Guidance for schools working with disabled students including implementing a Disability Support Summary

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Contents

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the following:
- Any local (Faculty/ School) guidance about supporting disabled students
- Alternative Examination Arrangements (AEAs): Guidelines for staff:
www.bristol.ac.uk/exams/alternative/
- Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes (in particular, see guidance regarding extenuating circumstances, assignment deadlines, and Annex 12, which focusses on reasonable adjustments to assessment):
www.bristol.ac.uk/esu/assessment/codeonline.html
- Joint Honours Student Experience Considerations:
www.bristol.ac.uk/esu/approve/joint-honours-programmes/
- Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degrees:
www.bristol.ac.uk/esu/pg/cop-research-degrees.html
- School Disability Coordinator (SDC) role descriptor: www.bristol.ac.uk/disability-services/staff-professionals/school-disability/sdcdescriptor.pdf

Abbreviations used in this document:
- AEAs: Alternative Examination Arrangements
- DSAs: Disabled Students' Allowances
- DSS: Disability Support Summary
- ECs: Extenuating Circumstances
- SDC: School Disability Coordinator

1.0 Quick guide to the Disability Support Summary

1.1 **The Disability Support Summary (DSS) communicates disabled students' study support requirements to the University staff that support them.** DSSs summarise the recommendations of medical professionals, psychiatrists, Educational Psychologists, independent DSAs Needs Assessors and the University's own Disability Advisers – resulting in a quickly digestible, actionable document of the reasonable adjustments to teaching and assessment required by a disabled student. *For a fuller introduction to the DSS, including definitions of key terms such as 'disability', 'reasonable adjustments', 'competence standards', 'anticipatory adjustments', 'interim support', 'Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)', and 'confidentiality', see section 2.*

1.2 Although the DSS is a key tool for communicating disabled students' support requirements, **students need not have a DSS (or be in contact with Disability Services) before they are supported by the University**. The duty to support students arises at the point of disclosure and there are many actions that Faculties/ Schools can take – both to: (1) anticipate the needs of disabled students; and (2) support students in the interim period between disclosure and a DSS being produced. *For further information about the action that Faculties/ Schools can take at the point of disclosure, see section 3.*

1.3 Students' DSSs are either *standardised* (in the case of the common difficulties associated with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia) or *personalised* (where the DSS reflects a wider spectrum of disabilities). **In the case of standardised (Template 1 and Template 2) DSSs, the expectation is that the School will implement the student's support upon receipt of the DSS and without further consultation with Disability Services.** In the case of personalised (Template 3) DSSs, there is a 21-day consultation period, during which the School must contact Disability Services if the support recommended in the DSS may not be possible or practical to implement. **It is important that the School does respond within 21 days if there are elements of a personalised (Template 3) DSS to query – because once the consultation period has elapsed, the DSS will be assumed to have been agreed and a copy will be issued to the student.** *For further information about the DSS process, and about the format and structure of the DSS document, see sections 4 and 5.*

1.4 A student's support requirements may change over the course of their degree programme. For this reason, **there is a standard review period of 12 months, after which the School should review the DSS with the student to ensure that the support specified in the DSS is still appropriate**. *For further information about the DSS review period, see section 5.7.*

1.5 **Disability Services' role is to advise staff on all aspects of disabled students' study support.** This includes providing guidance if you are uncertain how to respond to a student disclosing a disability, and guidance on how best to implement the reasonable adjustments to teaching and assessment specified in a DSS. *For Disability Services' contact details, see section 5.9.*

2.0 Introduction and context

2.1 This document aims to:
- Provide Faculties/ Schools with best practice guidance about managing the University's response to students who disclose a disability
- Describe the process for creating a Disability Support Summary (DSS)
- Advise on the common recommendations found in a DSS

2.2 Disability Services

Disability Services is made up of a small team of Disability Advisers, staff who coordinate the support service, and administrative staff who support these processes. Disability Advisers meet with students in booked appointments. During an appointment, the Disability Adviser will discuss obtaining evidence of a disability, the study support options available, how support can be funded, and the timeframes involved in accessing support. Disability Advisers will also signpost to other services, such as the Students' Health Service, the Student Counselling Service, the Library's Disability Coordinator, etc. As part of the process of communicating support to the Faculty/ School, a Disability Adviser will routinely contact the School Disability Coordinator and other staff (e.g., the student's Personal Tutor) about the best way to support individual students.

2.3 Key terms:
- Disability
- Reasonable adjustments
- Competence standards
- Anticipatory adjustments
- Interim support
- Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)
- Confidentiality

Disability: A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. 'Physical or mental impairment' includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing. 'Long term' means that the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for 12 months or more. 'Substantial' means more than minor or trivial. Case law has established that 'day-to-day' includes attending University and sitting examinations, which are not regarded as specialised activities. Unseen impairments are also covered (such as mental ill health and conditions such as diabetes and epilepsy). Cancer, HIV infection and multiple sclerosis are considered disabilities under the Act from the point of diagnosis. Progressive conditions (such as lupus, multiple sclerosis) and fluctuating conditions (such as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ ME, chronic pain) and conditions which may reoccur (such as depression) will amount to disabilities in most circumstances.

Reasonable adjustments (as defined by the Equality Act 2010): Section 20 of the Act imposes a duty on the University to make reasonable adjustments for students in relation to:
- A provision, criterion or practice – including admissions and assessment practices
- Physical features – including access to teaching and assessment venues

- Auxiliary aids – such as hearing loops, lecture materials and exam scripts in large print or Braille, and human support such as readers, scribes and sign language interpreters

Where a disabled student is at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to other students, the University must take reasonable steps to avoid the disadvantage. The purpose of the duty is not to confer an unfair advantage on disabled students but to remove barriers where it is reasonable to do so.

