

Improve your 3 Rs

Recruitment • Retention • Results

Do you deserve an
OASES Award?
See page 3

The Single Equality Act

In April 2010 the UK Government passed the Equality Act 2010 (see page 5). This new legislation came into force in higher and further education in October 2010 in England, Wales and Scotland. Within it is a requirement to take a proactive approach to shaping institutional processes and the promotion of equality, so merely avoiding discrimination is no longer an option.

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As well as complying with the new legislation there are also real practical and economic benefits to adopting inclusive practices. JISC TechDis specialises in highlighting the use of technology to remove barriers to learning and promoting inclusive practices. Our resources enable universities, colleges and other learning providers to minimise the barriers experienced by a range of learners and can bring significant benefits in terms of recruitment, retention and results.

You do the maths!

- Where tutors put lecture/class notes online, the need for note-takers for disabled students is reduced.
- Where libraries subscribe to accessible e-book platforms, the cost of scanning books for disabled learners is slashed.
- Where free and open source assistive technologies are used, more learners can have greater support with no licence cost.
- The LSN MoleNet* projects reported a retention improvement around 8 – 10%.
- Using productivity tools increases return on investment.

An accessible electronic copy of this leaflet can be found at www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/sed with links to additional detailed guidance.

*www.molenet.org.uk/projects

Making a difference

The single Equality Duty provides an opportunity to take a fresh and sustainable approach to current practice and can be a driver for other positive developments that can improve recruitment, retention and results.

Where technology is used to support inclusive teaching, it invariably benefits all learners, not just those with disabilities.

- **Improved e-learning infrastructure**
Resources in digital format (even simply class/lecture notes) are inherently more flexible and accessible than paper-based resources, supporting differentiation and a range of learning styles;
- **Up-skilling staff in the use of technology in teaching and learning**
The single Equality Duty gives you the opportunity to make the use of technology to support learning an actual entitlement;
- **Increased learner autonomy and responsibility**
The effective use of technology provides learners with more opportunities for self-direction and fewer excuses;
- **Increased capacity**
Courses can be delivered more cost effectively.

For a list of free resources go to:
www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/sed/technology

Where do I start?

It is often difficult to identify strengths and weaknesses in current practice to establish priorities even with the wide selection of resources available to support accessible and inclusive teaching and learning.

OASES is designed to support any individual involved in delivering inclusive learning.

One proactive response an institution can make is to formally examine its own practice in a variety of areas through using the **JISC TechDis Online Accessibility Self Evaluation Service** (OASES-www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/oases) and to bring the results of the self-evaluation together to create whole-institution policies that strengthen the institution's Equality Scheme and truly integrate relevant groups into decision-making processes as a matter of course.

OASES is designed to support any individual involved in delivering inclusive learning. Examples include learner support, IT/network systems and marketing staff, as well as senior managers. The tool helps managers reflect on current practice via an online survey, enabling them to benchmark their own institution's practice against a summary of anonymised peer responses and make informed judgements about where to focus future resources.

The JISC TechDis OASES Global Award

We know that many organisations have already made great progress in embedding accessibility into institutional policy and are sure that there must be some excellent examples of good practice in the UK and overseas. We want to celebrate the progress that colleges, universities and other learning providers are already making in ensuring equality of access to teaching and learning. This is why we have introduced the JISC TechDis OASES Award for Institutional Progress on Equality using Technology to recognise the best that is happening here and abroad and spread the word about good practice.

Entry Conditions

Your initial submission should consist of a maximum of 500 words, explaining what your organisation has done and the difference it has made to working practice, highlighting any change in policy and mentioning any evidence of impact. If you are shortlisted for an award we will be in touch. For details on criteria, closing date and how to enter, simply visit our website: www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/oases/award



How mature are you?

The legislation is designed to encourage colleges, universities and other learning providers to move to a more advanced state of maturity with regard to inclusive learning. Most are well beyond a tokenistic approach but far too many remain at a 'specialism' stage, treating inclusion as a specialist topic, dealt with by people employed to focus on that area, leaving mainstream practice largely untouched. Others have moved forward to a standards-based approach, using checklists and applying kite marks to 'prove' the extent of their work on accessibility or equality. Whilst this does indicate a level of progress, the presence of a kite mark can still mean a lack of progress to a more mature approach.

The goal with institutional approaches to equality is to achieve a truly integrated mainstream.



Figure 1: Model of Institutional Accessibility Maturity

The goal of any organisational approach to equality is to achieve a truly integrated mainstream (see www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/sed/integratedmainstream), with ownership of the agenda by all staff and partnerships with minority groups whenever and wherever appropriate. Those that reach this stage (see Figure 1) are characterised by having equality schemes that dovetail with other key management strategies or policies covering assessment, learning and teaching, learner/student support, procurement, library and learning resource provision, IT and network systems and so on. Colleges, universities and other learning providers at this level may well make marketing capital about the benefits of their approach on retention, recruitment and student/learner success, but the real benefit will be to their learners in terms of achieving a high level of fully integrated equality practices.

Steps you can take

Step One: Tackle accessibility costs by identifying and reducing barriers, rather than providing ladders over barriers - for example:

- Training teaching staff to create properly structured, accessible handouts can reduce the support required by dyslexic learners;
- Following JISC TechDis guidance on making marketing material accessible can minimise the demand for, and cost of, alternative formats.

