Access Technology Factsheet for staff

This document summarises the main sources of help and information for University of Edinburgh staff about:

1) making information, activities and materials more accessible;
2) specialist technologies ("assistive technologies") available to assist students and staff.

1) Making your work more accessible

Information Services Support

Information Services maintains a set of web pages with factsheets, advice and links to further information at http://www.ed.ac.uk/is/accessibility.

This includes factsheets on alternative formats for documents, creating accessible emails, Word, PowerPoint and PDF documents.

These pages also summarise

- the accessible features of the library services
- some common misconceptions about accessible materials
- an outline of the relevant legislation
- other ways in which Information Services can support staff in making all our services as accessible as possible.

Student Disability Service and support

There are a number of specialist groups within the University working on improving services for all disabled people. Their members can advise staff on particular aspects of their work. The Disability Committee currently has one relevant sub-group: Technology, Information & Communication Sub Group (The Disability Technology and Accessible Information sub-groups combined together in December 2012). See http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service/committees for details of these committees and membership.

All Schools have a designated member of staff who deals with the adjustments to curriculum and resources required by disabled students, and many schools have a designated Teachability officer. Your School Administrator will be able to tell you who holds these roles.

2) Specialist technologies

Information Services makes a range of specialist hardware and software available, which either converts materials into different formats, or helps students work in a way that meets special needs. You may wish to use some

of the conversion technologies, or try out some of your teaching materials on them to see how well they work. Following some of the guidance from Information Services on their accessibility pages, you can ensure that your lecture notes, reading lists etc are available for students who use the technologies outlined below.

Wherever it is technically and financially possible, specialist software is available as a "mainstream" item from the managed desktop and in public labs. Where this is not (currently) possible, there are a number of options.

- Software and hardware will be installed at a specific site for use by an individual student. This may change from year to year.
- A group of dedicated (accessible) PCs are available at different library sites around the university. All accessible PCs have a large monitor, scanner, ergonomic mice and keyboards, and rest on adjustable height desks.
- There are a number of Accessible Study Rooms on the 1st floor of the Main Library building, equipped with accessible PCs and a range of hardware and software, including those described below.

The Information Services pages above include a list of these locations and how to access them.

Accessible Study Room 3 in the Main Library, equipped with scanner, CCTV with MyReader video capture and Dragon Naturally Speaking software.

The Learning and Teaching Spaces Technology Section aim to make the technologies in lecture theatres and teaching rooms as accessible as possible, and ensure availability of support for things like induction loop systems. They can advise on such equipment and arrange special facilities such as Closed Circuit TV (CCTV), if necessary.
http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/about/organisation/iti/division-iti-who/division-iti-units/section-ltsts/contacting-ltsts

Specialist technology and what it does

Items marked * are available on all public access PCs and can be provided for a managed desktop on request.

Braille embosser
This hardware produces paper Braille documents, by embossing Braille characters onto special paper.

Dragon Naturally Speaking 12
This software requires a headphone and microphone - it converts your speech to digital text. It also allows the user to control the computer using voice commands. Not currently available but will be coming to the Main Library early 2013. This software is widely used by people who have difficulty using a mouse, keyboard or using other forms of computer input device.

Duxbury Braille Translator
Turns electronic text into Braille. This can then be made available to a Braille user either through printing using the Braille embosser, or directly using a specialist Braille hardware reader - some Braille users will have their own.

Mind Mapping Software
Many people find it easier to construct plans and visualise work to be done by creating structured visual images - "mind maps". It is easy to create as many different topics as you need, move them around, make links between them and set up sub-headings and attach notes. Then you can convert your mindmap to a word or PowerPoint document, with headings and bullet points.

Mind mapping can be helpful for anyone planning study or essay writing. People with dyslexia and some other forms of specific learning difficulties may find mind mapping particularly helpful, to get an overview of a subject and connections between topics which they would struggle to visualise from text and bullet points.

Inspiration 9*
MindGenius 4*
These two different programmes have different appearances and strengths, so some users will prefer one to the other. For example, Inspiration has a range of "template maps" for different subjects and tasks which provide a starting framework. MindGenius has support for task and team project planning.

ABBYY FineReader 11
This software converts paper documents into electronic formats for editing, using optical character recognition. It is especially useful for people with a visual impairment who can then use something like TextHelp Read & Write to read the text aloud. This can be particularly useful for reading lists where the

originator of a document cannot make an alternative format available, but care must be taken to comply with relevant legislation such as copyright law.

TextHELP! Read & Write Gold 10 *
This software will read text aloud highlighting words or phrases as they are spoken. It supports spelling and grammar checking, and will suggest word completion. You can scan in images of documents and convert them to a readable digital format. Electronic documents such as Adobe Acrobat PDF formats can also be converted. This is helpful for people with reading difficulties (e.g. dyslexia) or a physical impairment which makes it easier to listen to text than read it onscreen. It can increase reading speed and improve concentration and productivity for many students.

ZoomText 10
This software allows users to magnify text and change contrast (e.g. black on white instead of white on black). It is especially helpful for people with a visual impairment and for materials which cannot easily be converted to audio, such as charts and diagrams.

All of the above come with comprehensive support and tutorial information.

Mainstream Accessibility and the future

Thanks to the legislation and advances in technology, more and more computers and other devices have built-in options which improve accessibility for some users. For example, most Internet browsers now have easy to use settings which change font size, style, colour and background. As long as your original materials have been formatted with this in mind, these tools will be very helpful and reduce the need for other specialist tools.

There is also growing amount of free software available for computers, mobile phones etc, which can convert file formats, enlarge or scan limited amounts of text, etc. So, for example, technologies like QR Codes can be used to provide a machine-readable notice where it might not be possible to place one on the wall. The Student Disability Service and Information Services monitor these developments and evaluate them for use, wherever possible.

The Student experience

Students coming to University should contact the Student Disability Service and arrange an appointment to see an Advisor.
http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service/students/making-an-appointment

Students meet with these Advisors to discuss their specific needs in relation to all aspects of academic life at the University. The Advisors at the Student Disability Service can then put together a list of all the adjustments they need. This is called a Learning Profile. Extra time in exams, a study room in

the library or receiving lecture notes in advance are all examples of the sort of adjustments available at University.
http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service/students/support-we-offer/learning-profiles

If a student is eligible, a Needs Assessment for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) is arranged to decide what a disabled student would need to assist them during their studies. This could perhaps be one-to-one support with a tutor or support worker, a note-taker, or some computer hardware and/or software.
http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service/students/support-we-offer/financial-support

The Student Disability Service will work with your school's coordinator of adjustments to ensure staff know what adjustments must be made for individual students on their courses. However it is always easier and quicker to provide adjustments for materials which have been prepared with accessibility in mind.

Key contacts

Student Disability Service
Website http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service
email: Disability.Service@ed.ac.uk

Information Services Disability Information Officer
Viki Galt Phone 0131 650 6645 email viki.galt@ed.ac.uk

JISC TechDis
This specialist group provides advice and support for the UK Higher and Further Education sector. It includes a wide range of factsheets on specific topics and reports, staff development materials, and links to access related projects, e.g. Web2Access, which is evaluating Web 2.0 communications technologies for their accessibility.
Website http://www.techdis.ac.uk

Compiled by the University of Edinburgh Disability Technology Sub-Committee, 2011 – Updated December 2012

If you require this document in an alternative format such as Braille, large print etc, please contact Bruce Darby on 0131 650 6828 or email bruce.darby@ed.ac.uk.