There is no legal defence for the failure of an institution to make a reasonable adjustment. This would be interpreted as discrimination under Section 21 of the Act. For further information, please see the University's guidance on equality and diversity: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/

Examples of reasonable adjustments:
- Providing communication support for a student with a hearing impairment at an admissions interview
- Providing extra working time in exams to students with dyslexia
- Timetabling teaching sessions such that there is level or lift access to all teaching venues for a student with a mobility impairment

Competence standards (as defined by the Equality Act 2010): The academic, medical or other standard(s) applied for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability. Reasonable adjustments (see above) are implemented to prevent disabled students from experiencing substantial disadvantage. However, in defining reasonableness, institutions are not required to compromise genuine competence standards. Not all competences, assessment criteria or learning objectives which students might be expected to fulfil on a particular course are *genuine competence standards as defined by the Act. For further information about competence standards, including the characteristics of genuine competence standards, please see Annex 12 of the Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes:* *http://www.bris.ac.uk/esu/assessment/codeonline.html*

Anticipatory adjustments (as defined by the Equality Act 2010): The duty to make reasonable adjustments is anticipatory (this includes admissions and assessment processes). The University should not wait until an individual student discloses a disability or until adjustments are requested. Instead, likely solutions to predictable difficulties should be prepared in advance. Anticipatory adjustments preclude responding to the individual needs of particular students.

Examples of anticipatory adjustments:
- Providing accessible buildings
- Making teaching materials available to all students electronically (e.g., on Blackboard)
- Offering students choices with regard to assessed coursework, e.g., a choice of a presentation, a submitted portfolio, or an essay -- rather than a mandatory presentation

Interim support: Access to anticipatory adjustments before receiving evidence of a disability and/ or before a DSS is produced. Interim support may be put in place after a discussion with the student about their study support needs. The student need not have evidence available at this stage, though there is an expectation that evidence will be provided in due course. The student need not have been in contact with Disability Services, though it may be in their best interests at this point to make an appointment with a Disability Adviser to explore their options for support. The distinction between interim support and reasonable adjustments is that reasonable adjustments are not implemented until the student has provided evidence of a disability.

Examples of interim support:
- Making teaching materials available on Blackboard
- Offering a coursework extension
- Offering an alternative to group work while awaiting a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs): These are non-means tested grants available to UK home students to pay for study-related support necessitated by a disability. For more information see section 2.6.

Confidentiality: In the context of support for students with disabilities, confidentiality is the expectation that information about a student's disability will be stored securely and shared only with staff who have a role in supporting the student. An individual student's support or disability must not be discussed in front of other students or with colleagues who are not involved in supporting that student. It must be for students to decide if they choose to discuss their disability or personal information in public. Further information is available in section 3.1.

2.4 Defining a Disability Support Summary (DSS) and the expectation that Schools will act at the point of disclosure

A DSS is a key method of communicating the detail of what support is required by a disabled student. However, **it is not necessary for a student to have a DSS before they are supported by the University**. When a student discloses a disability to a member of Faculty/ School staff, it is at this point that the Faculty/ School must consider what interim support they can offer the student (for a definition of interim support, see section 2.3). At this point, the student should also be signposted to Disability Services to discuss their options for support.

In many cases, interim support will be updated when a DSS is produced and sent to the Faculty/ School for review/ action. However, there are circumstances when a disabled student won't have a DSS and the interim support is effectively permanent (for further details, see section 4). For this reason, it is important that Schools implement support at the point of disclosure, rather than waiting for a DSS to be produced. **We must emphasise: It is not necessary for a student to have a DSS or to be in contact with Disability Services before they receive support. The duty to consider and implement support for students arises at the point of disclosure.**

2.5 Disabled students and extenuating circumstances (ECs)

The Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes (http://www.bris.ac.uk/esu/assessment/codeonline.html) includes a section giving guidance to Faculties/ Schools on using ECs. This explains that for known circumstances, where there is no exacerbation or flare-up, using the ECs process is not appropriate. Where a student's disability is known (disclosed), their support requirements should be detailed in their DSS, or reasonable adjustments should have been put in place without a DSS by the Faculty/ School.

Where the application for ECs is based on an unexpected change in circumstance, the ECs guidance applies to disabled students. Using the ECs process must not be seen as a substitute for making anticipatory/ reasonable adjustments, however.

2.6 Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)

UK home students with suitable evidence of a disability are eligible for support via non-means tested government grants called Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). DSAs can fund equipment and software support and also human support such as notetakers, study skills tutors (but not subject-specific tuition) and specialist mentoring. A key feature of DSAs support is that it must be study-related and necessitated by the student's disability. DSAs will not fund living support (e.g., personal care) or pay costs that any student would have to pay (e.g., costs of lab materials or standard text books). Neither will DSAs fund support that the University can reasonably be expected to provide (e.g., accessible facilities, academic tuition).The support available is determined by an external, independent, quality-assured DSAs Needs Assessor and is personalised to every student. It is therefore important that Schools do not guarantee what DSAs-funded support will or will not be offered to a student until these externally-sourced recommendations are received, evaluated by Disability Services, and summarised in a DSS. Students should be told that Disability Services are best placed to advise on eligibility for DSAs and how DSAs can be used.

Where a student does not apply for DSAs, the student must be advised that the support they may receive in addition to the anticipatory/ reasonable adjustments that the University is obliged to provide will be limited.

2.7 Examples used in and drafting style of this document

These guidance notes provide examples of commonly recommended reasonable adjustments but are not an exhaustive list of all possible adjustments, nor are the examples provided applicable to every student or situation. If you receive a DSS with recommendations that present questions, please contact a Disability Adviser for advice and further guidance.

A flowchart for the DSS process can be found in section 6.

3.0 Action that Faculties/ Schools can take at the point of disclosure (before a DSS is produced)

A student discloses a disability to their School Disability Coordinator (SDC). What interim support can be offered before a DSS is produced? How should the SDC decide what support can be offered?

3.1 The first conversation

Once a student has disclosed a disability, the purpose of the first conversation should be to work with the student to identify the impact of their disability on the various elements of their programme. This conversation should focus on the components of the programme, e.g., lectures, field trips, practicals, etc. so that the support requirements of each component can be discussed.

