The University of Edinburgh

Periodic Review

Student Disability Service

18th and 19th March 2015

1   Review Context

1.1 The Periodic Review (PR) of Student Disability Service (SDS) at the University of Edinburgh is part of the University's quality assurance framework and procedures, and is complemented by the Senatus and College Quality Assurance Committees' monitoring and reporting. Periodic Review is the process by which the quality of the student experience of some key student-facing services is reviewed in more depth and over a longer term than through the submission of an annual report. Through Periodic Review the University aims to take a wider strategic overview of the impact of the support service and its impact in relation to the other services.

1.2 The review consisted of:
- The University's standard remit for Periodic Review (Appendix A)
- Service-specific remit items (Appendix A)
- Further remit items proposed by the wider university (Appendix A)

- The Analytical Report and supporting documentation prepared by Student Disability Service[1]
- The review team visit took place over 2 days on 18th and 19th March 2015, and consisted of a series of meetings (Appendix B) with members of staff from Student Disability Service, with student users, and with members of staff in other parts of the University.
- The Periodic Review report was produced by the Review Administrator, with input from the review team.

1.3 The Review Team members were:

Convener – Dr Robert Mason, Associate Dean Quality Assurance, College of Humanities and Social Science

External member – Dr Shirley Hill, Head of Disability Services, University of Dundee

Internal member – Mr Ronnie Millar, Director of the Counselling Service, University of Edinburgh

Internal member – Dr Fanney Kristmundsdottir, Dean of Pastoral Care, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, University of Edinburgh

Student member – Ms Polina Shipkova, School of Biological Sciences, student representative, University of Edinburgh

Administrator – Mrs Marion Judge, Academic Services, University of Edinburgh

1.4 In the course of the review the Review Team had discussions with Director of SDS Sheila Williams, the SDS management team which included Assistant Directors and the Service's Office Manager, and a selection of their colleagues from SDS, Coordinators of Adjustment, representatives from Colleges and Schools working with SDS including Deans of Students, representatives from other Support Services, and student users of the service. The timetable for the review including a list of those who attended the review is at Appendix B.

1.5 The Analytical Report from SDS was prepared by Sheila Williams. The Analytical Report was helpful to the review team and provided a basis for discussion in the meetings held with staff and students. SDS provided the Review Team with a wide range of supporting information, made available through a Wiki. A list of supporting documentation is at Annex C.

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[1] https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/pages/viewpage.action?title=Student+Disability+Services&spaceKey=PRSS

Student Disability Service (SDS)

The Student Disability Service sits within the University Secretary's Group. The Service provides a range of services to students in support of the University's academic mission. In addition to disabled students and their parents/guardians/family carers, the Service works with academic colleagues, Personal Tutors, Coordinators of Adjustments, Student Support Officers and with other services within the University Secretary's Group including Student Administration and Information Services. The Student Disability Service (as at January 2015) employs 68 staff[2], equivalent to 16.8FTE, with 35 Student Support Assistants and 8 educational and clinical psychologists. The Service is located in the Main Library, George Square, with sessional staff working from Moray House, Edinburgh College of Art and King's Buildings. This review was the first internal Periodic Review undergone by the Service.

2   Report overview

2.1 The review team has **confidence** that Student Disability Service fully meets and satisfies the requirement of the University's standard remit items, and has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement processes and procedures which adhere to Scottish and UK good practice. The Review Team **commends** Student Disability Service for setting and attaining high standards, in line with the University's reputation.

2.2 The review team found the Periodic Review to be a positive experience, and enjoyed discussions with members of the Service, their colleagues in the wider University and student users of the Service. The Review Team considers that SDS is operating effectively and responding to the challenges it faces.

