

4. Course development, programme planning, approval and review

► **Who might find this checklist useful?**

Academic Boards, Faculty Boards, Teaching & Learning Policy Committees, Deans and Heads of Departments/Schools, Approval and Validation Offices, Approval Panels, Undergraduate and Post-graduate Programme Committees, Programme Teams, Subject Group Heads, Subject Assessment Panels, Award Assessment Boards, Partnership Management Committees, Faculty Partnership Liaison Monitoring Committees, Faculty Partnership Managers, Faculty liaison staff, Quality and Standards Committees, Information and Learning Services, and new staff on induction.

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► What the SENDA Code of Practice requires

5.6 Responsible bodies should not wait until a disabled person applies to do a course or tries to use a Service before thinking about what reasonable adjustments they could make. Instead they should continually be anticipating the requirements of disabled people or students and the adjustments they could be making for them (to):

- teaching, including classes, lectures, seminars, practical sessions
- curriculum design
- examinations and assessments
- field trips and outdoor education
- arranging study abroad or work placements
- research degrees and research facilities
- distance learning
- independent learning opportunities such as e-learning
- learning facilities such as classrooms, lecture theatres, laboratories, studios, darkrooms, etc.
- learning equipment and materials such as laboratory equipment, computer facilities, class handouts, etc
- libraries, learning centres and information centres and their resources
- information and communication technology and resources. (3.14)

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● **What the QAA Code of Practice for Students with Disabilities recommends**

Precept 8

Programme specifications should include no unnecessary barriers to access by disabled people. Institutions should consider establishing procedures which ensure that:

- The setting and/or amendment of academic and other programme requirements during approval or validation processes includes well-informed considerations of the requirements of disabled students;
 - Programme specifications and descriptions give sufficient information to enable students with disabilities and staff to make informed decisions about the ability to complete the programme.
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■ What students say about current practice

Kirsten - Arts and Humanities - Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

I wish, when they are planning courses, that someone would think about the overall scheme from the point of view of the time tabling of assignments. On my modular course there were three lengthy pieces of work all due in the last fortnight of term and we simply didn't have the information to tackle them any earlier. Everyone was burning the midnight oil but I was completely exhausted and I had to make a special case for two late submissions. It was dreadful.

Parvinder - Arts and Humanities - mental health problem

I have had so much absence from the course this year because of my health problems that I haven't really felt that I was actually that involved. Quite honestly it would have been much better for me if I could have taken two terms to do the work and then I would have achieved something positive. As it is a lot of my very limited energy has gone on applying for extenuating circumstances, which I have had to do on numerous separate occasions.

Mark - Technology - visual impairment

Much of the time I feel like a square peg in a round hole. Doing a degree is something like an obstacle race. Sure, it has to be challenging for all of us, but the basic framework for my course just isn't friendly when you have a loss of sight. The course software isn't compatible with my enabling technology, the staff don't know how to operate the two systems together, the computer with the large monitor is never in the lab when I need it and I always feel like I'm complaining.

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* What staff say about current practice

- I think there would be a real value in exploring the possibility of officially longer degree routes for students with some disabilities involving stamina problems, although I suppose that will create difficulties when for funding purposes degrees are regarded as "full-time".
- There are a lot of advantages to what is now being called "problem based learning". Developing a more student-centred approach to course programmes, encouraging dialogue and collaboration amongst the students, is a promising direction in my view. Many disabled students often have an interesting and non-standard approach which, if managed properly in the context of team working and peer assessment, can be very fruitful indeed.
- As a department we need to think long and hard about whether our current teaching styles, course materials and assessment tasks allow students with disabilities the necessary opportunities to demonstrate their acquisition of the learning outcomes, in a way that is perceived as a level playing field.

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Checklist

Policies and frameworks for curriculum development

What is the mechanism for ensuring that SENDA compliance is addressed in the relevant policy making committees of the institution?

What is the procedure for ensuring that anticipatory "reasonable adjustments" will be made to make the broad curriculum accessible, through the development, approval and review of courses/programmes?

What procedures have been adopted to ensure that all staff involved in course/programme development, approval, review and delivery are aware of their responsibilities under the SENDA?

How will responsibilities under SENDA be monitored and reviewed?

What mechanisms exist to ensure that inconsistencies in policies and practices between faculties, schools, departments and courses are identified and rectified as part of Quality Standards?

Development, approval and review of programmes and courses in HEIs

Approval Panels

Do approval panels include a disability specialist to address issues of SENDA compliance?

Do members of the approval panel have opportunities during the approval process to inspect programme-related facilities for disabled students?

Do reports from the approval panel identify the fact that satisfactory and/or unsatisfactory measures are in place for the access of students with disabilities? In what ways is approval contingent upon satisfying such criteria?

What are the SENDA compliance procedures for proposals that do not constitute new programmes but do involve some form of approval process?