The aim is to agree and implement interim support, which will be in place until a DSS is produced. Please note that where students elect not to use Disability Services, there will not be a DSS. This is because **students are not obliged to use Disability Services and do not require a DSS before they can be supported by the University**. Where a DSS is produced, however, it will replace any interim support arrangements (though in most cases the DSS is likely to confirm the interim arrangements).

During the first conversation, please explain to the student the benefits of disclosing their disability (i.e., that the School can support them and signpost them to relevant services). It is also useful to explain who in the School will be made aware of the disclosure and why (staff involved in teaching and supporting the student should be briefed about the student's difficulty so that the student need not explain their support needs at every turn). You should also tell the student about any contact you will make with Disability Services and/ or other services. The member of staff should explain that a student's disability information will be stored confidentially and will be shared only with staff who have a role in their support.

Note, however, that a student has a legal right to request that the nature of their disability is kept confidential. This can be managed by writing to a student to confirm their decision to do this, and to note that they are aware that this may restrict the support available to them. A copy of this letter should be retained by the School. The letter need not state the nature of the disability. Staff not aware of the specific nature of a student's disability can still be guided in providing reasonable adjustments by the person who is aware of the student's disability. This way of working should not be offered as a matter of course but if a student should request it then it should be facilitated. Advice about managing this situation can be provided by Disability Services.

When gathering information from the student, it is good practice to ask what support they may have had in the past and to identify what did or did not work for them. However, there is no guarantee that any pas support can be replicated at the University.

Example 1
A student discloses a visual impairment. They haven't disclosed before because they managed well at A-level – but university is harder. In talking to the student, you may discover that they need access to text in Arial font, size 14 to read comfortably. The School ensures that all teaching materials are on Blackboard so that the student can adjust the font and size. The SDC makes staff aware of the font requirement so that all photocopied material and exams scripts are made accessible to the student.

3.2 Supporting evidence of a disability

To implement reasonable adjustments, the University requires the student to produce supporting evidence of a disability. This is likely to be from a GP/ consultant, an educational psychologist or specialist teacher, or a psychiatrist. If the student does not have supporting evidence and is uncertain how to proceed, please signpost them to Disability Services, who will advise regarding how best to obtain evidence.

There may be occasions when a student has a long-standing disability (see section 2.3) but has not needed to provide evidence of this as an adult. For example, a student might have a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome – but the diagnosis may have been made when the student was very young. In this case, the student may not have documents to hand and may not know immediately how to provide evidence. For this reason, there may be a delay in providing evidence. In such cases, Faculties/ Schools are advised not to delay offering support but to discuss interim support with the student (see section 2.3). Disability Services can provide further advice and guidance – both to Faculties/ Schools and to students who may need support to provide appropriate evidence of a disability.

Supporting evidence can vary substantially depending on who wrote it and why. Examples range from educational psychologists' reports providing detailed recommendations for study support to GP letters, which may state a diagnosis and nothing more. If the student has supporting evidence, please signpost them to Disability Services for an appointment to discuss their support options with a Disability Adviser. Additionally, Disability Services can advise staff on the sufficiency of students' evidence and how to interpret what has been provided, if this is not immediately apparent.

3.3 Alternative Examination Arrangements (AEAs)

Does the student need alternative exam arrangements? If the evidence is available to you, please process the student's AEAs application immediately, as there is no need to wait for a DSS to be produced. The decision making process for AEAs is the same no matter how the application is made, i.e., the Faculty makes the decision. Where a student is on a joint honours programme, it is the home School's responsibility to liaise with the second School when making decisions about AEAs and to seek approval through their Faculty.

In the absence of clear recommendations, or where there are queries about what support is required, staff are advised to contact a Disability Adviser for advice. The Disability Adviser will use their judgement and knowledge of good practice across the sector, along with consultation with the School, to advise on what is reasonable and appropriate. If the

diagnosis is long-standing, the student is likely to have examples of what support worked and didn't work when studying previously.

Where a DSS has not been produced, it is the student's responsibility to apply for AEAs.

Example 2
A student has a GP letter which confirms a diagnosis of CFS/ ME. The letter states that the student was diagnosed five months ago and that they experience fatigue, muscle aches, and regular headaches. The evidence does not say what support the student needs in exams. In this instance, please identify with the student what they might need and then seek advice from a Disability Adviser, who will be able to talk through the likely exam support requirements to assist you in implementing exam arrangements.

Once you have had an initial conversation with the student, please speak to a Disability Adviser to talk through the interim support options and identify what is practicable in the short term.

3.4 Confirming with the student what interim support will be put in place

The next stage is to let the student know what interim support can be actioned before they meet with a Disability Adviser and before a DSS is drafted. Explain how the student's support will be put in place and what the student should do if they have any further queries. **Note: If a student chooses not to use Disability Services, the School must still offer support.**

Example 3
A student discloses to their SDC that they have recently received a diagnosis of a specific learning difficulty, dyspraxia. The student has not yet been to Disability Services. Through a conversation with the student, you identify that they would benefit from access to lecture materials in advance, as well as the opportunity to clarify their understanding of assignments. The student is also struggling to keep up with note taking and needs extra time and the use of a word processor in exams. The student has given you their diagnostic report, so you can set up the alternative exam arrangements. You speak to a Disability Adviser in Disability Services, having told the student that you will, and you talk through what can be offered. You identify that you can provide access to handouts in advance and set up a meeting between the student and their tutor. The Disability Adviser explains that Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) may fund a notetaker but that this cannot be guaranteed and that the student would benefit from an appointment to see a Disability Adviser to further explore their options.

4.0 The Disability Support Summary (DSS) process

4.1 It is important to note that a DSS will only be produced if the student has met or spoken to a Disability Adviser and following receipt of suitable evidence confirming a disability. When Disability Services receive evidence about a student from an external source (such as an educational psychologist's report or a DSAs Needs Assessment), the student is invited to meet with a Disability Adviser.

