



2014/15 Annual Report

Disability Resource Centre (DRC)

Support and advice for students



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE



## Foreword

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The Disability Resource Centre's Annual Report demonstrates the University's commitment to supporting its disabled students to achieve their potential at Cambridge and to ensuring that the University continues to meet its obligations under the Equality Act.

The DRC has been working hard to advise the General Board of the most effective ways to respond to the significant changes that will be made to the regulations concerning Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) in both the 2015/16 and 2016/17 academical years, in order that standards of support for disabled students at Cambridge are maintained.

Developments in inclusive teaching and learning practices, alongside utilisation of rapidly developing assistive technologies and alternative approaches to the provision of support, will all form part of the University's response to governmental changes.

These changes represent a significant but exciting challenge to which the staff at the DRC are making an informed and valued contribution.



**Duncan McCallum**  
**Deputy Academic Secretary**

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The DRC plays a vital role in ensuring that disabled students can achieve their true potential when they come to Cambridge, and the mechanisms of support they offer endeavour to cater to individual needs. To do this work well, the requirements of students with a range of disabilities need to be understood and accessed at an early stage, because the sooner that any adjustments to teaching and learning practices can be accommodated, the better able are the students to make the most of the opportunities available to them.

The work which the DRC does in facilitating high quality human support (such as mentoring and specialist study skills) is an excellent example of the value this small team adds to the Collegiate University. It is particularly pleasing that the Colleges have provided the DRC with funding to allow the dedicated Asperger syndrome advisory post to be extended for another three years.

However, the expected changes to the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) present us with significant challenges, both financial and practical. I have every confidence that the expertise, guidance and dedication of all of the staff at the DRC will ensure that Cambridge can respond in innovative and effective ways to the difficult road ahead.



**Dr Nick Bampos**  
**University Disability Equality Champion**

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# 1. Overview of the 2014/15 academic year

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## 2014/15: Headlines

### Service Demand:

The 2014/15 academic year saw a further increase in disabled students accessing support. The total number of current disabled students at the end of the academic year (2 July 2015) was **1890**, an increase of **4%** on the previous year (1825). The number of undergraduate applicants disclosing a disability during this period rose from **866 to 878**, an increase of **1.5%**. These increases are a positive indication that any perceived stigma around the disclosure of disability is diminishing and evidence of achievement against the University's Equality Objective 4, which has a focus on increasing levels of disability disclosure.

A breakdown of all current students by HESA disability category is included in Appendix 1.

### Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) 'Modernisation'

The Government's proposed 'modernisation' of the DSAs system was originally designed to be implemented in its totality for the start of the 2015/16 academic year. After concerted efforts from individual HEIs (including Cambridge), students and sector bodies (such as the National Association of Disability Practitioners, NADP), including two separate Judicial Review process, the majority of the planned changes were delayed until the beginning of the 2016/17 academic year. The University made a submission as part of a BIS public consultation on the planned DSAs changes in the summer of 2015. The outcomes of this consultation process will be published in late 2015, with the guidance on DSAs from 2016/17 being published in early 2016. The General Board's Education committee has supported proposals from the DRC setting out mechanisms to allow the University and Colleges to respond to the coming changes, whilst ensuring that the quality of support to disabled students is maintained and developed.

### Student Service Centre Project

The DRC will move to the new Student Services Centre (SSC) on the New Museums Site in 2018. The DRC has been represented on a series of workshops planning a range of different aspects of the project (such as accessibility and IT and audio/visual systems) during 2014/15 and continues to work with the SSC Project Team, architects and consultants on developing this exciting developments. The DRC has taken a leading role in developing the access statement for the new building.

### Staffing:

June Massey retired from the DRC in September 2014 and was replaced by Ken Ewing as Specific Learning Difficulties Adviser. Ali Fawkes joined the team as Asperger Syndrome Project Officer. Deb Taylor's post as Disability Adviser was made permanent.

