

“Just as it is more cost-effective to include ramps and include accessibility into the design of a new building, it is also cost and time-effective to consider the flexibility of learning materials when designing a course than in trying to provide individual accommodations after the fact”

Johnson, D. M., & Fox, J. A. (2003). Creating curb cuts in the classroom: Adapting universal design principles to education. Curriculum transformation and disability: Implementing universal design in higher education, 7-21.

2019/20 Annual Report

Disability Resource Centre (DRC)

Support and advice for students

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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 us using the details above.



Figure 1: The main entrance to the DRC & the Student Services Centre

Annual Review: 2019/20

The second half of the 2019/20 academic year was dominated by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the necessary move to online learning, and the need to provide support for students and staff during these challenging times. The DRC worked in collaboration with the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning (CCTL) and with University Information Services (UIS) to move swiftly to provide advice, information and guidance to academic staff, support staff and students specifically on the accessibility considerations related to on-line learning and on-line platforms. All DRC services moved effectively to on-line provision in a very short period of time (with the only exception being the loan-pool of equipment which was suspended). There was a 35% increase in the demand for non-medical help during the first period of the pandemic. The DRC has also worked closely with the Teaching, Learning & Assessment 2020-21 Working Group and with the Cambridge Students' Union to support the continuity and quality of education and the use of technology and tools within the University in response to the pandemic.

Despite these challenges, 2019/20 was also a year that saw some very positive initiatives which have helped to further increase the University's approach to accessibility and inclusion. In November 2019, the Vice-Chancellor launched the University's new access guides, produced in conjunction with AccessAble. These access guides, which provide essential information on accessibility for students, staff and visitors alike, cover over 130 buildings across all University sites. The guides are a clear demonstration of the University's ongoing commitment to accessibility and inclusion. In another positive development, the University approved the new Accessibility Service within the University Library (UL); a service designed to enhance the provision of accessible materials for disabled students. Thanks go to the University's Sub-Committee on Accessibility which led on the approval of the new University access guides and which was also instrumental in preparing the groundwork for the University Libraries Accessibility Service. Thanks to the UL for making this essential service a reality.

The numbers of current students who had disclosed a disability to the University rose to 3568; an increase of 9% on the previous year. As in all of the last five years, the increase in students disclosing mental health difficulties was steeper than in all of the other disability categories with an increase of 24%, with the total number of students having disclosed mental health difficulty standing at 1296 as of July 2020.

The DRC has continued to support the work of the Cambridge Centre for Teaching & Learning (CCTL) in the promotion of inclusive teaching and learning practice and diversified assessment. The DRC is represented on the Steering Committee for the University's Mental

Health and Wellbeing Strategy, working collaboratively with the Head of Wellbeing, the Head of the Counselling Service, Education Services, and others to enhance the provision of support for students with mental health difficulties. The DRC's non-medical help (NMH) scheme continues to receive extremely positive feedback from students and staff with many students identifying NMH support as a key factor in keeping them engaged in their studies. The DRC also recruited to two new posts of Assistant Disability Advisers to help meet increases in demand.

All of these activities and initiatives contribute to the University's commitment within its Access and Participation Plan to increase the attainment and retention levels for disabled students, and to help the collegiate university move from a costly model based on individual adjustments to one based on the inclusive principles of Universal Design (see figure 2).

My sincere thanks go to all of the staff at the DRC, without whose dedication and extremely hard work this would not have been possible, and for their tireless work in ensuring that the DRC continued to operate effectively, if remotely, during the months of the pandemic, in support of disabled students and those staff working with them.