There are three types of DSS (see section 7.0 for a summary table):

A standardised '**Template 1**' DSS. This is for UG and PGT students with a specific learning difficulty **without** DSAs-funded study skills tuition. There are four subtypes of Template 1 DSS:
[1a] for students with a SpLD only
[1b] for students with a SpLD together with a handwriting difficulty
[1c] for students with a SpLD together with visual stress
[1d] for students with a SpLD together with a handwriting difficulty and visual stress

A standardised '**Template 2**' DSS. This is for UG and PGT students with a specific learning difficulty **with** DSAs-funded study skills tuition. As above, there are four subtypes of Template 2 DSS, which do not differ in their support recommendations from the Template 1 DSSs listed above:
[2a] *as per [1a], above*
[2b] *as per [1b], above*
[2c] *as per [1c], above*
[2d] *as per [1d], above*
Note: T2 DSSs differ from T1 DSSs only in noting that DSAs-funded study skills tuition is available to the student.

A personalised '**Template 3**' DSS. These are issued for UG and taught PG students whose needs are not met by a Template 1/ 2 DSS -- and for all PG research students.

When a student's support requirements are met by a standardised T1/ T2 DSS, and where the student is not a PGR student, Disability Services will inform the School Disability Coordinator which standardised DSS applies to that student. This process is designed to finalise support requirements quickly. In all other cases, a personalised T3 DSS will be produced.

4.2 Advice appointment

The Disability Adviser will talk with the student about the support they need. After a student has met or spoken to a Disability Adviser and provided evidence of a disability, a T1, T2 or T3 DSS will be issued as appropriate.

4.3 Evidence

A variety of evidence may be used to support the production of a DSS. This could include evidence from an educational psychologist or specialist teacher to diagnose a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia -- or could be medical evidence from a doctor for long term illnesses or mental health difficulties. The student's DSAs Needs Assessment is also considered. This document outlines the study support recommended for the student and makes specific recommendations for the University regarding reasonable adjustments to teaching and assessment. The Disability Adviser will use the evidence available, information from their discussion with the student, their professional judgement, and knowledge of good practice across the sector to produce a DSS.

When a student has provided evidence but updated or additional evidence will soon be available, the Disability Adviser will use their discretion to decide whether to wait until the new evidence is received before producing a DSS – or to produce one based on the existing evidence, with an updated DSS to follow in due course.

The DSS has actions for Faculties/ Schools, Library staff, Disability Services and the student.

4.4 Draft, consultation period and production of the final DSS

If the student's support needs are described by a standardised (T1/ T2) DSS, the student and the School Disability Coordinator will be informed of this by Disability Services. For standardised T1/ T2 DSSs, there is no consultation period for the School to review the DSS. However, as with every DSS, there is a standard annual review where the School is expected to ensure that the recommendations are still appropriate; see section 5.7.

If a personalised DSS (T3) is required, then this will be drafted by a Disability Adviser and sent to the SDC for review. **The draft is subject to a consultation period of 21 days, during which any concerns must be raised or the document will be finalised as it is.** The School is required to review the draft DSS, in particular to check that the recommendations made are practicable and reasonable in the context of the student's programme of study. The School is responsible for liaising with their Faculty Officers as required in order to agree the DSS within the 21-day consultation period. If a School won't be able to review draft DSS documents in this timeframe, for example due to undertaking research away from email contact or for any other reason, it is the School's responsibility to inform Disability Services of a deputy to temporarily cover this work.

After any concerns have been addressed, or at the end of the review period (whichever comes first), the DSS is finalised and sent to the SDC and to the student. **We must emphasise that it is, therefore, important that the School respond during the 21-day consultation period if there is a need to query the support recommendations specified in a T3 DSS. Otherwise, the student will be issued a DSS specifying support which may not be provided, which puts the Faculty/ School (and the University more generally) at risk of challenge on the basis that specified, agreed, documented reasonable adjustments to teaching and assessment may not have been provided.**

5.0 DSS format and structure (including common recommendations and how these can be managed by Faculties/ Schools)

5.1 Introduction to the format of the three DSS templates

There are three different DSS templates, which are designed to capture the support needs of an individual student (see section 7.0 for a summary table).

Template 1 is a standardised DSS for UG and PGT students with specific learning difficulties (e.g., dyslexia, dyspraxia) who **do not** have DSAs-funded study skills tuition in place. Their support needs are met by the recommendations in one of the four Template 1 subtypes. See section 4.1 for greater detail regarding the four subtypes.

Template 2 is a standardised DSS for UG and PGT students with specific learning difficulties who **do** have DSAs-funded study skills tuition in place. Their support needs are met by the recommendations in one of the four Template 2 subtypes. See section 4.1 for greater detail regarding the four subtypes.

Template 3 is a personalised DSS for all UG and PGT students whose support needs are not met by one of the other templates. All PGR students will have a personalised DSS, regardless of their disability.

For example, a dyslexic student who has been recommended 33% extra time for examinations but who otherwise has more commonly recommended support recommendations would have a personalised (Template 3) DSS because their examination arrangements exceed the more often recommended 25% extra time.

Each School will need to hold records of all students who have a Template 1 or 2 DSS, so that the relevant support can be implemented, and reviewed as required. Note that the expectation with Template 1 and 2 DSSs is that the School will implement the reasonable adjustments detailed in the DSS without further consultation with Disability Services. See section 5.7 for further information about the review period.

5.2 Student details section

This is largely self-explanatory. Template 1 and 2 DSSs don't have personalised information about the student; Template 3 DSSs include the student's name and course details, together with information about the student's disability and how this may impact on study. This sets the context for the report, which will tend to vary considerably in the case of Template 3 DSSs (as opposed to Template 1 and 2 DSSs, where the context is always a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia).

5.3 Student responsibilities

This section outlines the reasonable expectations placed on students who require support. The University recognises the importance of student experiences and that assumptions should not be made about their support needs. Ultimately, each student is responsible for

their own learning. This assertion underpins the approach to supporting students at the University. Accordingly, students must have clearly stated, central responsibility for organising and directing their own study support.