### Governance:

The Head of the DRC reports to the Head of Educational and Student Policy within the Academic Division. The Head of the DRC is also co-opted member of the Student Health and Wellbeing Committee. Disability related policy matters fall under the remit of the General Board's Education Committee. The Head of the DRC has attended meetings of the General Board's Education Committee and the Senior Tutors' Welfare and Finance Committee across the year to keep the University and Colleges abreast of planned changes to the Disabled Students' Allowances system.

# 1. Overview of the 2014/5 academic year (continued)

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## **Quality Assurance 2015 Student Survey:**

14% of the 1889 students registered with us took part in the survey. Of those, 33% would consider themselves 'a disabled person' and 38% received Disabled Students' Allowances. The survey responders showed a strong bias to postgraduate students compared with the base cohort. 34% of students registered with the DRC are postgraduate in comparison to the 51% of survey responders who were postgraduate. The survey was open April-June 2015. 85% of respondents rated DRC support as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

Respondents commented that, whilst standard of service was high, the time taken to respond could be longer than expected. Feedback regarding opening times has led to an increase in opening times to accommodate students who are unable to attend the DRC during office hours

**'I received regular support emails and I have been provided with great financial and pastoral support. The help by the DRC has been great.'**

**I felt very at ease. Everyone involved was sensitive and helpful (but not patronising!) . I feel I have received sufficient support, and also know exactly where I can go and who to contact if I require more.**

Annual Student Survey Comments.

