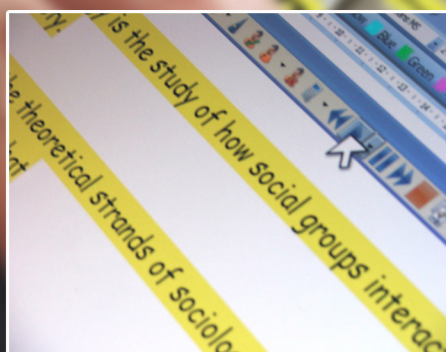


JISC Regional Support Centres, Scotland

Evaluating the Training Needs of Managers and Practitioners in the Area of Support for Learning / Disability Services within RSC Supported Institutions in Scotland.

eAccessibility and Inclusion a training needs evaluation



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If you require this report in an alternative format, e.g. electronic, DAISY, Braille, large print or MP3, please get in touch with your RSC.

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Introduction

The eLearning Advisors for Accessibility and Inclusion in the JISC Regional Support Centres (RSCs) South & West and North & East Scotland are funded by the Scottish Funding Council¹ (SFC) to provide appropriate support and advice to institutions in their regions. Their main remit is to embed inclusive practice in all aspects of eLearning. As part of this initiative, it was important to identify the eLearning needs of relevant staff across the sector. This was done using an online survey targeted at practitioners who work directly with students, and those with a wider, more strategic responsibility for managing services promoting inclusion.

These individuals often have a significant cross institutional responsibility as ‘agents of change’, working closely with staff developers, equality managers and other key personnel in promoting effective practice to staff groups within their institutions.

The survey was conducted in June 2007, and invited the respondents to describe their levels of knowledge in key areas of eLearning and accessible practice. The aim was to determine awareness of relevant JISC support services and to identify wider training needs in the area of accessibility, inclusion and eLearning.

Rationale

In 2001, the SFC published an analysis² of Further Education Awards in relation to disabled students (see Appendix 1). This was the first time that a detailed analysis was available which reflected the range of students with additional support needs studying in FE. Full-time students were grouped by college, type and nature of disability and level of study.

The Funding Council’s findings coincided with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) which prohibited discrimination against disabled students in all aspects of education. Their most up-to-date figures (see Appendix 2) reveal that the number of FE students with a disability has increased

¹ Scottish Funding Council www.sfc.ac.uk

² The Scottish Funding Council’s Infact database allows users to request statistics, tables or graphs providing information on Scottish Further Education. <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/infact/>

considerably. For example, there has been a rise in the number of students identified as dyslexic, from 0.57% in 2000-2001 to 1.87% in 2005-2006 (an increase of approximately 300%).

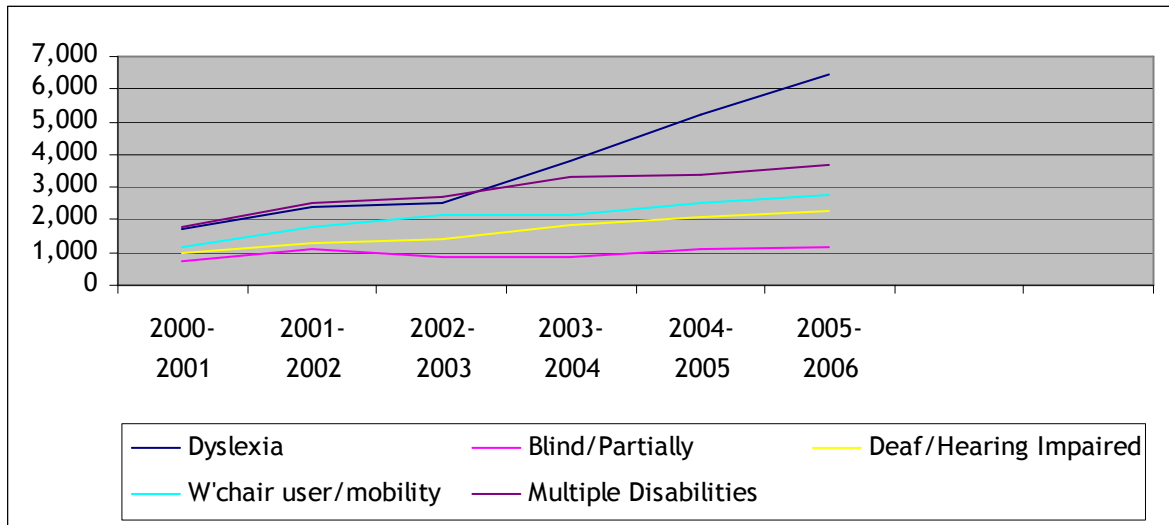


Figure 1: Disabled full-time students attending FE from 00/01 to 05/06

In 2000-2001, the percentage of blind/partially sighted students attending college was 0.28% of the total cohort. This rose to 0.4%, an approximate increase of 33%. Similar increases were also recorded for deaf and hearing impaired students (over 130%) as well as students with a physical/mobility difficulty (over 140%). It should be noted that when the initial figures were collated in 2000, some colleges did not submit information. The sector has also experienced a great deal of change in recent years, particularly in terms of restructuring, new builds and mergers which might, in some cases, provide unreliable data.

Despite these factors, there has undoubtedly been an overall increase in disabled students attending FE colleges. This could be explained in part by the effect of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and Part 4 of the Act - Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). As a result colleges are increasingly and more accurately capturing disability information as part of the admission and induction process. It is also the case that more students are willing to disclose their disabilities and are receiving appropriate levels of support. There are also

students who have not disclosed a disability but do require and receive additional support.

In addition, there is wider awareness of dyslexia as a specific learning difficulty (SPLd) throughout the sector and colleges now have appropriately trained staff (e.g., BRITE³ trained staff) who are able to identify and assess students with dyslexia related difficulties.

Methodology

Information was gathered using an online survey targeted at managers and practitioners across the sector involved in the area of support for learning. While managers can have a direct responsibility for the wider strategic development of access and inclusion within their institutions, learning support practitioners have regular daily contact with students. Both groups were asked to respond to separate sets of questions, reflecting their respective roles and responsibilities.

Job titles for staff working in this field vary from one institution to another (Support for Learning, Access Co-ordinator, Extended Learning Support, Inclusion Advisor, Disability Advisors), therefore for the purposes of this report, the generic term 'Support for Learning' will be used to describe this diverse range of nomenclatures.

The online survey was disseminated to support for learning staff by email in June 2007. Respondents had until July 2007 to select and complete the questionnaire option that best described their area of work.

What follows is a presentation of the findings from both groups. The first section focuses on Support for Learning managers and the second on Support for Learning practitioners.