Disability Advisers will review student responsibilities with students during advice appointments, and it would be helpful if School Disability Coordinators (SDCs) would do the same. The responsibility of the student to apply for alternative examination arrangements and coursework extensions deserves particular emphasis.

The success of the support arranged for a student depends on a partnership between the Faculty/ School, Disability Services, wider support networks across the University, and the student. Additionally, success depends crucially on the willingness of the student to engage with support.

5.4 Information for the academic School

This section outlines the study support requirements.

5.4.1 Lectures/ seminars/ tutorials

5.4.1.1 The use of a recording device in lectures/ seminars/ tutorials/ labs/ practicals

This is recommended for students who have difficulty with notetaking. It may be recommended in conjunction with a notetaker (a support worker, see section 5.4.1.4 for further details), or the student may annotate handouts themselves, or may type notes during the lecture.

Referring to the Recording of Academic Teaching Policy (www.bris.ac.uk/secretary/studentrulesregs/recording), students are advised that they are allowed to record lectures/ seminars/ tutorials/ labs/ practicals unless they are told otherwise. The exception to this is where personally sensitive information is shared, e.g., when students provide personal examples and discuss them. Students should not have to ask before recording lectures/ seminars/ tutorials/ labs/ practicals. In cases where recording is not possible, teaching staff should arrange reasonable access to alternatives, e.g., handouts, PowerPoint slides – and offer students the opportunity to contact a member of staff afterwards for clarification of content.

Example 4
A student with epilepsy is recommended the use of a recording device in lectures and seminars as she experiences 'absences' during which she is not fully aware of her surroundings and may lose track of what is being discussed. Recording teaching sessions means that if she has an absence and misses part of a lecture, she will have a full recording of what was discussed so that she can review it later.

5.4.1.2 Providing handouts and PowerPoint slides in advance on Blackboard

This is to help students who have difficulty notetaking. Handouts or slides provide a structure and limit the amount of notes the student needs to write. Handouts/ slides also benefit visually impaired and d/Deaf students. Where notes are provided electronically, many visually impaired students can access them using screen reading software or magnifiers and thus be better able to follow the lecture. d/Deaf students can gain context of the lecture which may assist with lip reading or may assist an interpreter in their work. By putting notes on Blackboard, students who require information in an alternative format can often adjust documents themselves; this reduces administrative load for the School.

Handouts/slides provided in advance also help students who have difficulty reading under time pressure. It can be useful for students to prepare for lectures in advance so that they become familiar with new vocabulary or terminology. Other requests for alternative formats could include providing materials in Braille, or in specific electronic formats such as LaTeX (e.g., for mathematical notation).

5.4.1.3 Leaving board notes up at the end of your teaching session

The request to leave board notes up is made to enable students who are slower at note taking to have a chance to capture what is written. It is appreciated that this is not always possible and where timetabling or other factors prevent board notes from being left on display at the end of the lecture, the student should be able to contact the relevant lecturer for clarification if content has been missed. Students may photograph the board at the end of lectures to supplement their notes.

5.4.1.4 Having a notetaker present in your teaching session

Notetakers are recommended for a variety of reasons, for example where a student cannot take their own notes, or where they cannot take notes and focus on the lecture simultaneously – for example, in the case of a Deaf person, who may need to focus on an interpreter and so cannot take notes at the same time. The notetaker will only provide a copy of the notes to the student(s) with this support recommended. The notetaker will not participate in the lecture as a student would. Some students are recommended an electronic notetaker. These notetakers do not offer subject-specific expertise or familiarity but are specially trained to take very comprehensive notes straight onto a laptop. They will capture more than a standard notetaker, but the notes are not verbatim.

5.4.1.5 Having a sign language interpreter in your teaching session

d/Deaf students may use a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter in their lectures and seminars because BSL is their first language, or because they find it less tiring and easier to understand than lip reading English. The role of an interpreter is to interpret from spoken English to BSL and from BSL to spoken English, without omitting or adding anything. An interpreter will attempt to interpret everything they hear in the lecture, including comments and questions from students or lecturers.

Example 5
A new Deaf student is starting a degree course and Disability Services make contact with the School Disability Coordinator to discuss the student's support. A British Sign Language interpreter will be present in all lectures. The interpreter will be situated at the front near the lecturer, who is advised to speak at a normal steady pace. The interpreter will interpret what the lecturer says, as well as questions from students. On occasion the interpreter may ask the lecturer or students to clarify. The interpreter will also voiceover questions and comments from the Deaf student.

5.4.1.6 Providing handouts on coloured paper

This recommendation is made when a student has visual stress (also referred to as scotopic sensitivity or Irlen syndrome), which makes it difficult to read text presented in the standard, high contrast way, such as black text on a white background. Words may appear to swim, distort, or move – and it is difficult to track lines of text. Someone with visual stress may take longer to read and their eyes may become fatigued such that they cannot read for long periods. Students with visual stress will be assessed to identify preferences for coloured backgrounds, which can improve reading speed. If handouts are available, sufficiently in advance and electronically (e.g., on Blackboard), students can often print their own copies on the coloured paper of their choice; this reduces administrative load for the School.

5.4.2 Labs/ practicals

5.4.2.1 A lab support worker to work with the student

Lab support workers provide a variety of practical support for students. This could using equipment under the student's instruction, where a student is not able to safely lift, carry, measure, etc. On other occasions, a lab support worker may be in place to assist the student with time management and keeping on task. The lab support worker will not tutor the student and provides support only during the session. Lab support workers are normally funded by Disabled Students' Allowances (see section 2.6).

5.4.2.2 Use of a recording device in labs/ practicals

For guidance, see section 5.4.1.1.

