



Disability Equality at LSE: students with disabilities a practical guide

The diversity of students and the variety of needs to be addressed in learning, teaching and assessment is growing. This leaflet specifically aims to provide guidance to academic staff on the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and give information to all those involved in teaching students at the School. Summary guidance for lecturers, personal tutors, class teachers and supervisors is given on matters to consider when adapting their teaching to the needs of students with disabilities.

Every member of staff has a personal and institutional duty under the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, Part 4 to:

- not treat students with disabilities less favourably than other students
- make **reasonable adjustments** where disabled students might otherwise be placed at a substantial disadvantage.

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 introduces a new duty to promote disability equality as a systematic whole – organisational approach. The LSE Disability Equality Scheme will be published in November 2006.

LSE Policy on Disability Equality

The London School of Economics and Political Science is committed to complying with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) by:

- Maximising accessibility to the School's services and activities for staff, students, alumni, visitors, and prospective staff and students with disabilities, and to ensure that no-one is treated less favourably on the grounds of disability.
- Developing a culture of inclusion and diversity in which people feel free to disclose a disability, should they wish to do so, and to discuss reasonable adjustments in order to promote equal participation in the School's services and activities. In adherence to the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA 1998), such information shall be passed on only with consent and where there is a legitimate reason to do so.

LSE Policy on Disability Equality (continued)

- Reviewing, monitoring and revising, as appropriate, all School systems, procedures, facilities, services and buildings in compliance with the DDA and SENDA in addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA), which includes the right not be denied access to education.
- Creating, maintaining and disseminating information about services, support and facilities available for staff, students, alumni, visitors and prospective staff and students with disabilities.
- For the purpose of this policy, the term 'disability' has the same meaning as that given in the DDA and SENDA:
 - *'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'*
 - In recognition of evolving case law, this includes, but is not limited to: *sensory impairments, learning disabilities, mental illness, clinically recognised severe disfigurements, cancer, HIV/Aids, progressive conditions even at an early stage, conditions which are characterised by a number of cumulative effects such as pain or fatigue and a past history of disability.*

Students with disabilities at the LSE

The profile of students with known disabilities at the LSE changes with each intake.

Case work with individual students and individual support	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Students with 'current' files in the Disability Office	120	300	440	434
One-to-one appointments with disability adviser	377	518	570	694
Number of formal assessments arranged for students with possible dyslexia	9	31	45	52
Dyslexia	50%	49%	49%	30%
Other medical conditions or impairments, including known mental health problems	24%	26%	44%	63%
Mobility impairment	14%	18%	3%	2%
Visual impairment	7%	5%	2%	3%
Hearing impairment	5%	2%	2%	2%

The Disability Office

The Disability Office has a full-time advisor, administrator, mental health and well being advisor, and a part-time dyslexia tutor, working within the Teaching and Learning Centre to co-ordinate the School's action on disability equality and to advise disabled students. Referral and self-referral to the Disability Office is open at any point during a student's time at LSE, when an interview will be arranged and, if necessary, an **Individual Student Support Agreement (ISSA)** will be drawn up and circulated (with the signed consent of the student) to agree 'reasonable adjustments' in order for the student to access studies and services at LSE (see page 9) .

In addition, the Disability Office liaises with other sections of the School and direct practical support for students is provided by a combination of peer group support from students who join the **LSE Circles Network** and a **Community Service Volunteer**.

The Disability Office reports to the Disability Consultative Forum, chaired by the Deans and report to the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee and Student Affairs Committee and contributes to strategic planning, staff development and works with SKILL (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities), Disability Rights Commission (DRC), and the National Disability Team (NDT) of HEFCE.

Students are encouraged to disclose a disability at the earliest opportunity in the admissions and registration process, in order to discuss and arrange any reasonable adjustments which may be necessary. This is recorded in an Individual Student Support Agreement (ISSA) which is copied to relevant School personnel, with explicit permission of the student.

