

MODULE 4

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INTRODUCTION

Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs) work for university disability services. University disability services and wider student support services, help students so that they are able to do their best and achieve their goals, play a full part in university life and be well prepared for their future.

Disability liaison officers can help you with anything relating to your disability and any effects there may be on your academic work directly, within your School of Study or Faculty and more broadly in being a part of the community. Disability liaison officers can also assist you in sign-posting to other University services who can assist with specific questions or difficulties.

TERMINOLOGY

- ✓ Access officer
- ✓ Disability AO
- ✓ Disability Liaison Officer
- ✓ Access Liaison Officer

THE ROLE OF A DISABILITY LIAISON OFFICER

The help a disability liaison officer could offer you may include some or all of the following:

- ✓ Information and advice on planning for university life and study
- ✓ Specialist study skills tuition
- ✓ Access and accommodation requirements
- ✓ Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) applications and process
- ✓ Assessment of study support needs
- ✓ Examination arrangements

- ✓ Accessing to relevant local services and advice to your home Social Services providers
- ✓ Provision additional study support
- ✓ Loan laptops and other equipment
- ✓ Assistance for Fresher's Week and with registration if required
- ✓ Campus orientation
- ✓ Liaison with Faculties and Schools of Study

It is important to make contact with the disability liaison officer linked to all the universities you are applying to. This is to make them aware of you so that they can make arrangements to make sure your needs can be met during your visits to the university and any interviews.

Once you have accepted a place at a university, the disability liaison officer will want to arrange a meeting with you to get a good understanding of your disability and how it affects you. This is so that any specialist equipment can be ordered and access arrangements can be made to help you during your time at university.

Depending on your disability, you may be offered help such as:

- ✓ Specialist equipment or software
- ✓ Concessions for parking
- ✓ Exam access arrangement
- ✓ Advice and support if events or things have affected your study
- ✓ Temporary mobility support
- ✓ Sticker schemes that allow you to alert those marking your work that you have a specific learning difficulty or autistic spectrum disorder

Who do they work for?

Disability liaison officers work for universities.

Who is this service for?

University disability services are available to all students who have a condition that has a substantial adverse effect on the conduct of daily life.

How can you contact a disability liaison officer?

Search the websites of the universities you are applying to for 'disability'. All university websites give information about their support for students with disabilities and how to get in touch.

LEGISLATION FOR DISABILITIES

International legislation document:

- ✓ CRPD
- ✓ The disability act 2005

National legislation document:

- ✓ Legislation of RT for disabilities rights (2010).

***DLO* key policy documents**

- ✓ National Disability Strategy
- ✓ National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan
- ✓ Strategy for mental health services.
- ✓ Sectoral Plans

LIAISON OFFICER'S POLICY

Type of support of Disabilities

There are a whole range of supports available to students with disabilities in third level and these are very much decided based on the needs of the individual student. However there are common supports given to students with certain types of disability and we've gathered some of them below to give you an idea of what's out there. It's important to note that this is not an exhaustive list and if you have a disability, it's not by any means certain that you will get these exact supports as they are decided on an individual basis in consultation with the disability support service.

Click the disability types below to see some of the common supports a person might receive drop down. Student who fall into these categories may require one or a combination of these supports.

Loop system: available in many universities. There is a range of assistive devices available for deaf and hard of hearing students, and if you are not aware of the best device for you, you should make enquiries with the DLO in your organization or institution.

Sign-language interpreter: there is a shortage of qualified sign-language interpreters in Ireland, and consequently, some universities may provide sign-language interpreters for tutorials and selected lectures, while some may not be able to make this costly provision at all.

Speed Text Captioning of Lectures: this service provides live transcription of what the lecturer is saying either to a large screen in the lecture room or directly on to a laptop in front of the student.

Transcription of audio-recorded lecture: this is a commonly used method whereby the student gets permission to record lectures and arrangements are made to transcribe the audio-tape to text.

Copies of lecture's notes and/or overheads: students may ask lecturers for their lecture notes and overheads. Some students ask for these before the lecture is delivered so that they can follow the lecture more easily.

Note-taker: a classmate or professional note taker may be employed to take notes for hard of hearing students during lectures, or may offer to make carbon copies of her or his notes for the student.

Extra time in Exams to complete each exam paper: the amount of extra time candidates may be allowed will depend on her or his individual disability needs.

Separate examination rooms and invigilators: this facility may be useful if the candidate is using assistive technology, or requires extra time, or is using an educational support worker (PA) or sign language interpreter.

Exam Spelling & Grammar Allowance: given by the examiner for poor grammar and spelling due to educational disadvantages that a deaf or hard of hearing student experiences e.g. English not being first language.

Video-recorded signed examination: the candidate answers the examination questions through sign which is video-recorded for transcription to text.