5.4.3 Group work

5.4.3.1 Considerations around group work

Consideration of how group work is arranged may be required for students with communication difficulties such as d/Deaf or visually impaired students – and for students with Asperger syndrome. Not being able to hear, to see, or to pick up on verbal/ visual social cues will make it inherently difficult to participate in group work without some forward planning on the part of the lecturer. For example, it may be helpful to assign groups rather than asking students to choose themselves, as this can help students who may otherwise struggle to do this. Likewise, provide guidance on how the group is expected to behave, e.g.,

turn-taking, notetaking, time limits and how best for members of the group to organise themselves. Other students may be able to negotiate these interactions themselves, but students with social or communication difficulties can find this very difficult and therefore direction from the tutor is recommended. In some cases, even with support, the student will be unable to interact with others and/ or unable to contribute to the work of the group. Where this may have an adverse impact on the student's attainment or on other students, it will be necessary to consider alternative ways for the student to achieve their learning outcomes (i.e., an alternative to group work).

Example 6
A student with Asperger syndrome is studying chemistry and is very concerned about a group project. The tutor considers what can be done to assist the student with and his peers to work together, whilst still achieving the learning outcomes. The tutor decides to arrange all students into groups to remove the difficulty around joining a group. He then gives each group member a role and an outline of what is expected from the role. He then facilitates the start of the initial meeting of the group to make sure everyone is clear about objectives. He arranges to meet briefly with the student and the group after their first session together, to see how work is progressing and to find out if there are any communication difficulties to be resolved.

Example 7
A PhD student with depression is part of a research group and is based in a lab environment. She has disclosed her disability to her supervisory team but doesn't want the group to know. She has been experiencing difficulties with regular attendance due to her disability and the effects of medication. Other students in the group have commented on her absence and are unhappy that she isn't contributing work at the rate expected. The supervisor considers how to handle this situation to make sure the group are not adversely impacted and the student with depression is supported. With her consent, the supervisor discusses the situation with a Disability Adviser as well as the second supervisor and the Director of Graduate Studies in their School. The supervisor speaks to the student to revisit the issues of saying anything to the group about her depression because the supervisor thinks that her group will be supportive. The student has not changed her mind, so they discuss other ways for the group to be informed about her absences such as the supervisor telling the group it is a personal matter or offering to explain some of her situation so that others can understand. The student decides that she is not happy with any kind of disclosure to the group, so the supervisor starts a discussion about her options relating to how she will manage the workload. The supervisor suggests that she seek advice from other services within the University to help support her studies. This could be Disability Services and/ or her GP, who will also be able to identify support options relevant to her situation and can liaise with her School with her consent. The student and supervisor agree to meet a week later. In the meantime the supervisor explains that he has an obligation to the group to ensure that they can continue to function. He acknowledges that the group as a whole requires some support (without being specific about the student) and temporarily allocates some additional support to the group whilst a decision is made about a way forward. At the second meeting the student states that although she would like support from Disability Services, she doesn't think this will be enough to improve her attendance and productivity immediately. They start to look at two options: (1) to go part-time either on a temporary or on-going basis (making clear that this will have financial implications for the student); or (2) to suspend for a period of time to seek support or treatment with the aim of returning next academic year in a position to increase her productivity. The student is given time to consider her options and they set a further date to meet, with the intention of making a decision at the next meeting.

5.4.4 Coursework and assignments

Disabled students are not automatically entitled to coursework deadline extensions. Requests for extensions should follow University policy (see Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes, 'For the late submission of summative coursework'). However, coursework extensions are often a reasonable adjustment with respect to a student's disability and should be considered by Schools on a case-by-case basis and granted (at the School's discretion) where practical and in the student's best interests.

5.4.5 Alternative formats to standard print

5.4.5.1 Providing handouts and PowerPoint slides in advance on Blackboard

For guidance, see Section 5.4.1.2

5.4.6 Industrial placements/ field trips/ study abroad

It is good practice for the School Disability Coordinator to make sure that disabled students taking industrial placements/ field trips/ study abroad have talked to the relevant staff member responsible for those activities in good time. This applies equally to PG students who are undertaking their studies whilst based with an employer or other industrial placement. The relevant staff member can then work with the SDC and Disability Services to identify support for these activities. The support required may be quite different to that required for study on University of Bristol premises.

The University has a responsibility not to discriminate in arranging or finding industrial placements/ study abroad. This is why we advise students and staff to consider this at an early stage. Students should also be advised to seek early advice from Disability Services who can work with them and the School to identify what funding may be available and what reasonable adjustments may be required. The Careers Service may also be able to provide input re: disability support on industrial placements.

5.4.7 Examinations and assessments, including in-class tests

The DSS can replace section A of the alternative examination arrangements (AEAs) application form. Section A captures the student details and reason for application, and provides a summary of the support requested. It is expected that Schools will process these requests, submit them for Faculty approval, and tell the student what arrangements have been approved. **Students with a DSS should not be expected also to apply for AEAs using the School-based AEAs application process.**

Further information is available on the Examinations Office website: www.bristol.ac.uk/exams/alternative/

5.4.7.1 Extra time

The most common recommendation is for 25% extra working time. This recommendation is often made for students with a specific learning difficulty (e.g., dyslexia, dyspraxia) and is intended to compensate (in part) for the student's slower reading, writing and processing speed. However, 25% is not always the amount of extra time recommended. This can vary based on the individual needs of the student and may be more (and sometimes substantially more) than 25% where the effects of the student's disability warrant.

Extra time may be required in order to make effective use of the additional support being used. For example, a scribe may be provided. To use a scribe effectively, the student will need to speak their answers, check what the scribe has written, spell unfamiliar words aloud, on an on-going basis stop and start as required to make corrections verbally with the scribe

transcribing the changes, and undertake a final review of the script before the end of the exam. The student will require extra time to accomplish this.

Example 8
A dyslexic student has been recommended 33% extra time in their exams. The School Disability Coordinator queries this with Disability Services as they are used to seeing the recommendation for 25% extra time for dyslexic students. The Disability Adviser explains that this recommendation has come from the educational psychologist who completed the diagnostic assessment. The recommendation is in place to compensate for the student's slower reading, writing and processing speed. In this case their processing speed is particularly slow, relative both to their non-dyslexic peers and to many other students with dyslexia. For this reason, they have been recommended 33% extra time.