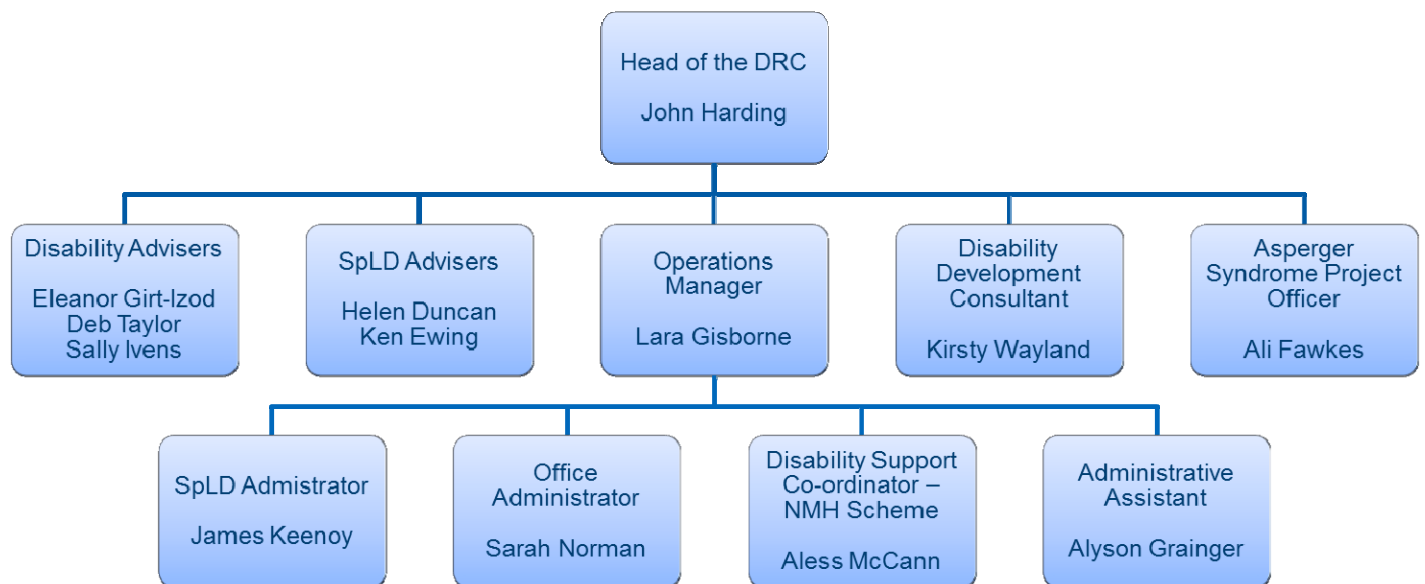
## **DRC Priorities for 2015/16:**

Outside of maintaining current levels of support for disabled students and those staff supporting them, the year ahead will be dominated by finalising the University's response to the proposed changes to the Disabled Students' Allowances system. Whilst the exact details of these changes are not known, it is clear that Universities will be asked to take on a far greater degree of the responsibilities for (and cost of) the support and adjustments required by disabled students. The DRC is representing the University in consultations with the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, prior to the publication of the new DSAs regulations for 2016/17, which will be issued in the early 2016. Additional regulations will then be issued for further changes, specifically to arrangements for the provision of human support, (non-medical help, NMH) which are due to come into force for the start of the 2016/17 academic year.

Other priorities for 2015/16:

- Continued input into the planning and development of the new Student Services Centre project
- 13th Annual Disability Lecture
- Implementation of new Non-Medical Help pay bands (to be in-place for Sept 2016)







### 3. Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) Advisers

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Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) is a term that covers a range of conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and, for the purposes of support and funding, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

#### Service Demands

The total number of current students who have disclosed a Specific Learning Difficulty, or were in the process of being diagnosed as of July 2015, was 793 as against 811 in 2013-14. This is a drop of 2%. This includes those diagnosed with two impairments including an SpLD.

#### Service Development

Two transitional support events for students with SpLDs are held before the start of Michaelmas Term for incoming students and operated successfully for a second year in 2014/15.

#### Specialist 1-1 Study Skills

Specialist 1-1 study skills is coordinated by the Disability Resource Centre. The DRC has a pool of eight 1-1 specialist study skills tutors who support students who have been recommended this support by Educational Psychologists or DSA Needs Assessors. Specialist 1-1 study skills is funded either by Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) or from other sources of funds, such as the International Disabled Students' Fund or via support from Colleges.

#### Evaluation of Service

All specialist study skills tutors are formally observed annually and submit termly reviews to Directors of Studies. PAToSS, the Professional Association for Teachers and Assessors of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties, has recognised the University of Cambridge's assessment model for SpLD as an example of best practice in the higher education sector.



Data on the DRC service for students with Specific Learning Difficulties, including detail of student appointments, is available in Appendix 2.

***'XXX is an incredibly skilled tutor both in person and on skype.'***

Annual Student Survey comment on Study Skills provision

***'It is so valuable, I've got so much. I feel now I have been embedded with the resources to go on and feel confident'***

Emily, PGCE student, interview on Study Skills provision.



## 4. Disability Advisers

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Disability Advisers carry out detailed investigations into the support requirements of incoming students who have disclosed a disability on their application. Support is then arranged in the months prior to an individual's arrival at University and communicated to academic and support staff via a Student Support Document (SSD). Disability Advisers provide on-going support and advice to students and staff after admission. They also work closely with students who become disabled or are diagnosed after admission. Advisers respond to initial enquiries from prospective students and/or their parents and set up pre-admissions visits for some prospective students.

### **Service Demands**

The total number of current students who disclosed a disability, other than a Specific Learning Difficulty, as of July 2015 was 1030 a 4% rise on the previous year when the total stood at 988. This includes students with more than one diagnosis, which may include an SpLD.

The Asperger Project Officer supported 50 new students in their transition into Cambridge.

As reported in previous years, the most pressing issues for the Disability Advisers relate to the increase in volume of current students requiring support; the increasing volume of enquires; the growing number of cases which require significant advisory time and resources, and increasing demand on advisory services in general.

### **Service Development**

32 students have been referred for diagnostic assessment at CLASS following initial assessment and referral by Disability Advisers. The popular Transitional Support Events for incoming students with AS and their families/guardians will continue to be held during the long vacation.

