentation outlining the key areas of review and, more specifically, the Disabled Students Premium.

They explained that the review of the SFC premiums was taking place within the context of the over all teaching funding review, for 2010/11, where possible, changes that can be made with minimal disruption to institutions are hoped to be included in the 2007-2008 funding round.

They are looking at the 6 main premiums, 3 for FE (non advanced courses in Colleges) entry cost, social inclusion and achievement and 3 for HE in Universities, the disabled student premium, the part-time incentive and the widening access premiums..

Anna indicated that she would be also meeting with the SFEU Strategy group, Universities Scotland advisory group, Scottish Universities Association of lifelong learning group, and SFEU strategic group.

SFC then went on to give some background information on the premium and the method used in the allocation of the funds. The premium was introduced in 2001/02 to assist with the additional costs of supporting disabled students. The premium was always to 'assist' and was never intended to be the primary or only source of funding. The 2006-07 funding is based on 2004-05 HESA data and the budget is £2,255,000.

They then outlined the key issues, including the need for a premium and whether there is a necessity to place a premium on the number of disabled students in HEIs. Also, how is the premium being used in terms of supporting individual institutions to address disability. The major issue is the method of allocation. SFC were looking for input into the most appropriate and robust measures available to them.

1.2 The group then went on to discuss the key issues.

A concern was expressed over the “ring-fencing” of the funds and the importance of good management and accountability was stressed.

SFC were asked if there were any plans to carry out systemic research on the data. They advised that they used to get reports on how the premium was used but that they moved away from this to give institutions more autonomy.

SFC highlighted a possible option that the premium could be rolled into core funding but the SFC were concerned about how to highlight disability. They could make it a condition of grant however the group felt this might not be necessary, as institutions have legal obligations,

1.3 The issue of how the funds were allocated (based on the DSA applications from previous 2 years) was discussed, and if a more robust theory could be considered, for example a ratio basis on general student numbers or using HESA data on all disabled students, not just those in receipt of DSA.

The group felt it would be a good idea for SFC to be more proactive and ask institutions how they intend to use the premium, perhaps linking this into institution’s disability equality duties.

1.4 SFC asked if the amount was an issue. It was discussed that money was obviously important, but so is the message that goes with it. SFC allow institutions to implement their own methodology as to how best to use the funding and do not applying restrictions, so that it can be all inclusive.

1.5 SFC thanked the group for their comments. They informed the group that they would be meeting with lots of other groups from various agencies, before a formal consultation would be carried out. It was agreed that there would be an update at the next meeting.