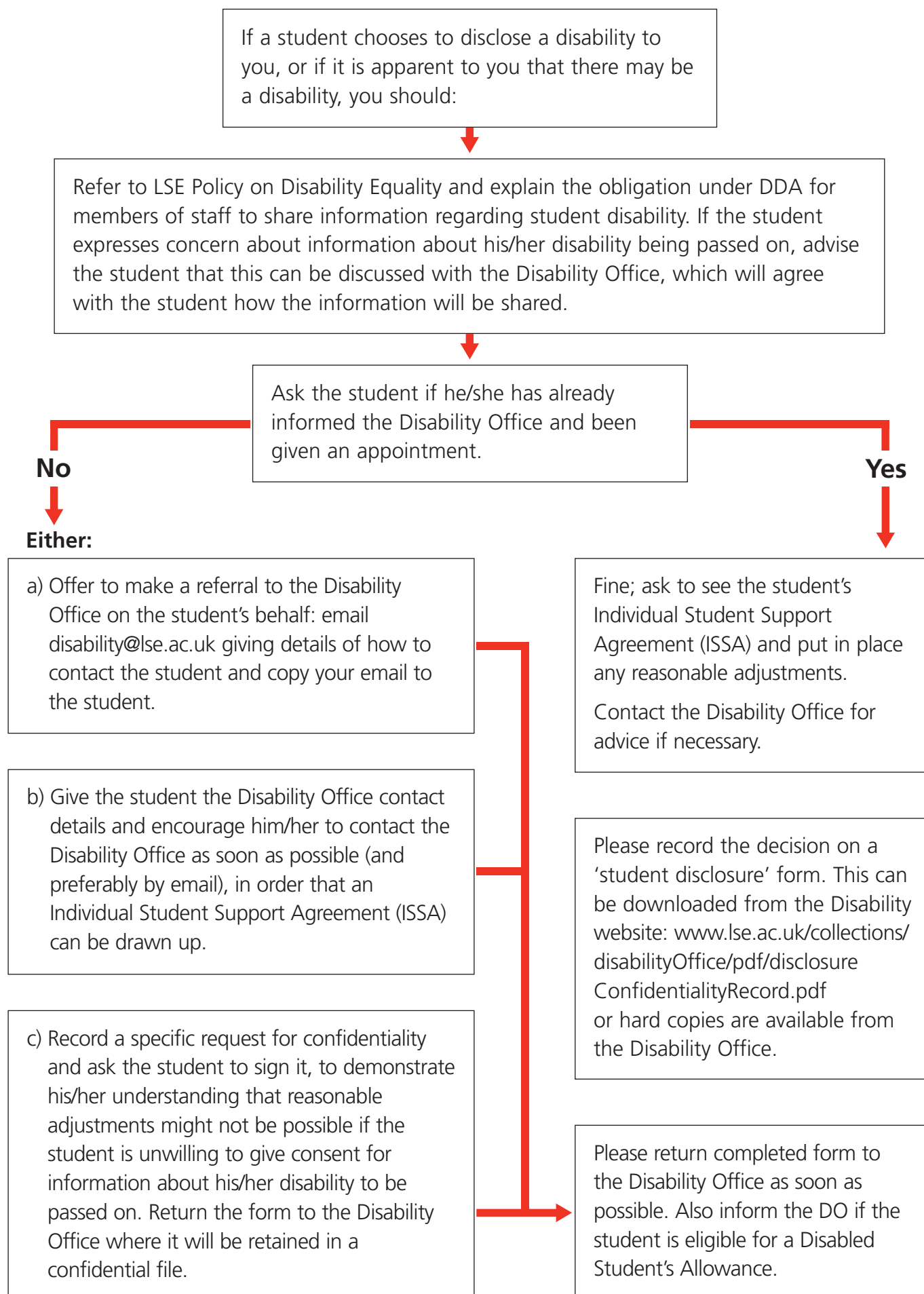
However, some students may become disabled, or choose to disclose a disability, at any time during their course, to any member of staff. It is important for that information to be shared with the Disability Office, either by encouraging the student to do so, or by the member of staff contacting the Disability Office, with the student's consent.