### **Specialist 1-1 Support**

Disabled students often benefit from the provision of Non-Medical Help (NMH), and this support is often recommended within students' specialist evidence, including independent assessments of need. Disability Advisers work with the Disability Support Co-ordinator to ensure that disabled students are matched effectively with support workers with the appropriate skills, experience and subject knowledge (for example note-takers and mentors).

### **Evaluation of Service**

Service evaluations are held every two years. A breakdown of current disabled students by HESA disability category is included in Appendix 1.

74% of respondents to the 2015 student survey rated the service they received from their Disability Adviser as 'very good' or 'good'.

***'My adviser has gone above and beyond for me so many times... and I'm really, really grateful.' Annual Student Survey 2015 comment***

## 5. Non-Medical Help (NMH) Scheme

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The Non-Medical Help Scheme provides coordinated support for disabled students who require assistance in order to access their studies effectively. These recommendations are usually detailed in the Needs Assessment Reports for students, within specialist evidence, or as a result of assessment by a specialist adviser. The recruitment, training, and matching of NMHs to students is the responsibility of the Disability Support Coordinator. The SpLD Administrator matches students with SpLDs to specialist 1-1 study skills tutors.

The DRC can provide interim NMH support in anticipation of DSA to students who apply for Disabled Students' Allowances, as this grant can take some time to process fully. The DRC does not have any budget allocation to cover the costs of this support. Colleges are, once again, thanked for underwriting these costs on occasion.

### Service Demands

The 2014/15 academic year saw an increase in NMH provision, with the total number of NMH support hours delivered to students increasing by 33%, from 7927 to 9698. From the previous year, there was a significant increase of 381% in the number of Practical and Laboratory Support hours used, from 528 to 2540 hours. This increase was largely due to the significant support requirements of an individual student. There was also a 14% increase in both the number of 1:1 specialist study skills and specialist mentoring hours used. Data on hours of NMH support administered by the DRC can be found in Appendix 4.

### Service Development

In 2014/15 there were 92 NMHs supporting students, and training and events were held for them throughout the year. Mentoring training has also been reviewed and developed by the Disability Development Consultant and the Disability Support Co-ordinator over the year. The 28 mentors were offered optional training courses on mind-mapping software, supporting students with Asperger syndrome and mindfulness.

### Evaluation of Service

The NMH scheme is evaluated annually as part of the Annual Student Survey, with the majority of respondents rating their NMH support as helpful or very helpful. The following are comments received from the 2015 Annual Student Survey:

***'X was a very useful and reliable notetaker.'***

***'X (Study Skills tutor) always goes beyond to help me with my needs/ learning style, so supportive, helpful and positive- really made a difference to the study side of my PGCE.'***

***'My mentor has made my studying here possible. Seeing her once a week makes a huge difference because otherwise my life here can be very isolated.'***

2015 Annual student survey

## 6. Training

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The Disability Resource Centre offers interactive, responsive training in a range of formats across the University and Colleges, through bespoke training courses developed in response to requests, and in conjunction with Personal and Professional Development (PPD).

### **Training courses**

The DRC delivers training in support of disabled students, staff and visitors. Sessions promote disability equality by enabling staff to meet their responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) and to work effectively and easily with disabled people.

### **Courses delivered in conjunction with PPD**

In 2014/15, 15 courses were delivered via PPD to 178 people. Ongoing courses included the 'Teaching Students with...' series and 'An Introduction to Sign Language'. Courses currently offered focus on dyslexia and other Specific Learning Difficulties and Asperger syndrome. A course on Student Support Documents (SSDs) and the process by which information about disabled students' recommended support is communicated proved very popular and continues this academic year. A new course was introduced, 'Supporting PhD Students with Mental Health Difficulties', which has been well received. The aim for next year will be to expand to cover all graduate students.