³ One of the key recommendations of the Beattie Committee Report "Implementing Inclusiveness; Realising Potential" (September 1999) concerned access to information and expertise in the use of enabling technologies to support students with disabilities and additional support needs in post-16 provision.

Section 1

Support for Learning Managers – Findings

Of the institutions who were invited to participate, 22 managers responded. 9 were from Higher Education and 13 from Further Education. Table 1 below indicates the institutions that responded.

College	Number of Respondents
Moray College UHI	3
Forth Valley College	3
Glasgow School of Art	2
University of Edinburgh	2
Glasgow Metropolitan College	2
John Wheatley College	1
Coatbridge College	1
Inverness College	1
West Lothian College	1
Edinburgh's Telford College	1
Perth College	1
Adam Smith College	1
Queen Margaret University	1
RSAMD	1
Stow College	1
Total	22

Table 1 - Institutions Who Responded

Nomenclature

As Table 2 suggests, job titles for staff working in this field vary from one institution to another. Those with responsibility for managing access and inclusion held the following job titles:

Job Title	Number
Curriculum and Quality Leader	2
Director for Learner Support, Guidance & Inclusion	1
Access Co-ordinator	1
Disabled User Co-ordinator for the Library	1
Learning Support Team Leader	1
Head of Teaching Department	1
Head of Division	1
Equalities and Development Manager	1
Assistant Principal: Student and Client Services	1
Senior Support Worker Additional Responsibilities	1
Assistant Director	1
Learning Technologist	1
eLearning Services Manager	1
Additional Support Coordinator	1
Student Services Manager	1
Access and Support Service Leader	1
Co-ordinator: additional support	1
Head of learning resources	1
Assistant Associate Principal	1
SL in ELS	1
Learner Support Manager	1
Total	22

Table 2 - Job Titles

Support for Learning Managers

A Strategic Approach to eLearning

Accessibility and inclusion are most effective when embedded into mainstream policy practice and provision, recognising the contributions of a range of staff across institutions. Working inclusively has therefore as much to do with library, learning and teaching, reception and administrative staff as those with a specific responsibility for supporting learners with disabilities. By recognising the benefits of providing inclusively designed electronic information within eLearning, it is possible to strategically address the sustainability of good practice in terms of disability equality legislation across a range of roles.

The JISC TechDis service argues that one of the most effective ways of meeting the anticipatory duty defined by the DDA is to give staff the skills to respond effectively and creatively to learner needs⁴. One aim of the survey was to assess how many respondents had an awareness of the benefits of inclusion that eLearning brings and how those benefits could be integrated and promoted in ICT policies and practices throughout their organisations.

As can be seen from Figures 2 and 3 (page 9), 59% of Support for Learning managers felt that they had an 'advanced' or 'good' awareness of the tacit benefits of inclusion in eLearning, yet only 37% felt 'very confident' or 'confident' about raising awareness of the issue. This suggests that although individuals understand the benefits that effective eLearning may have, they felt less able to implement an approach which supports the wider application of good practice across their institutions.

⁴ www.techdis.ac.uk/index.php?p=2_2_3

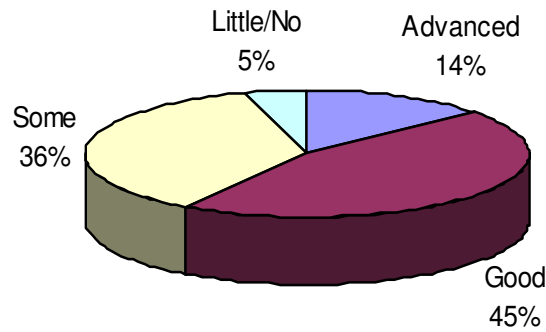


Figure 2: How much do you know about the accessibility and inclusion benefits of eLearning?

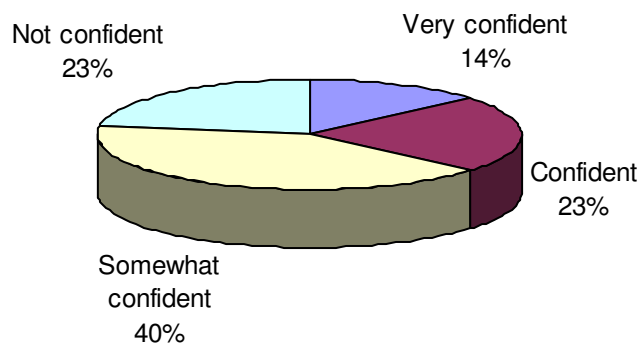


Figure 3: How confident do you feel about your ability to raise awareness of accessibility 'hotspots' or promoting benefits within your institution's eLearning/ICT Strategy?

Supporting other stakeholders in your institution

Having responsibility for access and inclusion across an institution often suggests a responsibility as an 'agent of change' in influencing the practice of others. With this in mind, respondents were asked about their confidence in supporting other key staff by advocating good inclusive practice within different areas of ICT/eLearning.

Confidence in promoting accessibility benefits of eLearning to the following staff groups?	Very Confident %	Confident %	Somewhat Confident %	Not Confident %
Senior Managers	14	38	38	10
Marketing Teams	5	63	16	16
Web Designers	0	35	45	20
Student Services/Admissions Teams	10	50	40	0
Network/IT Teams	0	45	35	20
Curriculum Staff	10	45	35	10
Library/Learning Resources	15	55	25	5
Careers and Welfare Teams	5	50	40	5

Table 3 - Level of Confidence in Supporting other Stakeholders

On the whole, there was a general level of confidence in supporting others to work inclusively. Most respondents felt comfortable working with other practitioners within their organisations. It was clear however, that there was a lower level of confidence in supporting Web designers and Network/IT teams which may be due to the technical nature of their role. This is an area the RSCs could provide support and guidance to both managers and stakeholder such as Web designers and Network staff.

Awareness of JISC Advisory Services: TechDis Resources

As one of the main JISC Advisory Services, and an influential provider of advice and guidance, TechDis aims to be the leading educational advisory service working across the UK, in the fields of accessibility and inclusion. The survey aimed to determine the level of awareness of materials produced by TechDis to support staff in Further and Higher Education. TechDis have distributed information about specific resource packs across UK institutions to senior management teams and Support for Learning managers over the last 18 months. Respondents were asked if they were familiar with either the TechDis Accessibility Essentials⁵ packs or the Senior Management (SMT) Briefing Series⁶.