Step Two: Move to a partnership model of accessibility (Figure 1), where everyone, including the learner, is aware of their

contribution to inclusive practice. This needs to come from the top, with a senior manager responsible for inclusive practice helping to drive it right across the organisation. A wealth of resources can support this, including:

- The **Online Accessibility Self-Evaluation Service (OASES)**;
- **Senior Manager Briefings and the Technology Change for Inclusion** report;
- Staff training resources on **disability awareness; creating inclusive documents and presentations; reasonable adjustments; inclusive mobile learning; creating accessible content** and a range of resources in the **ITQ in accessible IT practice**;
- Guides on **inclusive library practices** and on **e-books, obtaining alternative formats and enabling technology**;
- Advice on **accessible marketing**.

These are all JISC TechDis resources available at www.jisctechdis.ac.uk

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Step Three: Adopt a sustainable approach to providing assistive technology by:

- Making free and open source software available with portable versions as appropriate;
- Ensuring the in-built accessibility provided in mainstream software/systems is exploited;
- Maximising the use of the learner's own technology e.g. mobile phones.

It's the law!

JISC Legal, a JISC Advance Service, has produced a useful summary of the main changes contained within the Act, as follows:

The Equality Act 2010, which came into force on 1 October 2010, strengthens particular aspects of equality law and extends some protections that were not previously covered. The Act provides a new definition of disability and has made it easier for a person to show that they are disabled and protected from disability discrimination.

Compliance with the Equality Act 2010 should be owned, supported and reinforced by leadership within FE, HE and independent specialist colleges, reviewing and changing policies and practices to ensure compliance.

In brief:

- The Act introduces a slightly different test of what 'disability' means. The **new definition** focuses on any difficulty in carrying out day-to-day activities, rather than on any defined conditions or impairments.
- The legislation has been **strengthened** to enable people to claim harassment relating to the general environment or culture, rather than just behaviour directed at them.
- Indirect discrimination has been **extended** to apply to circumstances where, for example, an institution has a condition, rule, policy or even a practice that applies to everyone, but particularly disadvantages someone with a disability. Protection from indirect discrimination for disabled people is new. This is a technical improvement to the law but it may not change much in practice because previous law already required service providers to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.
- The Act has also been **extended** to include associative discrimination, covering people who associate with or care for a disabled person, for example.
- **New provisions** are introduced, including the concept of discrimination arising from disability, which occurs if a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and the unfavourable treatment cannot be justified.

JISClegal
information

www.jisclegal.ac.uk

Other sources of help and support

Preparing for the single Equality Duty can either be a box-ticking exercise designed to minimise risk to the institution or an opportunity to remodel more efficient ways of supporting learners. If your organisation chooses the latter option, there is a wealth of free advice, guidance and resources from JISC TechDis and our partners which can help throughout the process. We work closely with a range of organisations and agencies, including funding councils, awarding bodies, charities, education institutions and professional associations.

The JISC TechDis service focuses on using technology to support inclusive practices. Our core work is in supporting education and training organisations, but the principles apply across a range of areas from commerce to local government and charity organisations. Other organisations with expertise in supporting inclusive practice in teaching and learning include:

- JISC Advance and its Regional Support Centres provide advice and facilitate events and networks. Much more information on sources of support and related projects can be found by visiting www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/sed/jiscsupport.
- Other sector organisations such as the Higher Education Academy, LSIS (Learning and Skills Improvement Service), LSN Education (and related MoleNet projects), SEDA (Staff and Education Developers Association), ALP (Association of Learning Providers), UALL (University Association of Lifelong Learning) and Natspec - the National Association of Specialist Colleges. Many of these organisations have a range of practitioner networks, including those with a teaching or staff development and learning technology focus. We also work with groups such as ATANET (Assistive Technology Advisor Network) and ATinHE (Assistive Technology in HE) specifically on assistive technology, as well as a number of JISCMail communities.

More information on support from other organisations working in the technology arena with us can be found at www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/sed/othersupport.

Beyond technology and teaching

The JISC TechDis remit is focused on supporting disabled learners using technology. Consequently, the broader aspects of the single Equality Duty will not be addressed by the guidance above. The following resources go beyond technology and teaching to cover the full breadth of the duty.

Government guidance

Equality Act 2010: What do I need to know? is a series of summary guides and "Quick Start" guides to the key changes in the law, produced by the Government Equalities Office in partnership with the British Chambers of Commerce, Citizens Advice and the Equality and Diversity Forum, to support implementation of the Act. These simple guides set out clearly what the new laws will mean for business, the public sector, the voluntary sector and the public, helping people understand their new responsibilities and rights.

<http://www.equalities.gov.uk>

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) *Equality Act 2010* guidance

EHRC has created a series of guidance documents to help explain the Act and provide practical examples on how the law has changed.

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>

Acas *Quick Start Guide for Employers*

<http://www.acas.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=2833&p=0>

Government Equalities Office (GEO)

Equality Act 2010: What do I need to know?
Disability quick start guide

http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/401727_EDF_Disability_acc.pdf

For more information visit www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/sed/beyondtandt