2.3 Themes emerging from discussion included:

2.3.1   **Space/Estate.** This is a major challenge to the Service, in two ways. First, the Service itself is short of space, affecting delivery of services. Second, across the University's campus and buildings, there are access issues for disabled students. This has an adverse impact on the student experience, particularly in light of increasing student numbers, and additionally on staff, with a lack of space for meetings. The Review Team noted that the Service is taking a proactive approach towards more flexible sharing of space, but the issue of space is one that the University can help to address. (*6.5)*

2.3.2   **Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy**.   The Review Team shares the view that the policy is a positive and important development, which the Team **recommends**

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[2] Analytical Report 2.5

be strengthened further through further work across the University on implementation and embedding of the policy. *(3.13)*

2.3.3 **Student Engagement**. The Service demonstrates that whilst it clearly has processes in place to support students, these could be strengthened by further engagement with students to develop a deeper partnership approach, thereby ensuring that students' disability related learning needs are met, and enhancing the student experience. Class representatives could in general play a stronger role in assisting in awareness-raising in relation to implementation of AILP. (3.7)

2.3.4 **Systems**. Data systems currently deployed by the Service are recognised as being no longer fit for the purpose they serve. SDS is working in partnership with Student Systems and Information Services on taking steps towards significant improvements in this area (3.24).

2.3.5 **Technology**, including accessibility for Online Distance learning (ODL) students. The Service provides a range of technology to students to enable them to access their teaching. The SDS also uses University-wide systems to communicate with disabled students and with relevant academic and support staff. The development of ODL provision presents new challenges, and the Review Team endorses the Service's view that more work needs to be done to develop provision for ODL students, whilst continuing to ensure promotion of best practice across the wider University.

2.3.6 **Service restructure**. A key development area, involving challenges for the Service, has been its ongoing restructure through a change project entitled, "Providing an Integrated and Effective Service". The aim of the project is the provision of more effective support to disabled students, with the overall aim of future-proofing SDS to position the service more effectively to cope with the changing demographic of disabled students, funding constraints and the shifting higher education context.[3] At the time of the review the project is in its final implementation stage. The Review Team **commends** the Service for the positive aims of the project, and whilst recognising that it faces challenges through the project, the Team is confident that the project will have strong benefits overall for students. (4.4, 5.2)

2.3.7 **Communications**. Developing robust and effective cross-University communications is a challenge to all Services. The Review Team recognises that SDS has developed good and effective communications with some Schools and Support Services, and encourages the Service to continue its good work in this area, building

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[3] Student Disability Service Analytical Report, section 2.5

on its successes, through identifying and sharing of good practice. The Review highlighted the need for two-way engagement in order for communications to be effective, and **recommends** actions for the wider University in this area. (3.3, 3.6)

3 Effectiveness of the management of the student support experience.

3.1 The Review Team has confidence that the Service is developing effectively and continuously in relation to the student support experience. The Service is following the direction set by the University, ensuring that it is matching the University's aspirations as one of the world's leading universities, providing a quality service and working towards an outstanding student experience, supported by the Service's vision, mission, and values.

3.2 The Review Team met with the Director of the Student Disability Service, Assistant Directors, Office Manager, and other staff members of the Service who demonstrated to the Review Team that the Service is committed to enhancing the service it provides to students.

3.3 The Review Team was invited to consider remit themes from the Service as well as from the Colleges and wider University, one of which related to communications between the Student Disability Service and administrative and academic staff in Schools and Colleges, with particular reference to the implementation and mainstreaming of adjustments and effectiveness of policy in this area. The Review Team noted that the Service has good working relations with Schools. The Service provides training for Schools and the role of the Coordinator of Adjustment (CoA) generally works effectively across Schools. Some positive examples of the effectiveness of School/SDS relations came from Edinburgh College of Art, which works closely with the Service. The Review Team **recommends**, however, that lines of responsibility for ensuring adjustments are implemented could be made clearer, and suggests for example making sure that there are regular meetings between SDS and CoAs in Schools.

3.4 The Review Team acknowledges that in addition to the internal partnership working the Service engages in, and **suggests** that where appropriate, it may be helpful to hold a general review of the committee structures, to assess the effectiveness of committees and to provide clarity of their roles.

3.5 The Service provides a range of training for staff across the University, which can be tailored on request for any School or support service. It is evident that while Schools are requesting training, there is not broad engagement in this area, which poses

concerns not only in relation to the quality of service provided to students, but also in relation to the University's statutory obligations. It is therefore **recommended** that Schools find effective ways to implement the requirement of attendance at regular, relevant training sessions.