Students other than those with specific learning difficulties may also be recommended extra time in their exams.

Example 9
A Deaf student has been recommended extra time in their exams and the use of a British Sign Language Interpreter (BSL). The School Disability Coordinator is unsure why extra time is recommended. The student has extra time because British Sign Language is their first language and this can entail a slower understanding of written English. The BSL interpreter is there to interpret written questions if the student queries them, a process that takes time. Therefore, to help compensate for slower processing and the use of an interpreter in the exam, the student has extra time.

5.4.7.2 Use of a word processor (laptop/ PC) or assistive software

This may be due to slow or unintelligible handwriting, poor organisation of written work, or pain preventing long stretches of hand writing. Students using a computer may also be recommended the use of assistive software, such as speech-to-text or screen-reading software. For more information about assistive software please speak to a Disability Adviser.

5.4.7.3 Stop-the-clock rest breaks

Stop-the-clock rest breaks are recommended for a variety of reasons including the management of fatigue, the need for regular toilet breaks, and for students who experience debilitating anxiety. Rest breaks are 'stop-the-clock', which means that the student is not allowed to read or write during a rest break and the time taken as breaks is added on to the end of the regular allotted time.

5.4.7.4 Readers and scribes

Readers and scribes are recommended for students who require support with accurate reading of exam questions or exam responses and/ or the physical process of making exam responses. Readers and scribes are organised and implemented by Disability Services, in liaison with Schools, as they are part of the School's local arrangements for exams. Readers and scribes are briefed on their responsibility with regards to the integrity of the exam.

5.4.8 Other

This section will be used for any additional information that does not logically sit elsewhere in the DSS, such as flagging the need for a Personalised Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) or disabled car parking.

Example 10
A student has to attend regular hospital appointments due to a mental health condition and will therefore regularly miss a lecture. This information is shared so that staff are aware of the reason for the absence and will respond to requests to clarify missed information sympathetically.

5.5 Library Services

This section will contain recommendations for the Library, such as extended library loans, individual library inductions, and additional facilities or equipment. As with all support, the student has a responsibility to make contact with the Library's disability/ dyslexia support team to organise any support required.

5.6 DSAs-funded support (or support funded else ways; coordinated by Disability Services)

This section describes the funded support that a disabled student has available to them. Disability Services will work with the student to implement the support they choose to use. Students are under no obligation to use Disability Services. Occasionally, students may prefer to arrange their own support independently of Disability Services, or may choose not to investigate what support might be available, or may elect not to use any support for which they have been funded. Students retain these options as a matter of personal choice. Accordingly, contact with Disability Services, or use of study support, can never be specified as a condition for the student to satisfy with regard to: (1) continuing at the University; or (2) returning to the University after a period of suspense. This does not mean that students who would benefit from study support should not be strongly signposted to Disability Services.

Disability Services may contact Schools to assist in setting up support – for example, for information about a student's timetable or to make arrangements regarding level/ lift access.

5.7 Review period for DSSs

Needs and circumstances can change over time and it is important that the DSS is revised as required in order to remain current and valid.

The default review period is 12 months and this includes the need to review DSS documents written in the old format, i.e., before 1 August 2013. If a student requires a more frequent review, this will be specified on their DSS.

A review should, as a minimum, require the SDC to:
- Sense check the DSS, taking into account the suitability of the support required for any forthcoming units (and specifically including any changes to units agreed since the DSS was produced)
- Ask the student for their views about wishing to continue the existing support arrangements; if a student does not reply to an email requesting a review after a reasonable period, silence can be taken as consent

If any changes are required, the SDC should discuss these with Disability Services. Once agreed, a Disability Adviser will draft the changes and issue a new version of the DSS.

5.8 Disability Support Summary written by

During the 21 day consultation period, the Disability Adviser named in this section is the most appropriate person for Schools to contact with questions. Outside of the review period, please contact Disability Services via disability-services-advice@bristol.ac.uk or call 0117 331 0444.
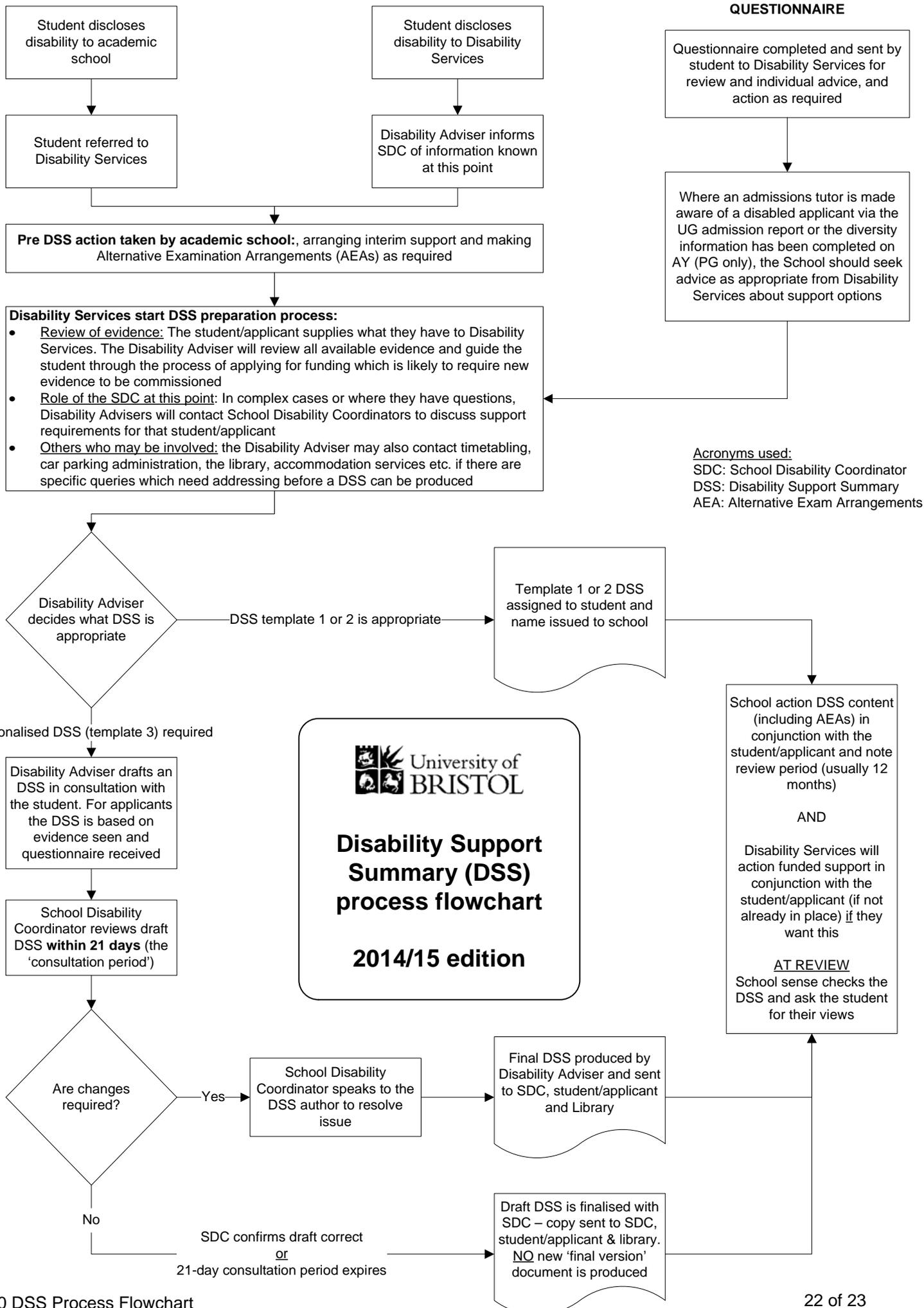
5.9 For further information