⁵ http://techdis.ac.uk/index.php?p=3_20

⁶ http://www.techdis.ac.uk/index.php?p=2_2_3

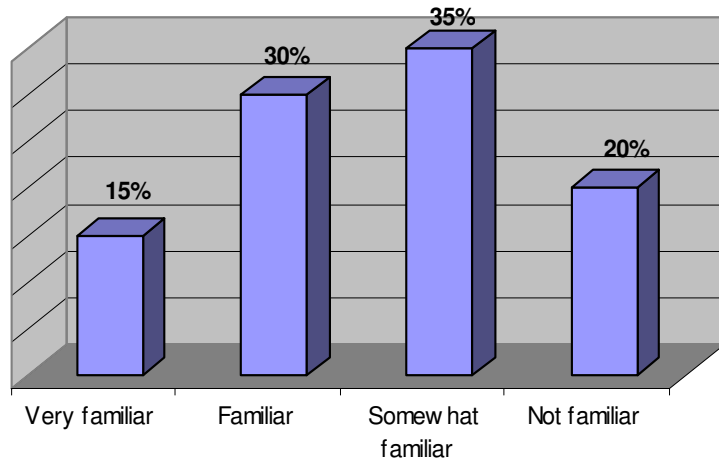


Figure 4: Familiarity with TechDis Accessibility Essentials Series

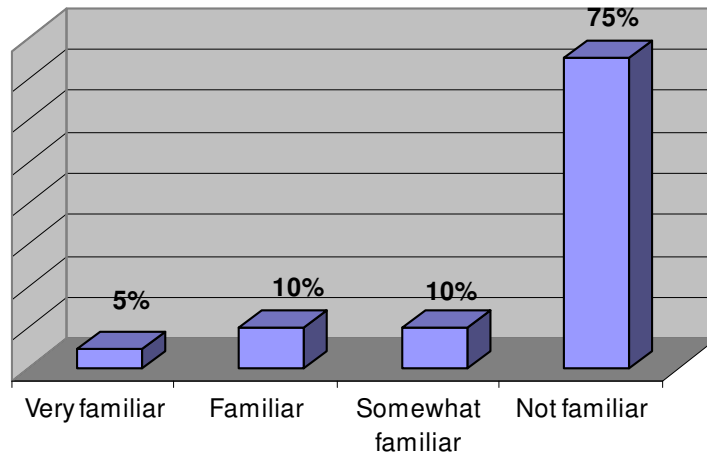


Figure 5: Familiarity with SMT Briefings

Only 15% of Support for Learning managers were ‘very familiar’ with the TechDis Accessibility Essentials Series which offers practical advice on embedding inclusive eLearning within office packages such as MS Word and MS PowerPoint. Around 20% were ‘not familiar’ with these resources.

Almost 75% of the respondents were ‘not familiar’ with the TechDis SMT Briefing series despite the fact that over the past 18 months, TechDis has provided Senior Managers within all UK colleges a series of briefing packs. The SMT packs feature specific guidance and advice relating to relevant staff roles. The TechDis packs provide advice, guidance and practical resources to assist with the understanding of issues related to the ‘Disability Equality Duty’. A key aim of the packs is to improve accessible teaching and learning practices.

Workshops Offered by the RSCs

In order to ensure that the RSCs offer fitting guidance and support, managers were asked about the appropriateness of workshops that have been offered by the RSCs in the past. They were also asked to comment on the types of workshops and support that would be appropriate in the forthcoming academic sessions.

Impact of Legislation

Figures 6 and 7 indicate that there was a strong demand for guidance on disability legislation, in particular the impact this will have on eLearning methodologies. They were interested in learning about assistive technologies, inclusive learning resources and the important role that all staff can undertake in order to comply with the legislation.

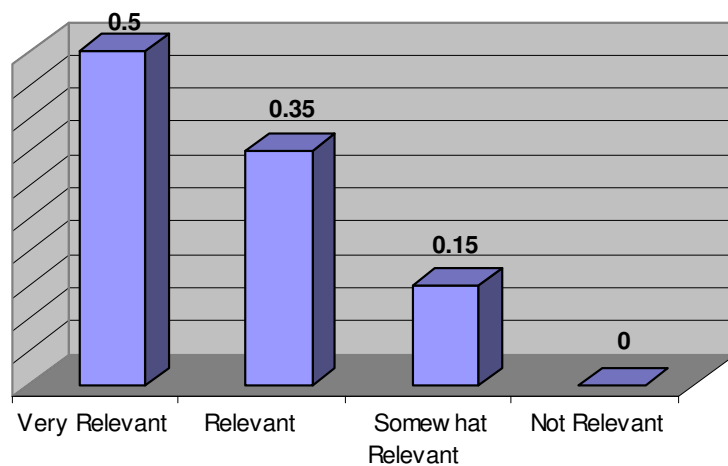


Figure 6: Relevance of training on the implications of the DDA in ICT

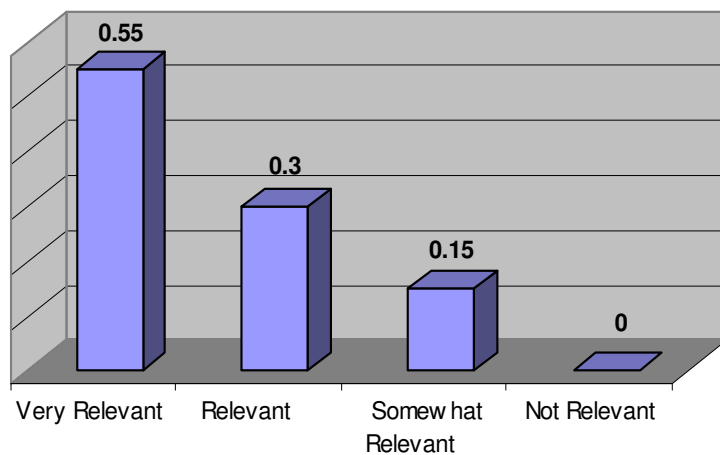


Figure 7: Implications of the Disability Equality Duty (DED) on ICT in eLearning

Online Support

Given the limited time and busy work commitments of those managing inclusion services, as well as the geographical constraints of providing guidance and support to institutions further afield, the RSCs have been investigating delivering online support using web-based conferencing.

Figure 8 indicates that 80% of respondents felt that this form of support would be useful to them.