What to do if a student discloses a disability to you

Higher education institutions are expected to take reasonable steps to find out about a student's disability. Once a student has disclosed a disability even if only to one staff member, or once an institution might reasonably be expected to know about a student's disability (for example, if it is visible), the institution has a responsibility not to discriminate. Students do, of course, have a right to confidentiality, both through the Data Protection Act, and separately within the DDA, although they need to know that reasonable adjustments might not be put in place without some information sharing. To help navigate through this complicated situation, please refer to the flow-chart given in Figure 1.

Figure 1

A step by step guide to dealing with a student's disclosure of a disability:



What students say about their LSE experience:

'Wow, the course pack transformed my year. It saved so much time and hassle in the library ... I cannot tell you the difference it made to me.' (dyslexic)

'WebCT in general was very good; the odd thing was scanned which made it inaccessible but overall it was great'. (visual impairment)

'The lecturer gave his overview of the course at the first lecture and then said that if there was anyone in the room who felt that their learning might be disadvantaged in any way they should have a chat with him in confidence. It made all the difference to me.' (dyslexic)

'I said after the first seminar, listen, there is no way I can make it to that room safely for a whole term...they managed to change it for the following weeks.' (mobility)

'I got the support without being made to feel different, which was the big thing for me, that is what made it such a positive experience'. (hearing impairment)

'It was my department – they made it alright for me to be here.' (mental health)

All quotations are from Barry Roger's Report: Establishing the Needs of Students with Disabilities at LSE, 2004.

Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA)

UK students with disabilities may be eligible for a Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA) from their local education authority. The School also receives additional funding, based on DSA numbers. As such, it is in everyone's interest that, when a student chooses to disclose a disability, this information is fed back to the Disability Office so that an accurate School-wide perspective can be maintained.

Different Disabilities

Table 1 gives a brief overview of the range of disabilities which students may have and the possible implications for their studies. The table is intended to provide a general summary only and colleagues should, whenever possible, read a student's ISSA, if appropriate discuss it directly with the student and if in any doubt or wishing to know more, contact the Disability Office.

Table 1 Summary description of student disabilities and their implications for study.

Students may have:	Description:	Possible Effect on Studies:
Dyslexia	A specific learning difficulty, a complex neurological condition, which is constitutional in origin with specific cognitive deficits and is generally indicated by a discrepancy between IQ and literacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short term memory difficulties • Slow speed of information processing, particularly reading and writing • Difficulty in structuring text and sequencing ideas • Inefficient time and organisational skills • Erratic and inaccurate spelling and punctuation
Dyspraxia	Dyspraxia, often linked to dyslexia, is a delay or disorder of the planning and/or execution of complex movements. It may be developmental or can be acquired at later stages in life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegible, uncomfortable handwriting due to lack of manual dexterity and poor hand-eye coordination • Some awkwardness in speech, movement and social skills
Asperger's	An Autistic Spectrum Disorder affecting social, language and communication skills, with higher order intellectual ability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marked difficulties in social skills, leading to high anxiety • May be obsessive and single-minded • Overly sensitive to noise, smells, etc
Vision Impairment	Different eye conditions create a range of different problems. Very few people see nothing at all; some have tunnel vision, others have peripheral field vision or patchy vision. Important factors are light, distance, focus, field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty reading print • Not able to see gesture and expression • Limited mobility/orientation • Can become isolated • May need different light conditions or special position
Hearing impairment	Ranges from no hearing to partial loss in one or both ears and can include tinnitus: not all conditions respond to hearing aids and most are exacerbated by extraneous background noise and personal fatigue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May supplement hearing by lip-reading (reduces ability to take notes) • Miss part or all of spoken word • Increased fatigue from concentration on hearing • May need different light conditions or special position
Medical conditions	Long-term illnesses can be progressive, fluctuating, debilitating or in remission and the treatment or medication involved can have side effects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain, discomfort and fatigue • Interrupted or inadequate sleep pattern • Erratic attendance/performance • Periods of hospitalisation or treatment
Mental Health	Can range from depression and high anxiety levels to well defined psychological conditions which affect ability to maintain normal daily life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medication can have side effects • Changed behaviour • Problems with attendance • Disrupted concentration and motivation • Possible lack of insight into own condition
Mobility Impairment and Repetative Strain Injury	This may be as a result of an accident, cerebral palsy, other congenital condition, long-term degenerative illness or as a temporary result of accident or illness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May use a wheelchair or sticks, resulting in restricted mobility • May not be able to write notes (upper limb impairment) • Some services and resources may be inaccessible (photocopying etc) • All activities and tasks may take longer to complete