John Harding
Head of the Disability Resource Centre

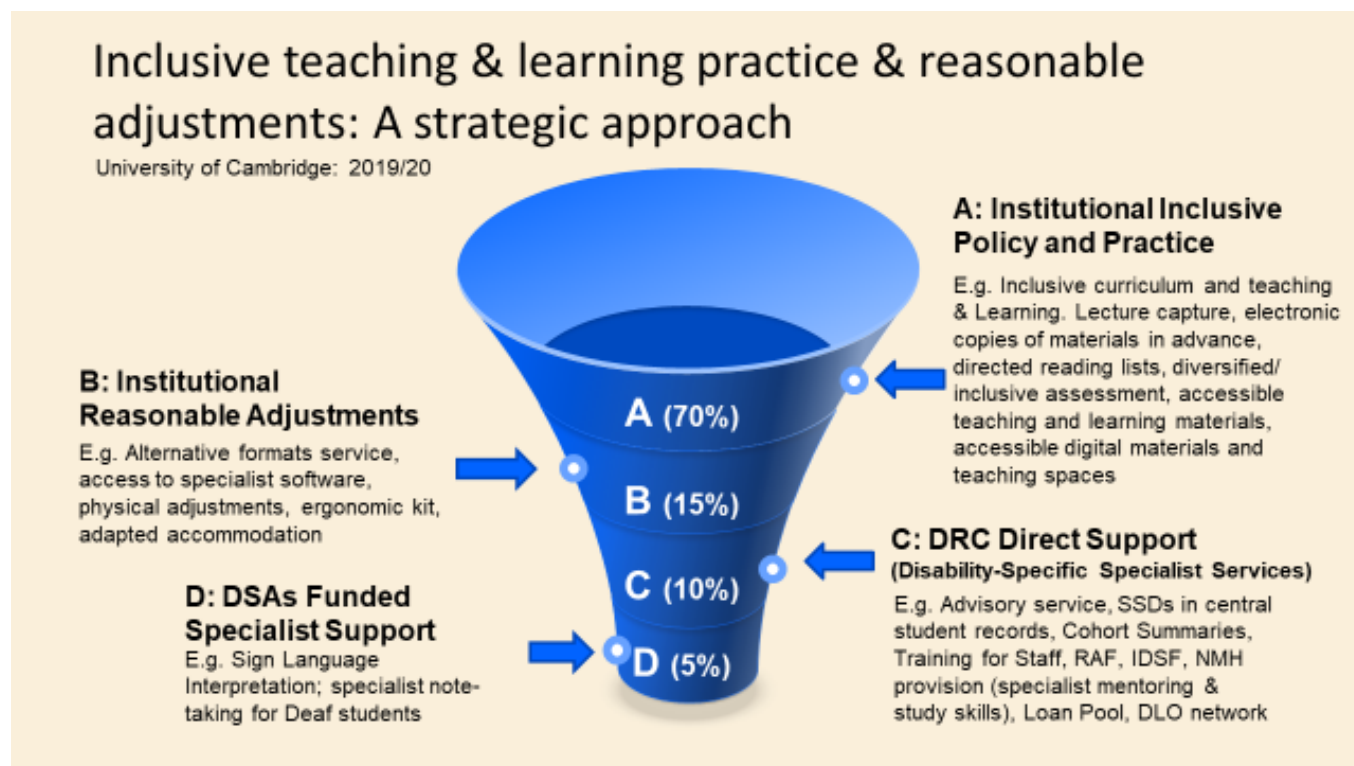


Figure 2: A strategic approach to inclusive teaching & learning

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1. Summary

Service Demand

- The total number of **current disabled students** at the end of the academic year (July 2020) was **3568**, an **increase of 9%** on the previous year (**3268**)
- Students disclosing a **mental health condition** rose from **1043 to 1296** in the same period, an **increase of 24%** in one year
- Students disclosing **Autism** rose from **208 to 245**, in the same period, an **increase of 18%** in one year
- Disability Adviser to Disabled Student Ratio (July 2020) = **743:1**

Full data available in Appendix 1.

DRC Priorities for 2020/21

- Our Cambridge: SSD into CamSIS project (anticipated July 2021 start)
- Launch of the Inclusive Teaching and Learning Moodle module (delayed from 2020 due to the pandemic) and associated initiatives and DRC training to promote and embed a move towards a more inclusive model of student support and teaching and learning
- Supporting the University's Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy and work towards Access and Participation Plan targets
- Working with the Sub-Committee on Accessibility in the development of the University's overarching Accessibility Policy
- Revision of the Code of Practice: Disabled Students
- Extension of the AccessAble Access guides
- Promotion of digital accessibility, through training, collaborative working with UIS, academic staff, CCTL, UAS and others and in development of policy and practice focused on enhancing accessibility
- Implementation of the DRC's process improvement and efficiencies plan
- Continued close collaboration and cross-functional working (e.g. with the Counselling & Careers Services, Cambridge SU, OSCCA, EQPO and the Student Registry)