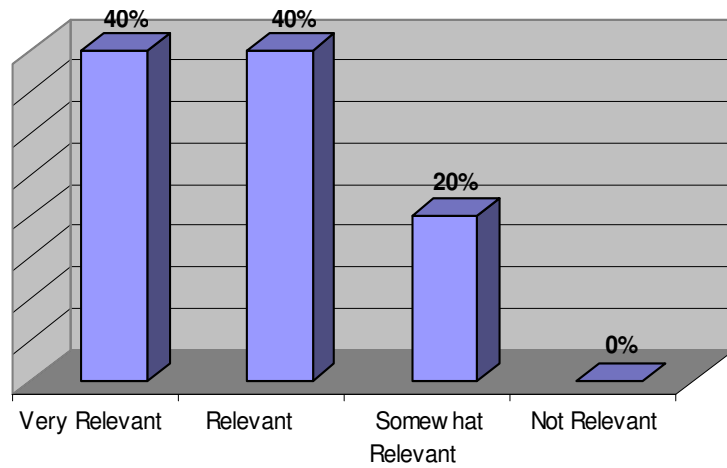


Figure 8: Relevance of scheduled online support workshops broadcast by the RSCs

Section 2

Support for Learning Practitioners - Findings

Questions were grouped into specific areas with the aim of identifying skills and knowledge. This was in relation to cognitive, sensory and physical difficulties. The survey focussed on how ICT and access to eLearning can be enhanced using built-in accessibility options, specialised software (such as screen readers, magnifiers and alternative input packages), literacy support, customisation of web browsers and open source software. A key element of the survey was to discover how familiar respondents were with TechDis publications (such as Accessibility Essentials) which are designed to support staff in creating accessible electronic documents and resources.

Nomenclature

As Table 4 suggests, job titles for staff working in this field vary from one institution to another. Participants with responsibility for delivering support in access and inclusion were asked to describe their job titles.

Job Title	Number
Lecturer	10
Support for Learning Assistant	3
Learning Assistant	3
ELS Facilitator/Coordinator	2
Learning Support Coordinator	2
Learner Development Worker	2
Head of Community Learning and Development	1
Learning Skills Advisor	1
Access Coordinator	1
Study Skills Support Tutor	1
Team Leader	1
Student Development Officer	1
Study Skills Support Tutor	1
Learning Development Lecturer	1
eLearning Technologist	1
Educational Development Officer	1
Guidance Advisor	1
Sessional Tutor	1
I.T. Support Technician	1
Total	35

Table 4: Variation of job titles and number of respondents.

General Accessibility Options

Accessibility Options is a suite of utilities which can be found in the Windows Control Panel (95 to XP) and are designed to increase access for disabled users. They provide a range of features which allow a computer to be customised to suit the different needs of learners. Accessibility Options are particularly useful for making ‘reasonable adjustments’ as specified by the Disability Discrimination Act.

For learners who have a physical or sensory difficulty, Accessibility Options can make learning more comfortable, easier to see and use. In order to gauge the awareness of the built-in features, respondents were asked a series of questions related to these features:

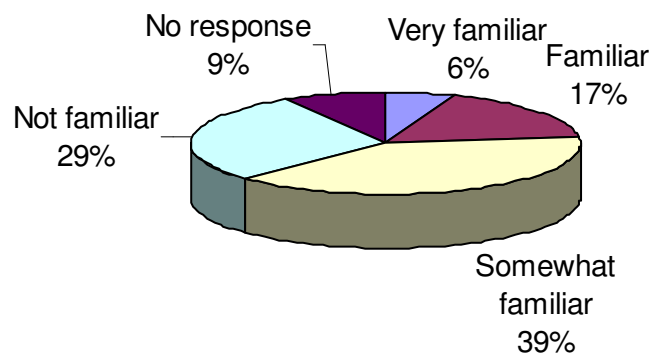


Figure 9: Are you familiar the features of Accessibility Options?

With only 6% of respondents agreeing that they are ‘very familiar’ with Accessibility Options, this figure suggest this is an area which is either neglected or unknown. It is often the case that more expensive or ‘higher end/specialised’ programs are used to support learners where built-in options would suffice.

As can be seen from the comments below, those practitioners who are ‘very familiar’ or ‘familiar’ with Accessibility Options use them to support a range of learning needs. This was highlighted in the following comments:

- “Stickykeys, enlargement of font/pointer/desktop, change of background, mouse adaptations, keyboard shortcuts.”
- “Zoom option and icon size.”

- “Screen Magnifier.”
- “Stickykeys, Key Mouse modification, Magnification, Monitor colour, High contrast screen presentation.”

It is evident that these staff are implementing a range of features to benefit those learners who experience difficulties accessing standard computers, mice and keyboards.

Customising Microsoft Word (Office) to support learners with dyslexia

It is also possible to customise commonly used applications in colleges such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook to suit the needs of individual learners. Customisation of Word and other Office applications are the main focus of the Accessibility Essentials publications⁷. As with Accessibility Options, it is possible that the features available within Office are being ignored in favour of bespoke and expensive applications.

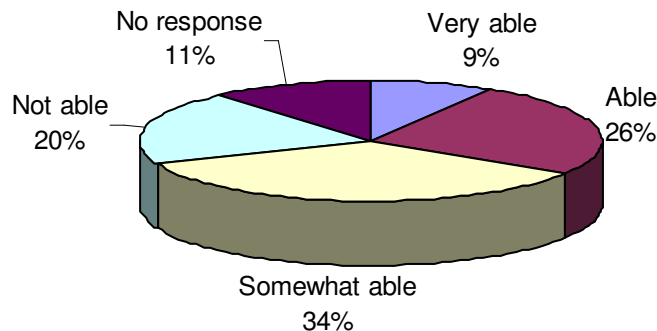


Figure 10: Would you be able to adjust the settings on a computer to meet the needs of a student who has a cognitive difficulty, such as dyslexia?

Much can be done in Word to individualise a computer’s settings, thereby making it more accessible for learners with literacy difficulties (such as dyslexia). While individual preferences will differ from student to student, basic changes of font style, size and colour, as well as background colours, can make all the difference, particularly for those learners who experience Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome⁸. Additionally, Word also contains a number of features that can help with spelling and increase data input such as AutoText and AutoCorrect.

⁷ The TechDis Accessibility Essentials Guides give practical step-by-step guides to increase accessibility in electronic documents: www.techdis.ac.uk/index.php?p=3_20

⁸ Irlen Syndrome, or Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome, was first identified by educational psychologist Helen Irlen while she was working with adult learners in the early 1980's. To find out more go to: www.readingandwriting.ab.ca/judypool/irlen.htm#Irlen

To identify if staff were aware of these features they were asked the following questions:

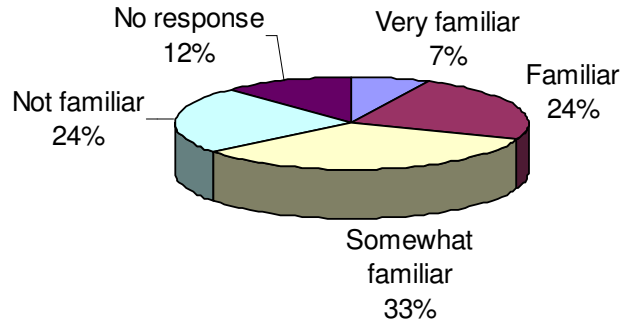


Figure 11: Are you familiar with MS Word features such as AutoText and AutoCorrect?