In classes, lectures and tutorials, teachers can help by:

- Where possible, produce handouts in advance and on public folders – avoid asking students to copy from the board
 - Use a clear font no less than 12pt and print
 - Use clear, bold headings and present materials in bullet points on cream or pale blue paper
 - Avoid asking dyslexic students to read text aloud
 - Recap and review points – using a variety of means
 - Give a clear outline of the topic at the beginning of each session
 - Repeat and rephrase questions posed by others, and if appropriate, contextualise
 - When marking, focus on meaning rather than spelling/punctuation errors, stress strengths – minimise weaknesses
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- Be patient with clumsy behaviour/stuttering. Set a good role model and respond immediately to incidents of bullying or harassment
 - Explain at beginning of lecture what the structure/main points will be. Provide written outline in advance, if possible
 - Invite feedback to check understanding
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- Be consistent in approach and keep variations to a minimum, if a change (e.g in timetable, room, lecture) is inevitable give clear, specific information as far ahead as possible
 - Be patient, encouraging and supportive: say exactly what is right or appreciated and why
 - Use clear, unambiguous language (spoken and written). Avoid or explain metaphors, irony etc and interpret what others say
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- Introduce yourself and other people clearly; say where people are in the room and when they leave
 - Summarise main points of a PowerPoint presentation orally
 - Offer minutes, lecture notes or other information, in the students' preferred format
 - Allow use of a tape recorder for the purpose of note taking
 - Tell the student if you are going to move away, so that they are not left talking into empty space
 - Be aware of possible restricted mobility as a result of visual impairment: eg, room layout, emergency evacuation and everyday hazards of bags and furniture
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- Meet the deaf or hard of hearing student beforehand to establish ground rules for communication and discuss the ISSA
 - Repeat and rephrase questions posed by others, and if appropriate, contextualise
 - In meetings, classes and seminars, speak one at a time
 - Use visual methods to supplement information and keep background noise as low as possible
 - Speak clearly in normal speech rhythm and a little more slowly and make sure you are visible in a good light
 - Do not block your mouth with your hands, or microphone
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- Provide opportunity for students to discuss sensitive concerns in privacy
 - Contact the Disability Office for further discussion/advice
 - Deadlines for work could be extended
 - Attendance at non-essential lectures or classes excused
 - Discretion and sensitivity are essential, not all students will want their condition widely known
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- Set clear boundaries ie: members of staff should not give out their home telephone numbers
 - Listen empathetically
 - Make short term reasonable adjustments if appropriate
 - Refer on to the Disability Office or Medical Centre
 - Deadlines for work could be extended
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- Refer to a student's ISSA to provide essential background information regarding access to learning
 - Facilitate any special arrangements which have been made: eg, make room for a note taker or personal helper
 - Be aware of procedures for emergency egress – if there is a problem, suggest a room change.
 - Deadlines for work could be extended

What does the School already have in place?

As part of the ongoing, 'anticipatory duties', a School Action Plan is in place, which requires every section and department to audit, assess and implement changes as necessary, under the following headings:

Physical Environment

A three-year plan is in place to meet the access requirements of the DDA by the deadlines and the on-going programme of refurbishment includes recognition of the new regulations and recommendations to increase accessibility in its widest sense. Hearing Loop Systems have been installed in the main theatres and large classrooms. Maps have been updated to show accessible routes.