Programme/Course Teams

Has the course team demonstrated that the learning, teaching and support elements of programmes/courses are accessible to students with disabilities?

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Checklist

In particular has consideration been given to the accessibility of:

- Preparing documents for printing, visual display and electronic dissemination
- Lectures, seminars and tutorials
- Fieldwork
- Laboratory, workshops and other practice-based environments
- Placement learning
- Assessments

➔ **Go to the checklist for each of the above.**

Is it made clear in the resource base and specialist facilities underpinning the course/programme what is available to support the delivery to disabled students?

In the mapping of assessment to learning outcomes, is there clear evidence of the availability of alternative assessment tasks, to meet the needs of a range of students with disabilities?

➔ **Go to Assessments.**

Is the range, loading and time-tabling of assessments suitable for disabled students?

Has discussion taken place with the relevant professional body to seek their views on the "reasonable adjustments" that may be made to teaching and learning, and assessment?

➔ **Go to Professional Bodies.**

What procedures are used to ensure that "reasonable adjustments" have been made to non-campus locations for accessibility, e.g., off-site, placement and overseas?

Have additional support providers external to HEIs been identified by course teams, e.g., RNIB transcription service, the tactile diagram service, etc.?

Joint University Programmes

Where joint-universities' programmes are involved, have arrangements been made to ensure parity of provision for disabled students across institutions?

If a memorandum of co-operation is to be adopted for a joint-university programme, how will SENDA compliance be addressed?

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Checklist

Programme approval and review in college partnership and sub-contracting situations

Who has responsibility for SENDA compliance amongst the relevant faculty liaison staff?

During consultation with partners, what arrangements will be made to ensure that resources and staff expertise at the partner institution is SENDA compliant?

In the supporting documentation for a sub-contracted programme, e.g., liaison report forms, what evidence of SENDA compliance will be reported? In what ways is approval contingent upon satisfying such criteria?

Does the form of contract offered to partner institutions recognise the significance of the partners' EO policies?

Does the partnership arrangement mean that the teaching and other services supplied are made by or on behalf of the institution? If so, have accessibility issues been discussed and have "reasonable adjustments" been made? Where does responsibility for this lie?

➔ **Go to Admissions; Placement Learning.**

How will the HEI disability support service be involved in establishing liaison and support arrangements at partner institutions?

Accredited programmes and accredited partners

If a memorandum of co-operation is to be adopted between partner institutions, how will SENDA compliance be addressed?

With accredited programmes designed and delivered solely in a partner institution, what reporting and monitoring arrangements are in place for SENDA compliance?

Definitive documentation for programmes and awards including student handbooks, etc.

Does the definitive documentation/student handbook include reference to accessibility in the areas of teaching and learning, and assessment, including reference to alternative arrangements?

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◆ Checklist

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Does the definitive documentation/student handbook show that the course development team have clearly applied mechanisms which do not discriminate against disabled students but, where necessary, have made anticipatory "reasonable adjustments" at the following points of reference:

- teaching and learning
- range and flexibility of assessment methods
- programme, pathways and structures
- learning environment?

What reference is made for disabled students to any specialist support in departments and other services such as libraries, open access computing suites, etc.?

Are students advised of the presence of the disability support service, its location and role?

Is a statement included on the availability of the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)?

Is mention made of specialist external sources of support?

Are disabled students advised of the availability of flexible study modes in circumstances where, because of disability, they might need to transfer to part-time study or make a year deferral?

Is the definitive documentation/student handbook in an accessible format and/or available in alternative formats?

➔ **Go to Preparing documents for printing, visual display and electronic dissemination.**

Have the necessary enquiries been made of students to ensure that the format of the documents produced meets their needs?

➔ **Go to Appendix I: Positive communication.**

Staff development

Is there staff development for new and existing staff on disability awareness and inclusive practice? How is the experience of staff fed back into the staff development review?

Student evaluation

What are the procedures for acquiring feedback from disabled students about courses and how is it applied to course reviews and future course planning?

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+ Additional sources of information

Auditing for Change, (2000), Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities, London.

Available from:

Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities
Chapter House
18-20 Crucifix Lane
London
SE1 3JW

Telephone	0800 328 5050
Textphone	0800 068 2422
Email	info@skill.org.uk
Website	www.skill.org.uk

Case Studies in Problem-based Learning (PBL) from Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences, (2001), Planet, Learning and Teaching Support Network, Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences. Available at: <http://www.gees.ac.uk>

Changing the Culture. Addressing the needs of disabled students, (2001), Mike Adams, Update on Inclusion: Widening participation in higher education. (Issue No. 3)

Inclusive practices for students with disabilities: a guide for academic staff, (2000), Universities Disabilities Cooperative Project, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, New South Wales, Australia.

Teachability - Creating an Accessible Curriculum for Students with Disabilities, (2000), Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, University of Strathclyde, Strathclyde.