### **Bespoke training sessions:**

In 2014/15, there were 11 bespoke training sessions delivered, with 206 participants, as a consequence of addressing a large group in one department. Training to departmental staff looking at teaching disabled students continued to be popular. Those taking up bespoke training included Philosophy, Physics and the Institute of Continuing Education.

Work continued around the needs of individual disabled students, and to support departments. Within the DRC workshops and training for mentors in the NMH scheme continued and were developed. The DRC supported a number of activities in Colleges including staff training, tutorial staff briefings, and delivering a legal briefing on the Equality Act with Mills and Reeves.

The Head of Centre delivered training to University tutors as part of a new programme in October and May. The Head of Centre gave presentations to the College Nurses Association and Student Registry, as well as his annual presentation to the Applications Committee with the Head of the Counselling Service in April 2015.

### **Evaluation of Service**

In 2014/15, the DRC continued to ask participants to evaluate how each course had met its objectives, the delivery of the course and its administration, ranking on a scale of 1 to 4 (where 1 was 'not at all' and 4 was 'fully'). Over 97% of respondents ranked the administration and delivery at 3 or 4, and 93% ranked success at meeting its objectives at 3 or 4.

### **DRC Staff development and training**

The annual away day for staff of the DRC in July was attended by Graham Virgo, PVC for Education. SpLD Adviser Helen Duncan completed her M.Sc. in Developmental Disorders. The Head of Service and the Asperger Project Officer both visited Trinity College Dublin to learn about the Irish model of HEI disability support.

For data of courses conducted in 2014/15 see Appendix 5.



## 7. Donations and Bursary Funds

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### **The Disabled Students' Bursary Fund:**

This Fund was established in recognition of the additional expenses incurred by disabled students and to contribute to the costs of acquiring essential services or equipment. The Guardians of the Fund consider applications throughout the year. In 2014/15, 17 awards were made to fund specialist equipment, Non-Medical Help, and travel and accommodation costs. These totalled £7435.38.

### **Donations:**

The Disability Resource Centre is extremely grateful for the continued support from a number of donors who help support disabled students at the University. These funds have assisted many disabled students in accessing their learning over the last year. The donors include the The Alchemy Foundation, City and University of Cambridge Masonic Charitable Trust, and Rodney Buckton, who raises money from organised annual events. We thank the donors for their generosity.

### **The Charlie Bayne Travel Trust:**

This Trust was set up in the memory of Charlie Bayne (1965–90) who spent four years as an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1985–89. The Trust offers travel grants to disabled undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of Cambridge and at Anglia Ruskin University. In 2015, 9 awards were made, helping students to travel to many different destinations, including: Uganda, USA, Berlin, Lisbon and Budapest. Our sincere thanks go to the Bayne family and the Trustees for their continued support of this valuable student trust.

***“Visiting Berlin was a dream come true for me, and one which I hope to repeat as soon as possible! I have returned to England even more desperate to continue improving my language, and with a real appreciation for daily life in Germany, which I hope to one day experience for myself. I would like to say a huge thank you to the Charlie Bayne Travel Trust for their support, without which this trip might not have been possible. The contribution from the fund enabled us to travel around the city with ease, and made sure that my using a wheelchair was never an issue.”***



***Veterinary Medicine student, University of Cambridge.***

## 7. Donations and Bursary Funds (continued)

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### **The International Disabled Students' Fund (IDS Fund)**

The IDS Fund enables international disabled students to receive support equivalent to that received by their 'home' counterparts via Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). The Fund is managed and administered by the DRC. During the fourth year of the IDS Fund (2014/15), a total of 72 international students were granted an award. Students who have already received funds from previous years can request additional IDS funding if their previous awards have been used.

### **Financial Overview**

Planned total expenditure for the 2014/15 academic year was £70,000 plus £45,572 of brought forward awards still to be utilised.

The majority of IDS Fund applications took less than one month to process from application to award, a far quicker turnaround than that for home students applying for DSAs.