2. DRC Team

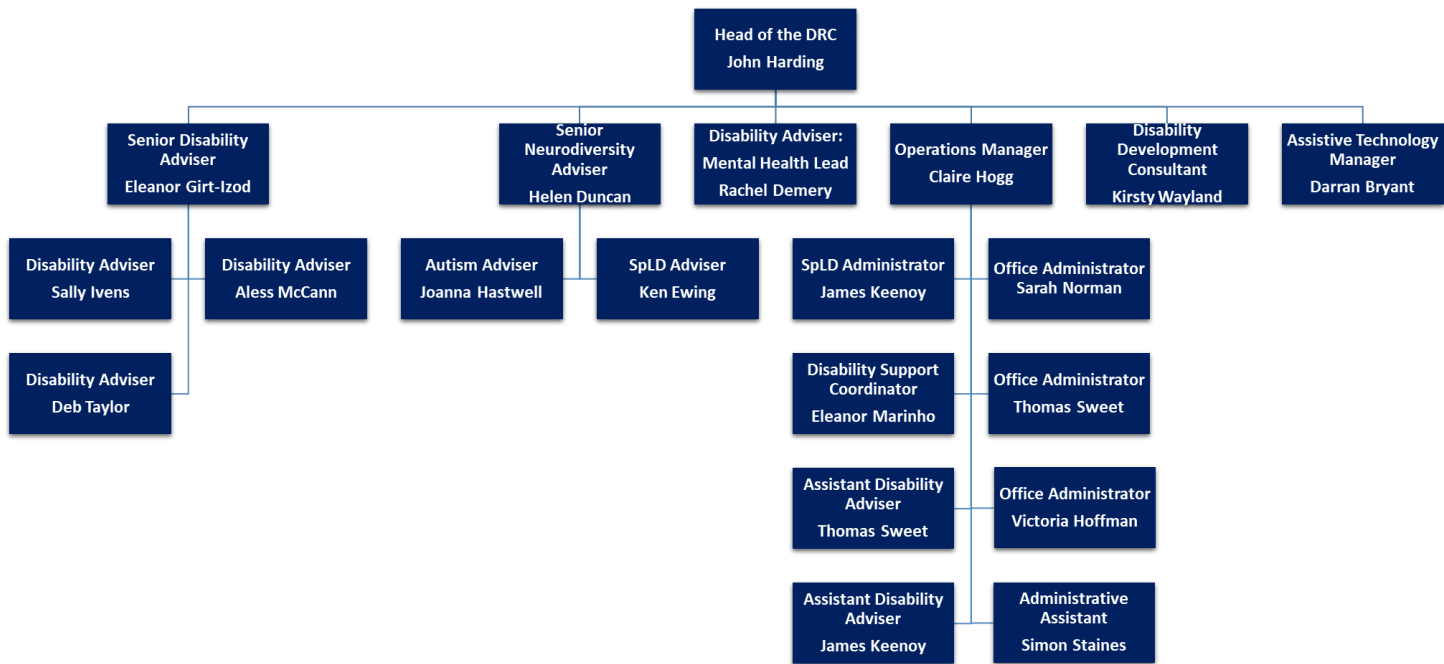


Figure 3: The DRC Team

3. Neurodiversity team

The concept of Neurodiversity (a term that was coined by Judy Singer, an autistic rights advocate, in the 1990s) supports a social model of disability approach. The term Neurodiversity emphasises that individuals with Specific Learning Difficulties, Autism Spectrum Conditions and ADHD have a cognitive profile that includes strengths as well as challenges, as do individuals without these diagnosis (the 'Neuro-typical'). It supports an approach with recognises **difference not deficit**.

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) support

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 2020, was 1129 as against 1086 in July 2019. This is a 4% increase on the previous year. 221 students were referred for educational psychologist diagnosis. Due to the pandemic formal in-person diagnostic assessments with Educational Psychologists were replaced nationally with an Evaluation of Need report which is acceptable evidence for examination and support purposes.