Disability Services can advise staff about supporting students with disabilities. Email disability-services-advice@bristol.ac.uk or call 0117 331 0444.

Student discloses disability to academic school

Student discloses disability to Disability Services

Questionnaire completed and sent by student to Disability Services for review and individual advice, and action as required

Student referred to Disability Services

Disability Adviser informs SDC of information known at this point

Where an admissions tutor is made aware of a disabled applicant via the UG admission report or the diversity information has been completed on AY (PG only), the School should seek advice as appropriate from Disability Services about support options

Pre DSS action taken by academic school:, arranging interim support and making Alternative Examination Arrangements (AEAs) as required

Disability Services start DSS preparation process:
- Review of evidence: The student/applicant supplies what they have to Disability Services. The Disability Adviser will review all available evidence and guide the student through the process of applying for funding which is likely to require new evidence to be commissioned
- Role of the SDC at this point: In complex cases or where they have questions, Disability Advisers will contact School Disability Coordinators to discuss support requirements for that student/applicant
- Others who may be involved: the Disability Adviser may also contact timetabling, car parking administration, the library, accommodation services etc. if there are specific queries which need addressing before a DSS can be produced

Acronyms used:
SDC: School Disability Coordinator
DSS: Disability Support Summary
AEA: Alternative Exam Arrangements

Disability Adviser decides what DSS is appropriate

DSS template 1 or 2 is appropriate

Template 1 or 2 DSS assigned to student and name issued to school

School action DSS content (including AEAs) in conjunction with the student/applicant and note review period (usually 12 months)

AND

Disability Services will action funded support in conjunction with the student/applicant (if not already in place) if they want this

AT REVIEW
School sense checks the DSS and ask the student for their views

Personalised DSS (template 3) required

Disability Adviser drafts an DSS in consultation with the student. For applicants the DSS is based on evidence seen and questionnaire received

![University of BRISTOL logo]

Disability Support Summary (DSS) process flowchart

2014/15 edition

School Disability Coordinator reviews draft DSS **within 21 days** (the 'consultation period')

Are changes required?

Yes

School Disability Coordinator speaks to the DSS author to resolve issue

Final DSS produced by Disability Adviser and sent to SDC, student/applicant and Library

No

SDC confirms draft correct
or
21-day consultation period expires

Draft DSS is finalised with SDC – copy sent to SDC, student/applicant & library. NO new 'final version' document is produced

7.0 DSS templates summary table

The following table distinguishes between Template 1, Template 2 and Template 3 DSSs -- and summarises the main differences in recommendations between the four subtypes of Template 1 and Template 2 DSSs. *For complete details of a student's support requirements, please refer to their DSS in full.*

TEMPLATE 1: SpLD (e.g., dyslexia, dyspraxia) **without** DSAs-funded support; T1 standardised DSSs are for UG and taught PG students only	**TEMPLATE 2**: SpLD (e.g., dyslexia, dyspraxia) **with** DSAs-funded support; T2 standardised DSSs are for UG and taught PG students only
[**1a**] SpLD only; *25% extra time in exams*	[**2a**] *as per [1a], see left*
[**1b**] SpLD + handwriting difficulty; *25% extra time in exams + use of a word processor in exams*	[**2b**] *as per [1b], see left*
[**1c**] SpLD + visual stress; *25% extra time in exams + use of coloured overlays/ tinted lenses in lectures and exams*	[**2c**] *as per [1c], see left*
[**1d**] SpLD + handwriting difficulty + visual stress; *25% extra time in exams + use of a word processor in exams + use of coloured overlays/ tinted lenses in lectures and exams (allow student to change the background colour of the computer display screen)*	[**2d**] *as per [1d], see left*
TEMPLATE 3: personalised DSSs; you must examine the detail of a T3 DSS for information about a student's particular study and examinations support requirements; T3 DSSs are for UG and taught PG students whose requirements are not met by a T1/ T2 standardised DSS, and for all PG research students	*Please contact Disability Services with any queries:* disability-services-advice@bristol.ac.uk 0117 954 6712 (internal: 46712)