The IDS fund is supported equally by the University and Colleges. Sincere thanks go to the Colleges and to the University for supporting this important source of assistance for the growing population of disabled international students.

### **Testimonials from Students in receipt of IDS funds**

*"I used my award to borrow a good laptop for the duration of my course and the use of mindmapping software Inspire. The laptop was mobile enough to take anywhere so I could work wherever I needed to and take notes and audio record conversations, supervisions, interviews and lectures. It provided me with the possibility to do the work I needed to do in a way which would otherwise have been very hard. The mindmapping software allowed me to organise my thoughts "on paper", which I could rarely do before mindmapping. The people at the Disability Service were always very friendly and helpful and made me feel appreciated."*  
**Biological Sciences student.**

*"Having a small portable CCTV has been great! In the past I used a large stationary CCTV as well as a small hand-held magnifier. These both fulfil their role but are cumbersome and often insufficient, respectively. In particular the CCTV has been great in allowing me to access hand-written material in other peoples lab books as well as hospital notes."* **Clinical Biochemistry student.**

### **Equipment Loan Pool**

The loan pool for assistive technological and ergonomic equipment is funded through donations. It provides equipment for students waiting for funding to come into place and for staff to borrow following a referral from Occupational Health or the UIS Assistive Technology specialist.

A generous donation of £15,000 from the Crane's Fund enabled the purchase of several items to enable support as changes to Disabled Students' Allowances come in. A discussion with Occupational Health led to an agreement of funding as required up to £3,000 for ergonomic equipment for staff to borrow. In 2014-15 the value of equipment purchased and cost of servicing current equipment was £1,314. Much of the purchasing falls into the 15-16 financial year against new funds.

A discussion with Occupational Health has resulted in the agreement that £3,000 a year will be available from 2015-16 for the purchase of equipment for staff for the loan pool.

## 8. Events and Communications

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### Events:

The DRC supports, co-sponsors and contributes to a range of events, both independently and within the wider Equality and Diversity programme.



- The **2015 Annual Disability Lecture** took place on 19th March 2015. The speaker was writer, artist, and part-time super hero **Jess Thom** on **'Laughter as a catalyst for change'**. A film of the lecture is available online at <http://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1981331>. The lecture was very well attended by over two hundred people
- The DRC offered information sessions and one-to-one guidance appointments for prospective students and their families as part of the University Open Days.
- Transitional support events were run for incoming students with Asperger syndrome and Specific Learning Difficulties during the 2014 long vacation.

- DRC staff attended the Societies' Fair in October 2014 in order to publicise the DRC's services to new and returning students.
- The DRC social media presence continued to expand with new followers on Facebook and Twitter
- The DRC website moved to the new University templates in October 2015.
- The Head of Service was part of the panel at the Equality and Diversity event 'Disability and Austerity: Shifting Perspectives'.

### Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs):

Events for DLOs were run in 16 April 2015 and 11 July 2015.

### Information dissemination on the changes to disabled students allowances

Presentations were given to the Departmental and College library meetings, Undergraduate Tutorial Forum and Porter's meetings on the new changes to Disabled Students' Allowances. General guidance was issued in March.

### Networking:

DRC staff maintain strong links with national professional bodies, such as the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP), of which the Head of the DRC, John Harding, is a Director, and the Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education (ADSHE). The Head of the DRC represents the University at the Heads of Russell Group Disability Services Forum. DRC staff are also represented on the steering group of the Disabled Staff Network, and attend national and regional Non-Medical Help groups and Funding Body Network meetings.

The DRC received fact-finding visits from Swedish, South African and Japanese university delegations.