Specialist 1-1 Study Skills

Specialist 1-1 study skills is coordinated by the Disability Resource Centre. The DRC has a pool of four 1-1 specialist study skills tutors who support students who have been recommended this support by Educational Psychologists or DSA Needs Assessors. A further two STEM study skills tutors are providing tailored support to STEM students. Specialist 1-1 study skills is funded either by the Reasonable Adjustments Fund or by the International Disabled Students' Fund.

Autism Spectrum Conditions Support

The DRC has one full-time adviser assigned to supporting students with Autism Spectrum Conditions (kindly funded by the Colleges).

Service Demands

One of the two cohorts of disabled students where the steepest annual increase of disclosures was recorded were students with Autism Spectrum Conditions (an increase of 18% from 208 to 245 between July 2019 and July 2020). In ET 2020, in-person diagnostic screenings had to be suspended due to the restrictions associated with COVID-19. The DRC developed an on-line replacement for the in-person screenings, which focused on the student's educational support requirements and access to support (similar to the Evaluation of Need report for students with SpLDs). Referrals for diagnostic assessment are managed by the students GP under current NHS referral pathways.

4. Disability Team

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, or who disclose after admission. Advisers respond to initial enquiries from prospective students and set up pre-admissions visits to Cambridge for some prospective students.

Service Demands

Student disclosures from those with a diagnosed **mental health difficulty** saw the highest annual increase of any disability category (an **increase of 24% from 1043 to 1296**). As reported in previous years, the most pressing issues for the Disability Advisers relate to the increase in volume of support demands and increases in cases which require significant advisory time and resources. Caseloads for individual full-time Advisers are in excess of 740 students.

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 Coordinator to ensure that disabled students are matched effectively with support workers with the appropriate skills, experience and subject knowledge (for example note-takers and specialist mentors). The DRC put in place over 13,000 hours of NMH support in 2019/20 (see appendix 2).

5. Non-Medical Help (NMH) Scheme

The Non-Medical Help Scheme (NMH) provides coordinated human 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.

Service Demands

The 2019/20 academic year saw an increase in NMH provision, with the total number of NMH support hours delivered to students increasing by 19%, from 11,104 to 13,175. The number of students accessing mentoring and study skills support has increased significantly during the period of the pandemic, which is unsurprising given the challenging situations many students find themselves in. Data on NMH support administered by the DRC can be found in Appendix 2.

6. Training

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 the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning (CCTL), as well as collaborating on courses related to mental health with the Counselling Service, and on Autism with the Careers Service. The DRC also has training materials available via Moodle.

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. A new workshop 'COVID-19 Providing Safe Student Support' was rolled out 4 times in Easter Term reaching around 80 staff with pastoral roles and achieving excellent feedback. 178 delegates attending DRC courses run via CCTL, with 8 attending a bespoke training event.

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. The DRC supported a number of activities for Colleges including staff training and tutorial staff briefings. The DRC also delivered 2 training sessions for the Disability Liaison Officer Network in September and July.

The Head of Centre delivered training to college tutors as part of the programme for new tutors in October 2020. An online course for students transitioning to Cambridge has also been developed. The DRC is also developing an online module for academic and support staff on inclusive teaching and learning, which will be launched in 2021 (postponed from 2020).

7. Assistive Technology Service

Service Demands

During 2019-20, 38 one-to-one Assistive Technology sessions were provided to University staff and 59 one-to-one consultations were carried out for students. During the same period 8 "How to Produce Accessible Documents - An Introduction" classroom based courses were delivered to both staff and students, training a total of 105 delegates. The Assistive Technology Manager is a member of the University's Sub-Committee on Accessibility and works closely with the Head of the DRC in the development of projects, policies and initiatives related to accessibility.

Service Development

The Assistive Technology Manager is also tasked with keeping abreast of the latest developments in productivity tools and their application by students and staff in teaching and learning, and has spent a significant amount of time this year investigating the accessibility features of various online teaching platforms and live speech to text captioning technologies to provide input into various projects.