Not all universities provide all the facilities listed above. However, individual universities are striving towards best practices for students with disabilities. Students must, however, check what facilities are provided and negotiate for appropriate supports with the Disability Officer and/or the Examination Office.

Before starting university they should

Arrange a mobility orientation of the university prior to the start of term so they can become familiar with the routes to and from lectures, the canteen, the library, the student union offices, etc.

Arrange to meet the Disability Liaison Officer for a demonstration of the relevant technology and facilities available.

Check that their own equipment works and, if necessary, that it is compatible with the technology used in the university

Common educational supports for blind and partially sighted students include:

Priority registration: students with disabilities may be allowed to register early each academic year.

Assistive Technology: there is a comprehensive range of assistive technology that blind and partially sighted students may use, such as screen reading technology like Jaws and Magnifying Software like ZoomText. Text to Speech and Screen Reading software allow a blind student to browse the internet, read and write documents and perform other computer related tasks.

Alternative Format Textbooks: most universities will provide blind students with their textbooks in an alternative format. Mostly these take the form

of electronic formats which can be read using screen reading software. In some cases students will require books in Braille - be sure to notify your Disability/Access Office of this as early as possible as the conversion process is time consuming and costly.

Reader Service: access to course material as an audio file. Some universities provide a reader service. The required texts are read and recorded either by volunteers or paid staff.

Recording of lectures: lectures are audio recorded and later used by the students to take notes or make Braille transcriptions.

Copies of lecture notes and overheads: these may be provided on request from the lecturer/tutor, and can be converted to Braille or audio recorded.

Time extension on out-of-lecture assignments: on essays, fieldwork, projects etc. Due to the impact of a disability a student may be able to avail of a deadline extension for assignments but they need to be aware that this can lead to an accumulation of assignments.

Use of a Computer and Assistive Technology in Exams: The exam paper is provided in an electronic format and the student can read and complete it using assistive tech such as Jaws Screen Reader and Kurzweil. For those with partial sight, magnifying software may be required.

Dictation to an examiner: person being dictated to should have a good working knowledge of the subject matter being examined.

Dictation to voice recorder and later transcribed: the candidate dictates to a voice recorder the examination answers which are later transcribed to text by university personnel.

A Reader: will read and re-read the entire or any part of the examination paper as well as any part of the candidate's text as requested.

Extra time to complete each examination paper: the amount of extra time candidates may be allowed will depend on her or his individual disability needs.

Separate examination rooms and invigilators: this facility may be useful if the student is using assistive technology, or requires extra time, special furniture or is using an educational support worker (PA) or sign language interpreter.

Not all universities provide all the facilities listed above. However, individual universities are striving towards best practices for students with disabilities. Students must, however, check what facilities are provided and negotiate for appropriate supports with the Disability/Access Officer and/or the Examination Office.

Common educational supports for students with specific learning:

Priority registration: students with disabilities may be allowed to register at an earlier time to general registration each academic year.

Reader service: some universities provide a reader service. The required texts are read and recorded onto tape either by volunteers or paid staff.

Use of audio-tape to record lectures and tutorials: permission to record lectures and tutorials must be sought from the lecturer and tutor.

Assistive technology: a range of assistive technology packages and devices are available which are very useful to students with specific learning difficulties. The most common piece of hardware is the Livescribe Smartpen which allows you to write key points and simultaneously record lectures which can then be downloaded to a computer

Alternative Format Textbooks: some universities will provide textbooks in an electronic format which can be read using screen reading software

Copies of lecturer's notes and/or overheads: students may ask lecturers for their lecture notes and overheads. Some students ask for these before the lecture is delivered so that they can follow the lecture more easily. However, it is important to note that some lecturers speak from notes that are meaningless to anyone but themselves, whilst some may not use notes at all. Others may be unwilling for their own reasons, good or otherwise, to let anyone see their notes. Students must be prepared for these situations.

Notetaker: a classmate may be employed to take notes for a student who has difficulty writing, or may offer to make carbon copies of her or his notes for the student.

Time extension on assignments: on essays, fieldwork, projects etc. If obtaining time extensions students need to be aware that this can lead to an accumulation of assignments

Study skills and Learning Support: many institutions provide courses on study skills for students who feel they need extra help in writing and research techniques, spelling and time-management.

Extra time to complete each examination paper: the amount of extra time candidates may be allowed will depend on her or his individual disability needs. Extra time is allowed for poor reading and writing speeds and for some editing.

Invigilator/reader: The availability of an invigilator or other suitable person to read the examination paper to the student.