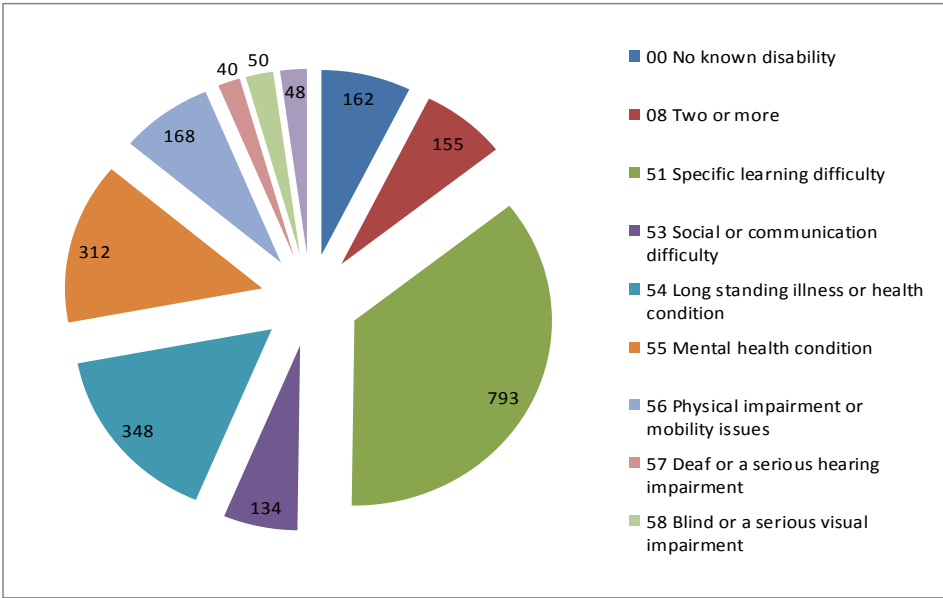
# Appendix 1: Overall Student Data

All data accurate as of 6 July 2015.

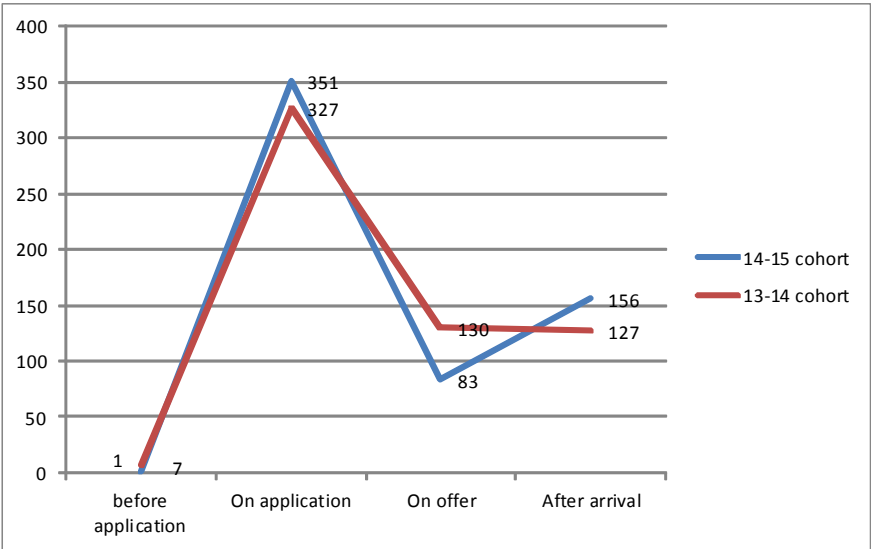
Data is collected on disclosure.

Category	No. of active student clients
Undergraduate	1241 (1200 + 3%)
Postgraduate	649 ( 625 + 4%)
Total	1890 (1825 + 4%)

Table 1.1 Total Active Students 2014/15 (2013/14 in brackets)



Graph 1.1 Active students by HESA Disability Categories in 2014/15. This includes 210 students who have two or more known disabilities. The 00 No known disability category includes 126 students waiting for a diagnosis of an SpLD or Asperger syndrome, and those with temporary injuries.



Graph 1.2 Time of disclosure to the DRC, first year students only.