Service Evaluation

Feedback from delegates on "How to Produce Accessible Documents - An Introduction"

“I don’t think I expected to learn as much as I did on the course. There was plenty of focus on the most commonly used documents and the general speed of the course allowed to absorb the information and the group time of questions.”

“The speaker was brilliant, gave instruction in a very clear and concise way and was very helpful during the practical exercise.”

“A really useful course for anyone producing documents which will be published online and need to comply to WCAG 2.1AA.”

“The course was a real eye-opener in that it demonstrated that we didn’t have to do a lot to improve the learning experience of those with learning difficulties.”

Specialist 1-1 Support

One-to-one assistive technology sessions are available to both staff and students. Sessions available include speech recognition training, help for those with upper mobility difficulties (including RSI), dyslexia/dyspraxia sessions, ergonomic advice and software training.

8. Donations and Bursary Funds

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, where other funding sources have been exhausted. It is funded by donations made to the DRC for this purpose. The Guardians of the Fund consider applications throughout the year, and awards are administered by the DRC. In 2019/20, 21 awards were made to fund specialist equipment, Non-Medical Help, and travel and accommodation costs. The total cost of these awards totalled £11,578.

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 Lady Hind Trust for funding towards a Pet as Therapy dog and the Crane’s Fund for funding towards Loan Pool equipment. The City and University of Cambridge Masonic Charitable Trust gave another £3000, honouring their pledge to donate £3000 a year for three years starting 2017-18. Enterprise Cars gave £1000 annually for three years in 2017. 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. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic and associated restrictions on travel, the Charlie Bayne Travel Trust was not able to make any awards in 2019/20.

9. Student Support Funds and Equipment Loan Pool

The Reasonable Adjustments Fund (RAF)

The RAF provides for a range of Non-Medical Help tasks and some assistive software for UK national disabled students studying at Cambridge. The implementation of the Reasonable Adjustments Fund has been beneficial to students as waiting times for support are considerably reduced. Students are now often matched to a Non-Medical Helper within one week of seeing their Disability Adviser, rather than 3 months under the old DSAs system. This is a huge improvement on the previous waiting times and there is no longer a requirement for interim funding from Colleges. The Reasonable Adjustment Fund has been recognised by the Department for Education as an example of best practice.

In 2019-20, 658 awards were made with total expenditure being £302,441. The average spend per student was £655.

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) and the Reasonable Adjustments Fund (RAF). The Fund is managed and administered by the DRC.

In 2019-20, 196 awards were made with total expenditure being £108,607. The average spend per student was £696.

The RAF and the IDS fund are both supported by contributions from the University and the Colleges. Sincere thanks go to the University and to the Colleges for supporting this important source of assistance for the growing population of disabled students at Cambridge. Separate annual reports are produced for both funds which are received by the General Board's Education Committee and the Senior Tutors' Finance & Welfare Committee.

Equipment Loan Pool

The loan pool for assistive technology 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 Assistive Technology Manager.

Financial support for the loan pool comes from the Occupational Health and Safety Service (OHSS) for staff equipment and the Crane's Charity for student equipment. The most popular items have been audio recorders for students and ergonomic mice and keyboards for staff. Unfortunately, the loan pool was unable to operate for reasons of safety during the pandemic and will reopen once DRC staff return to the Student Services Centre

10. Events, Communications and Networks

Events

The DRC supports, co-sponsors and contributes to a range of events, both independently and within the University's wider Equality and Diversity programme, and with the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning (CCTL). Unfortunately, the DRC was unable to hold the Annual Disability Lecture in March 2020 due to the pandemic.

Also in response to the pandemic the DRC's transition event for disabled offerholders was run virtually this year and hosted on the DRC website, with an introduction from Professor Graham Virgo, Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education. The DRC has also contributed to a range of Open Days and Widening Participation activity online.

Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs)

A Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) is a named contact person within a college or department who can be approached by students, staff, and disabled visitors with questions and issues around disability. They also act as a first point of contact for the DRC in the dissemination of disability equality related information. There are currently 164 DLO's and the DRC ran two events specifically for them during the academic year.