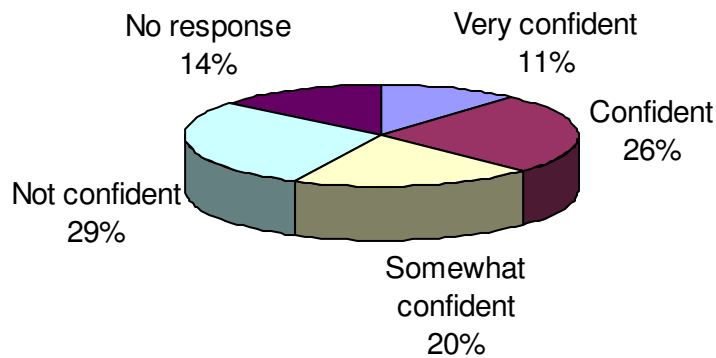


Figure 12: Do you know how to customise/create toolbars in MS Word?

Autocorrect and AutoText are powerful utilities that, when used in the correct context, can provide literacy support to enhance confidence with spelling and repetitive writing tasks. AutoText entries can be located in Word's menu/toolbar giving students access to commonly misspelt words. As can be seen from Figures 10, 11 & 12, there is an overall lack of knowledge and confidence in using these features. Creating AutoText and AutoCorrect entries are featured in Accessibility Essentials 2 which highlights the importance of using these effective features.

Supporting students with visual difficulties to access eLearning

Figures taken from the SFC’s Infact database reveal there has been a 57% increase in students recorded as blind or partially sighted attending FE between 2000-2001 and 2005-2006. Visual difficulties or partial sight can range from blindness to tunnel vision, blind spots, difficulties with colour perception and blurred vision. For those students who are partially sighted, there may be occasions when adjustments are required to make information on the screen readable.

In recent years, the screen resolution of PC monitors and laptops have increased from an average of 800x600 to 1024x768 pixels and above. This means that while more space on the desktop is available for multiple Windows or applications, it has simultaneously had an adverse affect on learners with visual difficulties. For example, icons, text, buttons, menu bars etc, are decreasing in size and becoming increasingly difficult to identify and read.

It is therefore important that staff are able to customise settings to meet the needs of those learners with visual difficulties. Out of the 30 respondents, less than half were ‘very able’ or ‘able’ to make such adjustments.

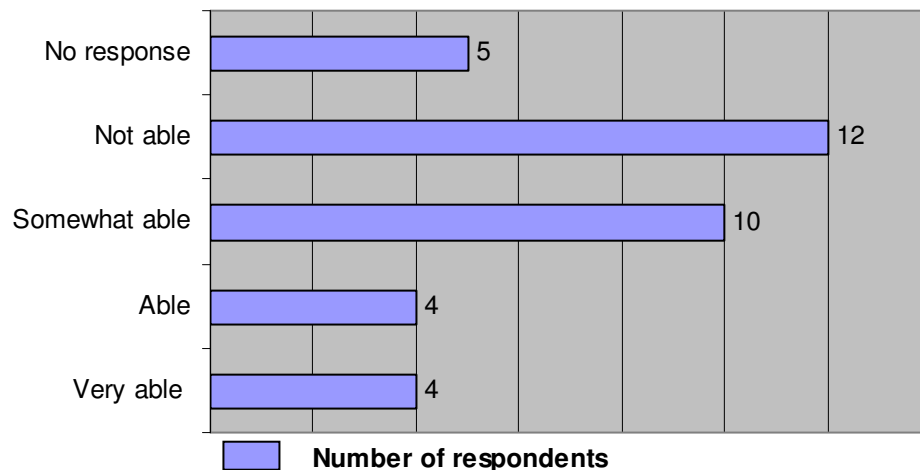


Figure 13: Would you be able to adjust the settings in Windows and Office to meet the needs of a student who has a visual difficulty?

These responses are helpful in understanding the kind of training that the RSCs could most usefully provide.

Figures 14 & 15 highlight the need for staff development that focuses on specialist software support for visually impaired learners.

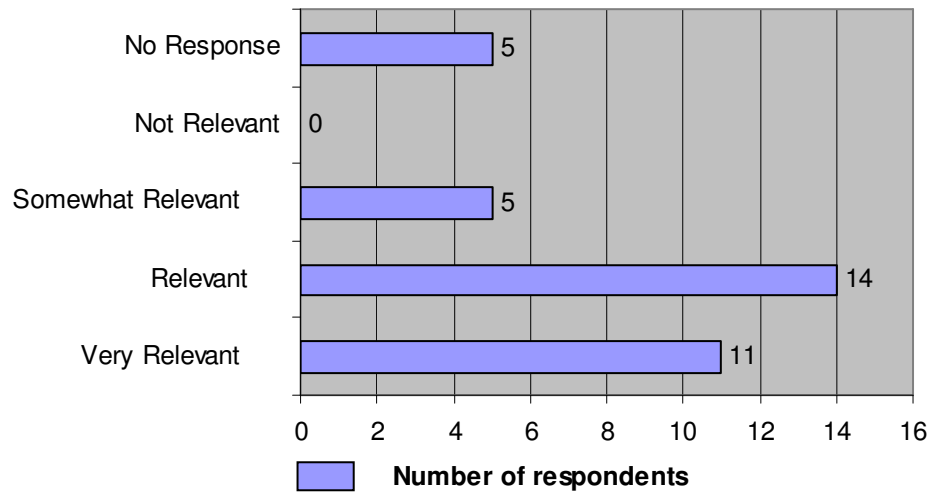


Figure 14: Software support for learners with sight difficulties (Lunar, BigShot, ZoomText, OCR scanning to text etc).

An overwhelming number of respondents identified a need for training using screen reading software such as JAWS⁹.

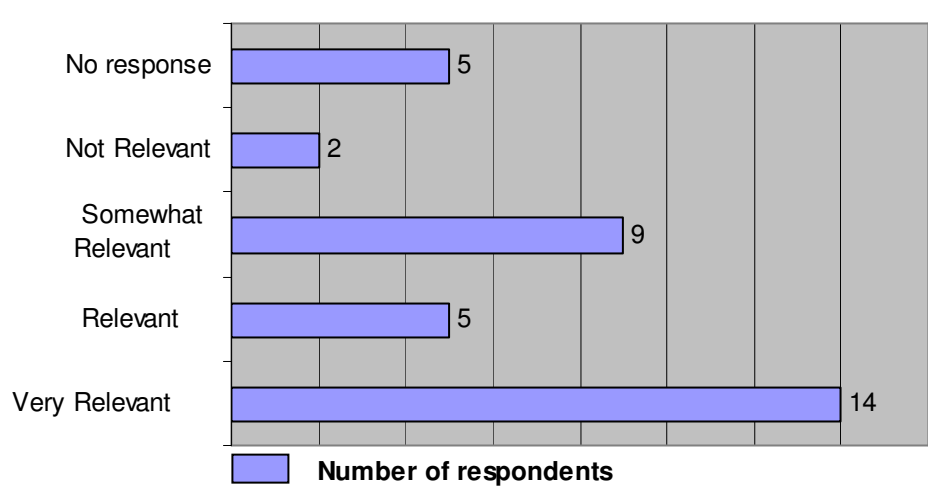


Figure 15: JAWS workshop (supporting blind users who use screen reading software).