Use of a Computer and Assistive Technology in Exams: The student may be allowed to complete their exam on a computer with the aid of assistive software such as Read & Write Gold

Spelling and grammar allowance: this is given by the examiner to accommodate for the educational disadvantages experienced by students with a specific learning disability resulting in poor grammar and spelling. Not all universities provide all the facilities listed above. However, individual universities

are striving towards best practices for students with disabilities. Students must, however, check with the Disability/Access Officer and/or the Examination Office what facilities are provided and negotiate for appropriate supports.

Before starting university

Students who require wheelchair access should make direct contact with the university of their choice to check how accessible the buildings are, and to give the university an opportunity to make the necessary modifications in time. Only a few of the universities are fully wheelchair accessible but efforts are being made by individual universities to address this problem. It is useful to visit the university before the start of term for mobility orientation, as the first weeks on-campus are crowded and can be extremely disorienting for some students.

Common educational supports for students with mobility impairments:

Priority registration: students with disabilities may be allowed to register at an earlier time to general registration each academic year.

Personal Assistant (PA): universities may provide personal assistants for students who require assistance during the day.

Reader Service: some universities provide a reader service. The required texts are read and audio recorded by volunteers or paid staff.

Recording of lectures: lectures are audio recorded and later used by the students to take notes or transcribe.

Copies of lecture's notes and/or overheads: students may ask lecturers for their notes and overheads. Some students ask for these before the lecture is delivered so that they can follow the lecture more easily.

Notetaker: a classmate or professional note taker may be employed to take notes for a student who has difficulty writing, or may offer to make carbon copies of her or his notes for the student.

Time extension on assignments: on essays, fieldwork, projects etc. If obtaining time extensions students need to be aware that this can lead to an accumulation of assignments.

Assistive Technology: there are various hardware and software devices which enable a student with a mobility impairment who otherwise could not, to use a computer for reading, writing and browsing the web.

Extra time to complete each examination paper: the amount of extra time candidates may be allowed will depend on her or his individual disability needs.

Separate examination rooms and invigilators: this facility may be useful if the student is using assistive technology, or requires extra time, special furniture or is using an educational support worker (PA) or sign language interpreter.

Rest Periods: some candidates may require a break(s) during the examination.

Dictation to an examiner: (someone to whom you dictate your examination answers). Dictation may be used if a mobility impairment affects the candidate's ability to write the examination. Person being dictated to should have a good working knowledge of the subject matter being examined.

A Reader: will read and re-read the entire or any part of the examination paper as well as any part of the candidate's text as requested.

Personal Assistant: a student may require the assistance of a P.A. during the examination, however, the P.A. will be available only to assist with personal functions. However, if approved by the university authorities, the P.A. may also dictate answers.

Chair supports: for students who have difficulties in sitting for long periods.

Chest-high desk: particularly useful for students who use wheelchairs. A chest high desk provides comfortable desk space for the examination as the student does not have to reach over the desk.

Architect-type table: for students who have difficulty sitting in a conventional manner at a desk.

Good circulation space: students using a wheelchair will need a clear space around them, allowing freedom to move without disrupting others.

Availability of nurse/medical aid: generally available at examination centres for all students.

Not all universities provide all the facilities listed above. However, individual universities are striving towards best examination practices for candidates with disabilities. Students must, however, check with the Disability/Access Officer and/or the Examination Office what facilities are provided and negotiate for appropriate supports.

Common educational supports include

Recording of lectures: lectures are recorded on audio-tape and later used by the students to take notes or transcribe.

Copies of lecturer's notes and/or overheads: students may ask lecturers for their notes and presentations. Some students ask for these before the lecture is delivered so that they can follow the lecture more easily. It is important to note that some lecturers speak from notes that are meaningless to anyone but themselves, whilst some may not use notes at all. Others may be unwilling for their own reasons, good or otherwise, to let anyone see their notes. Students must be prepared for these situations.

Notetaker: a classmate or professional note-taker may be employed to take notes for a student who has a difficulty in writing or who perhaps has missed lectures due to illness.

Time extension on assignments: on essays, fieldwork, projects etc. If obtaining time extensions students need to be aware that this can lead to an accumulation of assignments

Priority registration: students with disabilities may be allowed to register at an earlier time to general registration each academic year.

Extra time in Exams to complete each paper: the amount of extra time candidates may be allowed will depend on her or his individual disability needs. Standard amount of extra time is 10-15 minutes per hour.

A Reader: will read and re-read the entire or any part of the examination paper as well as any part of the candidate's text as requested.

Dictation to audio-tape and later transcribed: the examination answers are recorded for transcription to text.

Alternative Venue for Exams: for medical reasons a student may require an alternative venue for examinations.

Rest Periods during Exams: for medical reasons some candidates may require a break(s) during the examination.

Not all institutions provide all the facilities listed above. However, individual universities are striving towards best practices for students with disabilities. Students must check what facilities are provided and negotiate for appropriate supports with the Disability/Access Officer and/or the Examination Office.

SUMMARY

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