Information and Communication

All School publications and information should be offered in alternative formats (advice is available from the IT Help-Desk) and include an open invitation to raise individual issues of accessibility for all events and activities.

A project to improve clarity and usefulness of signage and way-finding is in hand.

Disclosure and Confidentiality

It is vital for all staff to be aware of the need for discretion and confidentiality, whilst ensuring that the right information about a student with a disability is shared appropriately with colleagues who need to know, to make special arrangements. See the flowchart on p.4 for further details.

Our aim is to integrate provision for students with disabilities into the overall system of the School, as far as possible, without separate arrangements. This applies to all services to students, including Careers, Accommodation, Catering, and services contracted out and involves scrutinizing current practice to see how to improve accessibility.

Teaching and Learning

Tutors and lecturers can make simple adaptations to their teaching practice: for example: providing outlines etc on Public Folders in advance, using the public address system in lectures, 'talking' through slides for a student with a visual impairment, taking care to speak directly to the front so that a hearing-impaired student can lip-read. Accessibility considerations should be built in to departmental agendas for meetings and reviews, including course design and teaching materials.

The Teaching and Learning Centre runs a Study Skills Programme for all students. The Disability Office can arrange additional study support for students as appropriate, through their Individual Student Support Agreement.

Training:

Training is integrated into the programmes of the Teaching and Learning Centre, the Staff Development Unit and the Disability Office. General awareness raising and guidance workshops are provided but, clearly, different staff groups will need to cover different aspects of the DDA or of good practice. Wherever possible, it is useful to tailor training to individual needs – this can be arranged through the Disability Office. An online program is available at: www.lse.ac.uk/resources/accessibleEducationMatters/

Students' Union

There is a Society for Students with Disabilities and a representative on the SU Executive. Together, they are raising the profile of disability equality in all SU business and services and also campaigning for improvements and changes within the School.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Disability Office conducts regular surveys of student experience and has undertaken a detailed focus group study of curriculum delivery and development and the experience of front line student services at the School (report available on request). The School is also working towards producing effective annual reporting on recruitment, selection, progression and completion statistics via the student record system.

Departmental Projects

As part of a HEFCE initiative to improve provision for students with disabilities, academic departments are invited to bid for funding towards small scale projects aimed at redesigning courses, teaching styles, materials and resources. Two departments have undertaken projects to date: Anthropology has investigated sub-titling old video and film footage for hearing impaired students and Economics have considered how to present the subject to more directly meet the needs of dyslexic students. Reports on both projects are available on the disability website and from the office.

What 'reasonable adjustments' can be arranged for individual students?

An **Individual Student Support Agreement (ISSA)** is the LSE's system of recording the adjustments and resources which have been deemed necessary to meet the individual needs of a student with disabilities and/or dyslexia, based on formal documentary evidence, copies of which are kept in the Disability Office. The ISSA is copied, with the explicit consent of the student, to relevant School personnel and reviewed as necessary. As a tutor or teacher you may be given a copy of a student's ISSA, which might recommend arrangements from the list below. You need to read this carefully, and seek further discussion, advice and/or assistance as necessary, or make alternative suggestions.

Special Exam Arrangements (including all assessment)

Students who have current medical or educational psychology reports which recommend alternative or adapted arrangements for assessment due to a disability, dyslexia or ongoing medical condition, may apply, through the ISSA for:

- **extra time** (usually 25%) for students who are dyslexic and/or dyspraxic to give them enough time to read the question, plan, proofread and edit their answers
- **rest breaks** (usually 10 mins per hour) for students who experience fatigue, repetitive strain injury (RSI), attention deficit disorders or certain medical conditions
- **amanuensis** (scribe) for students unable to write or type for themselves
- **use of word processor** for students with certain visual and physical impairments and some dyslexic and/or dyspraxic students
- **provision of question papers in alternative formats:** ie enlarged, tape recorded, electronic or Braille
- **smaller exam room and/or ergonomic furniture** for a variety of conditions

Library Additional Services

This can include: provision of a 'buddy', a book fetch service, subsidized photocopying, longer loan periods, ergonomic furniture and/or specialist software

Rest rooms and IT/Dyslexia Study room

Access can be given to space with beds for daytime use in Old Building and a small room with specialist dyslexia software in St Clement's Building.