Networking and Representation

DRC staff maintain strong links with national professional bodies, such as the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP), (of which John Harding, the Head of the DRC, is an Adviser to the Board, and Joanna Hastwell, Asperger Syndrome Adviser, and Aless McCann, Disability Adviser, are Directors), 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, and the pan-European LINK network of disability practitioners, and is one of the University's named members of AMOSSHE (The Student Services Organisation). Helen Duncan has been appointed as a member of the national SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC). Rachel Demery is the DRC's representative for The University Mental Health Advisers Network (UMHAN). DRC staff also attend national and regional Non-Medical Help groups and Funding Body Networks. The DRC receives requests for visits from UK, European and international Universities annually.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Student Data

Current disabled students (total)	3568
Undergraduates	2083
Graduates	1485

Table 1.1 Total number of disabled students as of July 2020

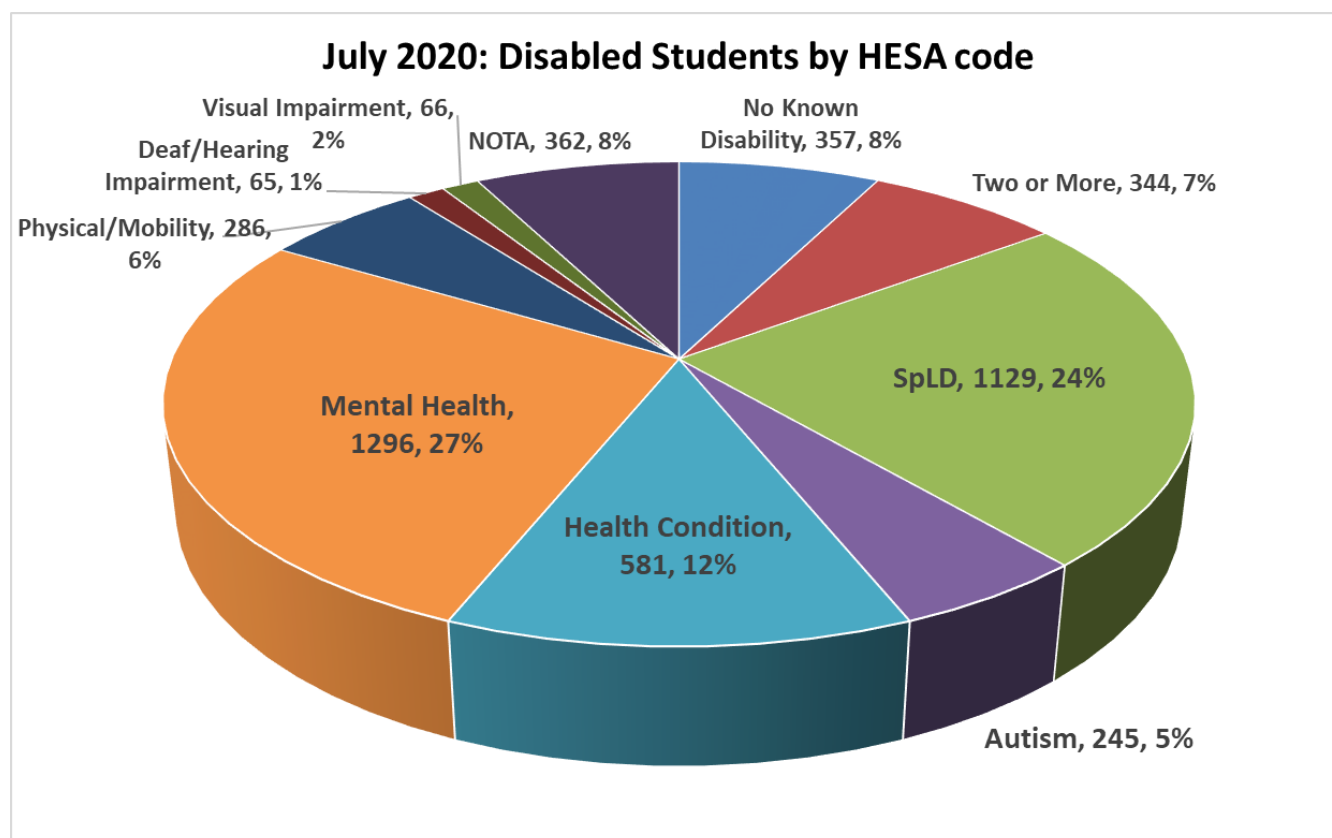


Figure 4: Disability Disclosures by HESA categories as of July 2020

Appendix 2: Non-Medical Help (NMH) Scheme Data

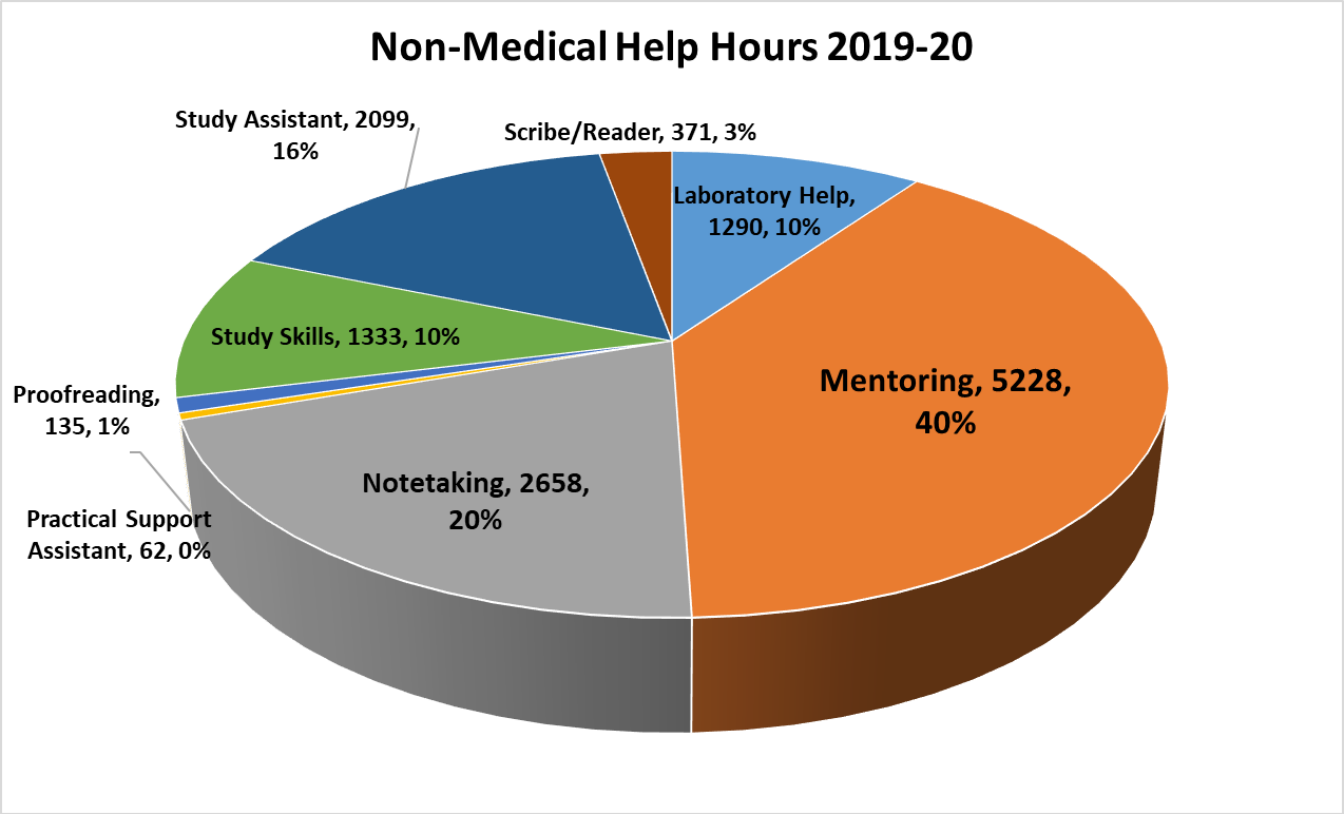


Figure 5: Breakdown of 2019/20 NMH hours by task

13,175 hours of non-medical help support were delivered in 2019/20.

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