⁹ JAWS stands for "Job Access for Windows and Speech." It is a screen reader program created by Freedom Scientific, which allows people who are blind to gain access to information on their computers. www.freedomscientific.com

Specialist software programs

There was also a great deal of demand (see Table 5) for staff development on specific programs that support learners with literacy difficulties, such as TextHELP, Inspiration, MindManager, ClaroRead and Dragon NaturallySpeaking.

These programs tend to be used widely throughout the sector and have been installed on many college networks. Students who receive a Disabled Students Allowance¹⁰ (DSA) and have been identified as dyslexic receive similar programs to support their coursework.

Very relevant	43%
Relevant	44%
Somewhat relevant	13%
Not relevant	0%

Table 5: Staff development in specialised software

As can be seen from Table 5, there was an overwhelming demand for training in literacy support software programs. With a 272% increase in students identified as dyslexic since 2000-2001, this is a large area for staff development.

A similar demand for training in Table 6 was identified for staff who support learners with multiple and/or complex additional support needs. These students are now attending in ever increasing numbers (87% rise since 2000-2001).

Very relevant	40%
Relevant	30%
Somewhat relevant	27%
Not relevant	3%

Table 6: Software support for students with complex difficulties alternative input options: Intellikeys, on-screen keyboards, switch access and scanning

Depending on the type of support required, some learners may require alternative or adaptive access to computers, for example, single switches (buttons) or augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices.

¹⁰See E. A. Draffen D. G. Evans & P. Blenkhorn "Use of assistive technology by students with dyslexia in post-secondary education" <http://eprints.ecs.soton.ac.uk/14143/>

This often requires very specialist knowledge and expertise as well as equipment. The majority of respondents identified that training to meet complex support needs were very relevant to their roles.

Web browsers, VLEs and accessibility

The next set of questions were designed to probe respondents' knowledge of the various ways in which web browsers can be customised to support a diverse range of learning needs. Although the World Wide Web Consortium¹¹ (W3C) provides a framework to ensure a more accessible web browsing experience, a great deal more can be done by customising the various settings within a web browsers, (e.g. Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Opera, etc).

Respondents were asked if were able to customise a web browser to suit individual preferences. While less than a quarter of respondents felt 'very able' or 'able' more than three quarters were less able.

Very able	13%
Able	13%
Somewhat able	33%
Not able	41%

Table 7: Would you be able to adjust the colour background and font settings in a web browser, e.g., to suit the visual preferences of learners?

The above also applies to most VLEs. Users can customise settings within their browsers so that the VLEs respond to their needs. For example, background colours, font sizes, styles, etc.

Many browsers allow users to add their own personal Cascading Style Sheets which control the design and layout of the VLE. Under half of the respondents were unaware of the visual changes that can be made in web browsers.

¹¹ The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) develops interoperable technologies (specifications, guidelines, software, and tools) to lead the Web to its full potential. <http://www.w3.org/>

The final question in this section explored the use of assistive technologies that can be used alongside (or even integrated within) browsers to provide text-to-speech, colour changes and/or magnification.

Very familiar	0%
Familiar	10%
Somewhat familiar	20%
Not familiar	70%

Table 8: How familiar are you with assistive technology solutions which work alongside or within a web browser (e.g., text-to-speech, magnification)?

With 90% of respondents selecting ‘somewhat familiar’/’not familiar’, this is obviously quite a large area for staff development, particularly as the sector is increasingly using web forums, VLEs and web-based information services to communicate with students.

TechDis: Accessibility Essentials

A common thread which runs consistently throughout the survey is the relevance and importance of the TechDis publications, particularly the Accessibility Essentials series. These publications provide informative, practical, yet easy-to-use tutorials to make electronic documents more accessible. The key principle which lies behind Accessibility Essentials is the idea that resources which take accessibility into consideration, incorporate the key aims of universal design; materials are not solely designed for ‘disabled people’ they are accessible to everyone.

To a great extent Accessibility Essentials addresses much of the knowledge required to resolve many of the issues highlighted in the survey and subsequently this report. For example, Accessibility Essentials 1 explores how to make electronic documents more readable. Accessibility Essentials 2 examines ways in which accessibility can be incorporated into Microsoft Word and Accessibility Essentials 3 considers the importance of making accessible PowerPoint presentations.

When respondents were asked how familiar they were with these publications, 67% indicated they were 'not familiar' while only 7% were 'very familiar'.

Very familiar	7%
Familiar	3%
Somewhat familiar	23%
Not familiar	67%

Table9: Are you familiar with Techdis Accessibility Essentials Techdis packs?

To highlight the significance of providing learners with accessible electronic documents, respondents were asked to identify workshops they would like to attend. Half of the respondents felt that courses which focussed on creating accessible and inclusive eLearning resources (in Word and PowerPoint, Tables 10 & 11) would be 'very relevant' to their role.

Very relevant	50%
Relevant	33%
Somewhat relevant	17%
Not relevant	0%

Table 10: Creating accessible and inclusive eLearning materials (Word and PowerPoint)

As PowerPoint presentations are increasingly used to convey information in class settings and online environments, the value of accessible presentations has implications for both learners and tutors. However, when respondents were asked how confident they would be to create presentations with access and inclusion in mind, only 3% felt 'very confident'. This can be contrasted with 28% of respondents who felt they were 'somewhat confident' and 45% who indicated they were 'not confident'.

Very confident	3%
Confident	24%
Somewhat confident	28%
Not confident	45%

Table 11: How confident are you at creating PowerPoint presentations with access and inclusion in mind?

Similar responses to the next question related to the use of ‘Styles and Formatting’ in Word, identified another area of training where skills could be expanded to make the most of the accessible features supported within Word. Using correct ‘Styles and Formatting’ allows users to benefit from both personalising and navigating documents.

Very familiar	13%
Familiar	20%
Somewhat familiar	50%
Not familiar	17%

Table 12: Are you familiar with ‘Styles and Formatting’ in MS Word to create accessible documents?

Cumulatively, these results suggest that if the Accessibility Essential packs were more widely used, accessibility and inclusion could be integrated into learning materials more readily.

