

Learner Support Team – Review of Activities and Development

End of Year Review for Academic Year 06- 07

- As mentioned in the last report there has been a major increase in the workload of the learner support team due to a 33% increase in 1st year students registering a disability. This is in line with the overall increase in 1st year undergraduates.
- Dyslexia Screening - A total of 40 students attended a dyslexia screening test and feedback session. Students were invited for screening as a result of:
 - indicating that they thought that they were dyslexic on arrival at HAUC
 - undertaking the induction dyslexia self assessment checklist
 - self referral (this included 10 students from other years)As a result of screening, 58% went forward for a dyslexia diagnostic assessment.
- A total of 53 diagnostic assessments were undertaken – this was a 33% increase compared to last year. Each assessment took on average 3 hours. Assessments were undertaken by an freelance assessor who had to meet the standards set out by the Dept for Education and Skills (DfES).
- HAUC is a satellite centre of High Peak Assessment Centre, which is registered with the National Association of Assessment Centres. Students can therefore, have an assessment of study needs at HAUC, as part of their application for the Disabled Students' Allowance. A total of 65 study skills needs assessments were undertaken, a 58% increase from last year.
- Study Skills - A total of 11 workshops were run over the year with 52 students attending. The workshops were held at lunchtime and they were open to all students. Workshops were advertised via posters, leaflets and emails. (Profile of students attending: 1st-27 , 2nd – 4, 3rd-7 ,4th- 14). In addition, a further 9 study skills workshops were held in class at the request of senior tutors.
- 1:1 study skills - A total of 430 individual sessions were undertaken, which is a small increase of 4 % over the previous year. 308 sessions were undertaken with students with dyslexia. The profile of who attended the 1:1 study skills was very different from last year with many more first year dyslexic students attending these sessions. 31 1st year students attended these sessions compared with 13 in the previous year. This may be due to the new location in the Aspire centre with a central booking system.

One of the aims over the last year was to promote individual sessions to all students other than those students with dyslexia. This was achieved with a 43% increase in these sessions. (The majority attended between 1-5 sessions).

JISC – liaised with JISC who worked with a student with dyspraxia to produce a podcast re accessibility issues. The podcast was then to be made available on the JISC website for university tutors in the West Midlands who were interested in IT accessibility issues.

Administration - due to the increase in workload, Catherine Blazier is now supporting the administration of Learner Support fulltime. This change of role will be reviewed after 6 months.

Staff Training – All staff were trained in June in the use of colour overlays for visual stress which means that we can offer it as part of our service.

Dyslexia Adult Screening Test (DAST) - This year 18 students also had a DAST. This is offered to students who may have a borderline probability of dyslexia as a result of the computer screening. It provides the student with more accurate information but the screening is on a 1:1 basis and therefore takes longer. No DAST tests were offered in the previous year so this has been an extension of the service.

Learner Support Survey - As part of obtaining feedback on our service Kath Leigh interviewed 16 students on an informal basis and collated the feedback. It was decided that it would be beneficial to have someone outside the LST undertake the survey. Overall the feedback was very positive with students indicating that the LST encouraged and supported learners to overcome their difficulties, was well organised, worked efficiently and communicated exceptionally. There were some issues regarding the booking system with students indicating that tutors were often booked up. It was agreed to ensure that students understood that they needed to book at least 3 days in advance and that the service would be monitored to see if we were meeting the target of a 1:1 appointment within 3 working days. Also, some students indicated that not all students were aware that the service was aware to non dyslexic students so we need to be aware of this when promoting our service.

Screening service for AMTRA students – Jane Hill is offering an Adult Dyslexia Screening Test (DAST) for students taking AMTRA exams. This is a fee paying service and depending on the results of the test, students may be eligible for extra time in their AMTRA exams only. This is an arrangement only with HAUC and students are advised, if appropriate, where they can undertake a full diagnostic assessment.

Updating of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy - The Learning and Teaching Policy for Students with Disabilities and Guidance for Staff has been updated to take account of changes in legislation and at HAUC.

Disability Awareness Training – 3 disability awareness sessions were held in conjunction with diversity awareness for new staff including new wardens.

Jane Hill, October 2007