3.6 The Service is aware that communications with students is a challenge, not only because of the volume of communications students face, but also because of the number of contacts involved, for example in the Service itself and in Schools and other areas of the University. Students who spoke to the Review Team *suggested* that it would be helpful, wherever feasible, to have one contact person who knows of all a student's needs, a single point of contact. The Review Team notes that the Service is aiming to address this internally through its approach in restructuring the Service, facilitating consistency of approach to disabled student support. It notes furthermore that the wider University is addressing the issue of student communications more generally in various ways including through the work currently being undertaken by a working group on communications.

3.7 The Service takes a proactive approach to gathering and responding to student opinion through a variety of surveys, in line with University practice. While the Review Team found that the Service's reflective engagement with the student voice deserves praise, it also noted that the quantitative thrust of most survey material does not always generate the right insights to inform enhancement activity. Students who spoke to the Review Team suggested that it would be helpful to have focus groups to provide a platform for students to discuss their views with the Service. The Review Team therefore **recommends** that the Service makes wider use of student Groups through Student-Staff Liaison Committees, with the assistance of EUSA as appropriate to enhance student engagement, for example through the student and staff liaison committees.

3.8 The Review Team notes that Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) has representation on disability-related working groups, with the Director of the Student Disability Service regularly meeting EUSA staff, sabbaticals and representatives of Disability and Mental Wellbeing Liberation Group. The Review Team **recommends** ensuring that there is student representation on *all* relevant committees, particularly in relation to consultations over estates issues.

3.9 Reflecting on ways in which the University in conjunction with the Service can help to enhance and further support the wider promotion of a positive image of disability across the University, the Review Team *suggests*, for example, introducing an award

that recognises support for disability related inclusive practice within the wider University community and highlights examples of inclusive practice.[4]

3.10 Considering internal support groups for students, there appeared to be limited awareness amongst disabled students of disabled student support groups within Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA). The Service *suggested* to the Review Team that it would help to facilitate finding ways of enabling students to contact each other.

3.11 In the course of the review there were discussions around managing the expectations of disabled students, including those of international students, involving their expectations of levels of adjustments in comparison to the level of adjustments received in the home country. The Service has worked with International Office on producing material (for example a video) to help get the message out to disabled students that seeking support can make a difference. Whilst information on disability support is provided to students by Student Recruitment and Admissions, the Review Team *suggests* that more detailed information could be provided at applicant stage in order to assist international disabled students to manage their expectations more effectively. The Review Team notes, however, that a lot of good work has been done by SDS and the Student Experience Project in the area of induction and pre-arrival, for example the pilot that was undertaken on pre-arrival support for students with Asperger Syndrome, evaluation of which has been positive, with this leading to proposed mainstreaming in this area.

3.12 It is acknowledged that the Service is doing an excellent job given the challenges it faces in light of rising numbers of students declaring disabilities. To help the Service the Review Team **recommends** that additional short-term staffing resource could be engaged to allow the Service to better cope with pressure points in the academic year (see 4.8).

3.13 The University launched the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy[5] (AILP) in 2013, mainstreaming a number of adjustments recommended for disabled students. The introduction of the policy has been broadly welcomed as a positive measure, providing further benefit to students. The review identified, however, that the policy has not yet had full take-up across the University and requires longer to become embedded. The Review Team therefore **recommends** to senior managers, including key University committees such as the Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee and EUSA, to enhance engagement with the policy by communicating it more widely across the University, as well as bringing greater awareness of the implications of AILP. It is further *suggested* that it would be useful for the policy to include exemplars to help further engagement with the policy.

3.14 It is **recommended** that it might be helpful for a focused, small-scale audit of the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy to be conducted to investigate how successful

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[4] This might be similar to practice in other institutions, for example the University of Dundee.
[5] http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Policies/Accessible_and_Inclusive_Learning_Policy.pdf

implementation of the policy has been, as well as to identify any obstacles to full implementation. This would then inform work to tackle those obstacles to the successful embedding of the AILP in all learning/teaching activity.