Open source software

There are some excellent free and open source assistive technologies, some of which can be downloaded from the TechDis website. Many open source resources offer similar features to expensive commercially available applications. Free and open source resources can be particularly beneficial to students who do not receive funding but have additional support needs. Open source resources are also helpful for learners with more general support needs, e.g. English as a second language (ESOL) and those students with literacy and visual difficulties. Up to 90% of respondents felt that open source software training would be ‘very relevant’ or ‘relevant’ to them.

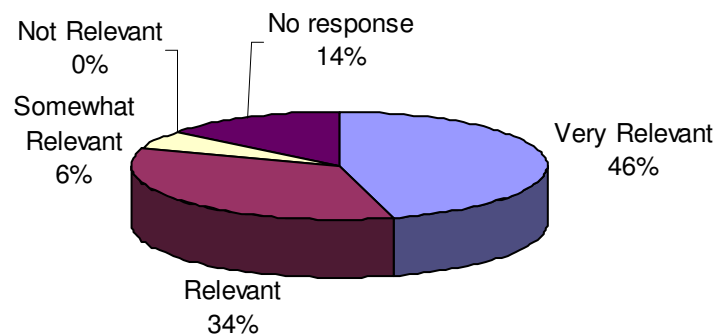


Figure 16: Relevance of open source assistive technologies to support learners

Staff development and training

As well as the demand for workshops which focus on assistive technologies and creating accessible resources, a new initiative by the RSCs is to provide online training using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) conferencing software. This would allow more staff to attend workshops at their desks (see ETNA¹² report on computing availability). Respondents were asked if scheduled online support workshops would be relevant to their needs. A majority of 78% respondents (Figure 16) indicated it would be a 'very relevant'/'relevant' method of delivery.

A key aspect of this form of delivery is that no additional software or hardware is required other than access to a Flash-enabled browser (although a microphone and webcam can enhance the training).

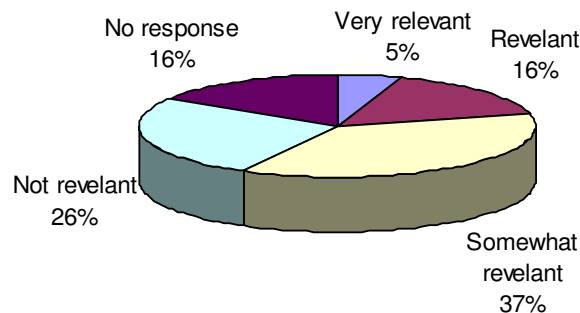


Figure 17: Scheduled online support workshops accessed from workplace computer.

Conclusions

The main points which have been highlighted by the survey include:

1. There has been a major increase in the number of students with additional support needs attending FE. Colleges must now make 'reasonable adjustments' to meet the needs of their students.
2. Managers were interested in finding out how to fulfil their responsibilities of the Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Equality Duty.
3. Managers would benefit from support in influencing and advocating good practice to their own senior managers.

¹² The Electronic Training Needs Analysis (ETNA) found that up to 98% of staff had access to a computer for their sole use when at work (p.41). www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk/etna/

4. Built-in Windows, Office and web browser features are largely ignored. In many cases, these options can allow learners to make reasonable adjustments to enhance their learning experience.
5. Techdis publications, such as Accessibility Essentials, contains the information learners and staff need to create and use accessible resources.
6. Money might be wasted on buying expensive specialised programs, where similar benefits can be gained by using the features available in Windows and Office applications and/or open source software.
7. There is a low level of knowledge about how to help learners with visual difficulties.
8. There is a need for training to support learners with complex difficulties.
9. Staff have shown an interest in online training.

A great deal has been learnt from the survey. Much has changed since the Scottish Funding Council began collating information based on full-time disabled students attending FE. Over the past 7 years, effective learning services and support systems have developed to accommodate the needs of students throughout the sector. This is an area which is constantly changing, particularly as the DDA extends into education. Subsequent amendments of the Act (e.g. The Disability Equalities Duty/Scheme¹³) have impacted on the sector. This serves to reinforce the point that there is still a great deal of work to do, particularly in the area of accessible and inclusive eLearning.

Support for Learning managers and practitioners have a key role in encouraging their institutions to work holistically in ensuring that all policies, procedures and practices have a positive impact on students with disabilities. In producing Disability Equality Schemes and corresponding action plans, there is a commitment and expectation for institutions to highlight ways in which these developments have been put into place and to actively consult users about the impact it has on them as recipients.

¹³ One of the principal provisions of the new Disability Discrimination Act 2005 will introduce a duty to promote equality for disabled people.
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/disability/publicsectorduty>

Recommendations

1. Awareness and specialist training is required in the following areas:
 - a. Techdis Senior Management Briefings and Accessibility Essentials Packs.
 - b. Support for managers to implement college wide inclusive policies.
 - c. Built-in accessibility features in Windows, Office and web browsers.
 - d. Literacy support programs.
 - e. Learners with visual difficulties.
 - f. Learners with complex difficulties.

2. Deliver workshops/training in a more flexible way using VoIP conferencing software.

The following comments indicate the diverse range of services which can be provided by the RSCs:

Support for Learning Managers

- “Regular updates re changes in legislation and how to ensure we are fulfilling our responsibilities.”
- “Updates on new developments within both elearning and assistive technologies.”
- “Joint training sessions with teaching staff to illustrate a joined up approach between teams.”
- “Main strategic issue is inability to influence/leverage resources for accessibility issues at key strategic levels.”
- “Awareness-raising/training is much more effective in realising change when it is delivered by those with direct experience, e.g. someone with a disability/someone who has suffered discrimination.”
- “Reasonable Adjustments in Learning and Teaching.”
- “Accessible materials: Why? How?”
- “Very helpful to know how capable RSC eAdvisors for Access and Inclusion are and how willing they are to assist our college.”
- “I would be/am happy to act as an agent of change in this area and promote the use of ICT. However, my skills are in disability awareness and learning and teaching for people with additional support needs - and not particularly in the IT area so I, personally, would benefit from attending a session which

would give an overview and some insight into the wide range of software, and the training opportunities for staff.”

- “Messages to Senior Management about need for this backed up by resources which would help us to fulfil our role in assisting the college to become more accessible and inclusive.”
- “As we move from familiarity with the use of 'basic' ICLT tools into the uses of newer tools like podcasts and Wikis it would be helpful to have workshops which help us to keep up to date with the technologies which our learners are most familiar with - even if we are not!”