LSE Circles Network and Community Service Volunteer

Personal study support is organized amongst students who form a peer-group support network, with individual and small group activities. This might provide note-takers, readers, 'buddies', informal support groups and practical assistance.

Timetabling and rooms

Individual needs for ground floor, accessible rooms can be negotiated as necessary.

Flexibility of conditions of study

Departments may be asked to be reasonably flexible about course requirements and deadlines, without jeopardizing academic standards.

LSE Disability Consultative Forum

The Disability Consultative Forum meets once each term and reports to TLAC and SAC. It is an opportunity for students and staff interested in disability and access to contribute to the development of disability equality in the School.

This forum will play a vital role in developing and monitoring the School's Disability Equality Scheme which is a requirement of the amended Disability Discrimination Act, 2005 and has to be in place by December, 2006. The new duties on public sector bodies such as higher education institutions introduced by this legislation include actively promoting opportunities for disabled people and eliminating harassment and bullying on the grounds of disability. This applies to staff, students and visitors and the scheme must demonstrate how disabled people have participated directly in the drafting of the scheme. Colleagues who are interested in contributing to this process would be warmly welcomed, either at a Disability Consultative Forum meeting, or by contacting the Disability Office.

Please, do note the dates and times of the three meetings in the School Calendar and make every effort to attend.

'An example of a campaign by members of the SU Society for Students with Disabilities to champion the on-going changes in culture and environment which are needed for the School to become 'disability confident': Help make LSE more disability-friendly'



- keep to the left
- hold doors open
- use stairs rather than lifts if you can
- don't obstruct handrails
- check bags and chairs are not in the way
- speak out clearly
- remember, not all disabilities are visible

Useful contacts and sources of information:

On the disability web site there is a series of pdf leaflets giving further information on all the disabilities outlined in Table 1, on special exam arrangements, disclosure and other relevant matters. See: **www.lse.ac.uk/disability**. Click on 'Information for students' and then see 'Guides to Services for students with disabilities'. Hard copies are available from the office on request.

Disability Office:

Jean Jameson Advisor to Students with Disabilities/Dyslexia

Sue Haines Administrator

Jane Sedgwick Mental Health and Well Being Advisor

Linda Kelland Dyslexia Advisor

Room A40, Ground floor, Old Building, Houghton Street, WC2A 2AE

email: **Disability-Dyslexia@lse.ac.uk** tel: 020 7955 7767

CSV (Community Service Volunteer)

email: **c.s.volunteer@lse.ac.uk**

Circles, **circles@lse.ac.uk** (student peer-group support network at LSE)

Student Union Advice Centre

email: **Su.Advice-Centre@lse.ac.uk** tel: 020 7955 7145

SU Education and Welfare, **Su.Edwelfare@lse.ac.uk**

St Philips Medical Centre tel: 020 7955 7016

Skill: National Bureau for Students With Disabilities **www.skill.org.uk**

Disability Rights Commission **www.drc-gb.org**

Demos Project: **<http://jarmin.com/demos/>** a HEFCE-funded project offering online resources, aimed specifically at academic staff, examining the issues faced by disabled students in higher education.

Staff with disabilities who wish to find out more about the Access to Work scheme should contact Gail Keeley in Human Resources.

Produced by the Teaching and Learning Centre July 2004, revised February 2006

The School seeks to ensure that people are treated equitably, regardless of age, disability, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation or personal circumstance.

This information can be made available in alternative formats, on request. Please contact TLC Administrator, email: **tlc@lse.ac.uk**