3.15 The Review Team **commends** the Service for the excellent work that is being done in service development, for example the pilot 2-day transition event for students with Asperger Syndrome (3.12) which is now planned to be mainstreamed to an annual event. The Team encourages the Service to continue with these positive and proactive approaches towards mainstreaming support for students.

3.16 The Service meets regularly with Student Administration colleagues to discuss examination support for disabled students, a key aim of these meetings being to streamline systems for implementing student support and ensuring that support recommended by the SDS is put into effect.[6]

3.17 The Review Team noted from discussions that the Service and Student Administration (Timetabling Unit) acknowledge that there is ongoing work to be done in the area of access to buildings in general and more specifically at examination times, in particular regarding implementation of Personal Evacuation Assistance Plans (PEAPs) (see 3.20). Enhancement work is being done by the Timetabling Unit to match up room allocation with student needs, with reporting in place to ensure students with particular declared mobility issues are allocated suitably accessible rooms. Timetabling liaises with relevant Schools(s) to address any issues and ensure students are appropriately accommodated. The Review Team **recommends** deeper School engagement between Schools and Timetabling, ensuring that Schools are clear on their role in relation to responsibilities for ensuring accessibility for disabled students, and that Advisors know the buildings that are to be accessed.

3.18 Among the points that students raised in discussion were not only the suitability of examination venues, but also the appropriateness of certain modes of assessment for students with certain disabilities. The Review Team *suggests* that Schools remain sensitive to disability-related issues both in considering new courses and in reviewing existing provision. The Team would remind colleagues involved with course approval and review to consider disability-related issues. The use of Equality Impact Assessment may be helpful in this regard.

3.19 A major challenge facing physically disabled students can be physical access, given that a large part of the University's estate is comprised of old buildings that were not designed for disabled access. Students who spoke to the Review Team, as well as SDS staff members, noted concerns around access and the ensuing impact that difficulties of access have on the quality of their student experience. Students acknowledged that progress is being made, but that it is slow. Further clarity of roles and responsibilities would be helpful in improving this area, as well as appropriate group/committee

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[6] Analytical Report 2.3

representation for both Service staff and students, together with School representation, to ensure that effective processes are in place and are being evaluated. An Access and Facilities sub-group meets once a quarter, but it is advised that the remit of this group needs to be updated. It is therefore *suggested* that the Head of Estates and Buildings review the remit and membership of the group be reviewed. Other issues such as not all buildings being manned by servitorial staff, or having facilities managers, may impact on access for students with physical access needs. The Review Team **recommends** that Estates and Buildings considers an audit of disabled access to buildings so that priorities for improvements can be identified and progressed, where reasonable.

3.20 The Review Team noted with concern that student evaluation responses consistently highlight fire evacuation as an area of least satisfaction.[7] It is understood that Schools are responsible for drawing up fire evacuation plans, but evidence from the review points to inconsistency in approaches. It is understood that more guidance for staff is being provided by the Fire department, including highlighting the need for a designated person nominated for this role in each School, but there is a sense that there is not enough support in this area, with guidance not yet online. It is understood further that the PEAP system is under review, but that changes and improvements have not yet been fully implemented. There appears to be a lack of clarity around procedures for access and egress, although the Review Team noted that Estates and Buildings are currently conducting a review in this area which will include a response on the issue of PEAPs. The Review Team **recommends** as a matter of urgency completion of the review of the PEAP process to ensure responsibility for developing and monitoring PEAPs, both in Schools and across the wider University, is clarified.

3.21 In addition, it is strongly **recommended** that there is clearer definition of roles and responsibilities in Schools in relation to fire evacuation, including succession planning for when staff with fire evacuation responsibilities leave, and awareness-raising of fire evacuation plans with Heads of Schools holding responsibility or the dissemination of relevant information.