Support for Learning Practitioners

- “Preparing materials for delivery using a VLE”
- “A course on the use of Dragon and Kurzweil to support visually impaired learners would be very useful”
- “How to change settings on the computer/internet. What software there is available for working with visually impaired, dyslexia and other learning difficulties and how to use it.”
- “Jaws would be the most useful at the moment.”
- “Online/on demand workshops would be very useful as I can't always leave the office.”
- “I would like to know more about free/low cost software that staff can use to create accessible eLearning materials as well as software that allows students to access electronic materials in a more accessible way.”
- “It would be very useful if all the information in the workshops (software/links/tools) is available on the RSC website too and updated regularly (RSS feed?).”
- “This area has become increasingly important within my working environment and I would very much hope to increase my current (very limited) knowledge over the coming academic year with the help of JISC.”

Appendix 1: SFC Further Education Awards Disability 2000 - 2001
(Source: Infact Database)

Disability	No known disability	Dyslexia	Blind/ part sighted	Deaf/ hearing impaired	W'chair user/ mobdf	Unseen- diab,epl ,as	Multiple disability
College name	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Aberdeen College	30,590	42	31	36	97	96	114
Angus College	5,145	23	5	5	16	28	16
Anniesland College	11,967	6	5	18	23	8	15
Ayr College	3,904	28	12	17	23	78	320
Banff & Buchan College of F.E.	7,171	43	5	5	0	8	21
The Barony College	875	5	0	0	0	6	0
Borders College	3,229	30	30	5	5	24	28
Cardonald College	9,015	52	6	13	9	12	7
Central College of Commerce	3,857	23	5	5	5	53	0
Clackmannan College of Further Education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clydebank College	9,634	7	5	5	7	13	5
Coatbridge College	2,553	19	16	28	52	120	34
Cumbernauld College	5,813	8	39	17	23	16	5
Dumfries and Galloway College	7,365	5	0	5	5	34	0
Dundee College	19,801	79	25	41	98	106	24
Edinburgh's Telford College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elmwood College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Falkirk College of FE	15,045	193	5	24	10	83	78

Fife College of FE	8,493	18	9	17	9	23	20
Glasgow College of Building and Printing	5,080	66	7	36	12	32	5
Glasgow College of Food Technology	4,232	0	0	0	0	0	0
Glasgow College of Nautical Studies	5,758	6	7	5	0	5	35
Glenrothes College	7,456	0	0	0	0	5	0
Inverness College	7,262	49	10	24	24	116	10
James Watt College of Further & Higher Education	12,824	23	9	25	10	10	24
Jewel and Esk Valley College	14,260	143	110	134	123	475	221
John Wheatley College	5,751	108	75	70	63	284	185

(continued)

Disability	No known disability	Dyslexia	Blind/ part sighted	Deaf/ hearing impaired	W'chair user/ mobdf	Unseen- diab,epl ,as	Multiple disability
Kilmarnock College	9,091	61	5	29	47	13	0
Langside College	10,345	24	5	5	9	8	0
Lauder College	6,207	112	13	48	58	167	5
Lews Castle College	2,496	35	5	20	8	122	10
Moray College	3,701	46	11	23	31	49	5
Motherwell College	13,061	113	53	125	56	435	140
North Glasgow College	5,908	6	98	5	0	0	5
Oatridge Agricultural College	1,656	10	0	5	0	5	42
Perth College	4,451	123	38	74	110	283	10
Reid Kerr College	11,737	135	64	51	176	200	396
South Lanarkshire College	2,827	34	19	27	15	60	7
Stevenson College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stow College	4,791	22	11	8	5	31	0
The North Highland College	4,245	10	6	5	8	18	6
West Lothian College	10,546	7	5	7	21	22	5
Orkney College	1,754	26	8	14	11	18	5
Shetland College of Further Education	241	0	5	0	0	0	0
Sabhal Mor Ostaig	339	5	0	5	0	5	0
Newbattle Abbey College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OVERALL	300,476	1,745	762	986	1,169	3,071	1,803

Appendix 2: SFC Further Education Awards Disability 2005-2006 (Source: Infact Database)

Disability	No known disability	Dyslexia	Blind/ part sighted	Deaf/ hearing impaired	W'chair user/ mobdf	Unseen- diab,epl,as	Multiple disability
College name	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Aberdeen College	22,059	318	44	150	143	179	119
Adam Smith College	15,741	704	93	161	137	690	97
Angus College	5,634	188	22	85	59	426	231
Anniesland College	5,891	87	34	42	64	201	54
Ayr College	5,039	101	32	61	82	339	422
Banff & Buchan College of FE	11,568	403	30	158	64	204	27
Borders College	5,551	197	24	71	86	208	115
Cardonald College	8,186	107	18	24	56	288	64
Central College of Commerce	5,271	69	9	14	11	85	15
Clydebank College	5,612	119	14	52	49	336	67
Coatbridge College	4,077	74	35	37	89	172	144
Cumbernauld College	6,429	55	20	50	57	97	16
Dumfries and Galloway College	8,453	136	63	80	57	337	118
Dundee College	18,816	222	23	82	79	251	81
Edinburgh's Telford College	6,629	449	38	66	190	396	102
Elmwood College	3,128	107	10	46	38	122	60

Forth Valley College	15,888	354	9	26	29	316	0
Glasgow College of Nautical Studies	5,725	148	23	56	28	158	135
Glasgow Metropolitan College	10,447	141	17	55	25	125	16
Inverness College	4,337	90	7	25	19	53	116
James Watt College of Further & Higher Education	15,695	128	81	46	95	232	188
Jewel and Esk Valley College	4,732	233	52	47	51	314	79
John Wheatley College	4,883	240	98	124	157	335	65
Kilmarnock College	7,194	111	23	65	76	215	56
Langside College	7,681	92	10	39	56	72	45
Lauder College	6,913	135	19	33	32	125	24
Lews Castle College	2,203	15	5	14	10	59	50
Moray College	2,424	104	14	43	51	164	126
Motherwell College	10,108	132	48	88	57	318	115

(continued)

Disability	No known disability	Dyslexia	Blind/ part sighted	Deaf/ hearing impaired	W'chair user/ mobility impaired	Unseen- diabetes, epilepsy	Multiple disability
The North Highland College	5,349	182	33	89	92	324	167
Newbattle Abbey College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Glasgow College	8,663	16	35	5	5	5	5
Oatridge Agricultural College	2,955	66	5	5	5	15	19
Orkney College	1,689	71	5	12	5	17	5
Perth College	5,410	158	18	81	59	226	77
Reid Kerr College	10,746	325	87	112	440	415	201
Sabhal Mor Ostaig	703	5	5	13	13	28	5
Shetland College of Further Education	4,884	110	8	31	17	104	32
South Lanarkshire College	3,448	99	25	37	47	98	71
Stevenson College	3,597	114	31	30	49	138	49
Stow College	6,095	48	11	35	24	118	264
The Barony College	3,239	15	0	0	5	22	11
West Lothian College	5,821	19	17	10	75	203	5
OVERALL	298,913	6,487	1,195	2,300	2,783	8,530	3,658