## Appendix 2: Advisers Data

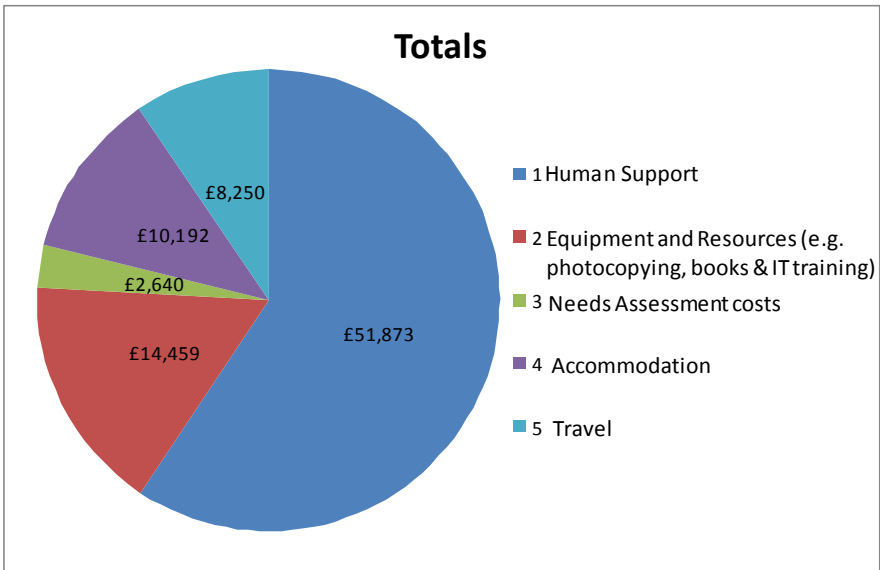
Activity	2013-14	2014-15
Initial interviews	140	158
Educational Psychologist diagnostic referrals	126	129
Report feedback sessions	84	66
Support review	116	106

Graph 2.1 Appointments and screenings for Disability Advisors (SpLD)

Activity	MT 2014	LT 2015	ET 2015	Total 14-15 caseload
Adviser appointment	145	137	96	378
Asperger Syndrome Screening	10	7	5	22

Graph 3.2 Appointments and screenings for Disability Advisors

## Appendix 3: International Disabled Students' Fund



Graph 6.1 2014/15 International Disabled Students' Fund expenditure by category

## Appendix 4: Non-Medical Help (NMH) Scheme Data

	2013/14 Annual NMH Hours	2013/14 Number of Students	2014/15 Annual NMH Hours	2014/15 Number of Students
Note-taking	3525	38	3627	33
Study Skills Support	781	162	895	156
Practical & Laboratory Support	528	10	2540	10
Mentoring	1792	135	2042	153
Library Support	144	14	70	14
Orientation	11	3	0	0
Proofreading	148	15	123	8
Amanuensis/ Transcription	368	12	401	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7297</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>9698</b>	<b>380</b>

Table 4.1 Comparison of NMH hours by task and number of students supported 2013/14 to 2014/15

## Appendix 5: Training Data

Type of Course	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Participants on PPD supported courses	86	113	121	178
Courses delivered supported by PPD	14	12	15	18
Participants on DRC administered/bespoke courses	166	133	148	206
Courses administered by DRC/bespoke courses	16	9	13	11

Table 5.1 Courses conducted in the past four academic years



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If you would like this report in an alternative format (such as Braille, large-font or an electronic version), please contact the Disability Resource Centre.

**Address**      **Disability Resource Centre (DRC)**  
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**Website**        <http://www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk>

**Twitter**         [http://www.twitter.com/Cambridge\\_DRC](http://www.twitter.com/Cambridge_DRC)

**Facebook**      <https://www.facebook.com/cambridgedrc>

**Pinterest**      <http://uk.pinterest.com/cambridgedrc/>

Some of the  
DRC team  
with their  
2015 Green  
Impact  
Award