3.22 As part of the remit, the Review Team was asked to consider the interaction between the Service and support provided for Online Distance Learning students. While it appears that many aspects of distance learning are actually well attuned to the accessibility needs that some of the University's distance learners may experience, with the general focus for this cohort of students being similar to that of non-ODL students, the Service is looking at ways of delivering training in relation to the needs of ODL students, as well as the use of screening tools and accessibility of materials to ODL

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[7] Analytical Report Table 6

disabled students. In addition the Service is planning in the near future to research online learning/study skills provision. The Review Team recognises the good work that is being done in this area.

3.23 The Service takes a strategic approach to inclusion and equality and has as one of its key aims to mainstream and embed equality for disabled students. The Service is represented on the University's Equality and Diversity Committee. In addition to the work of the Service on equality and diversity, some Equality and Diversity groups in Schools are taking a lead in access to mental health training, which is welcomed, though the issue is how to encourage this approach more widely. The Review Team *suggests* that the Equality and Diversity Committee considers the University's approach to inclusion to take account of the intersectionality of disability with other protected characteristics. This could build on SDS's work in mainstreaming adjustments, and could include an assessment of the extent to which these adjustments have improved access to learning for students in general.

3.24 The Service demonstrates that it interacts with Information Technology in a broad range of ways, providing a wide range of equipment and software to support disabled students. These include assistive technology, with provision of specialist software. The Service is aware, however, that disabled students face challenges around the lack of consistency of use of technology, for example around the inconsistent use of microphones by lecturers, and that equipment does not always work. It is therefore *suggested* that provision of assistive technology e.g. use of microphones, subtitling of lectures, is reviewed in liaison with Information Services to consider ways to improve and mainstream access to assistive technology.

3.25 The Service is engaged (at an early stage) in additional technology projects and in initiatives designed to help to enhance Service provision. This work is in partnership with both Information Services and Student Systems who are developing a Road Map for the Service which will focus on improving processes based on students' needs and of the needs of the various related roles (Coordinators of Adjustment, Personal Tutors, Advisors, etc.). This will include enhancement/replacement of data systems through: managing and maintaining waiting lists; communicating more effectively with students and staff; facilitation of access to a range of statistics for planning purposes. In addition to this project, further enhancement work is being undertaken to make more effective use of the MyEd portal (with more personalised communications) and to the applicant portal. The Review Team **commends** this work, endorsing the approach being taken to enhance systems provision, and *suggests* that the work is given high priority.

4   Effectiveness of the management of quality and standards

4.1 The Review Team is confident that Student Disability Service has effective quality structures in place, and takes a rigorous approach towards the setting and maintaining of standards.

4.2 The Service values internal partnership working, engaging with a wide range of stakeholders and colleagues, and is represented widely across the University at committee level and in working groups[8] in addition to participating in external bodies. The Service has effective partnerships with other Student Support Services, working effectively with Student Counselling Service and Chaplaincy, for example. The Review Team notes the positive effects of the Support Services' approach of working closely together, and **recommends** ensuring inclusion of SDS in all relevant discussions, particularly for example with Estates and Buildings around disability requirements in relation to new builds and to renovation work on old buildings.

4.3 The Review Team **commends** the Service for its inclusive and open approach, its encouraging of open discussions and exchange of ideas, sharing good practice, as well as its self-reflective approach.

4.4 The Review Team **commends** the Service for its aims and approach in its restructuring project, with its aims of maximising resources and providing more effective and consistent support to students, whilst maintaining and developing specialisms that already exist. The Review Team acknowledges the challenges the changes have posed, and encourages SDS staff to continue engaging with the change management process as the project moves into its final phase. The Review Team **recommends** that the SDS management team monitors the impact of the restructure on students and staff in the Service.

4.5 The Service noted that a key driver in restructuring, in addition to the need to provide an integrated service, is the need to reduce waiting lists. The Service's front-line staff, who are highly skilled in ensuring that students see the right person, are **commended**. Some students commented that many staff are part-time staff with some working during the semester only, and highlighted the need for continuity of contact, especially for some students (eg those with Asperger syndrome).

4.6 The Review Team **commends** the Service for the improvements it is making to internal administrative systems. A key example is the "Paper Light" project, designed to place

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[8] Analytical Report: appendix C and appendix D – internal and external relationships and key involvement

essential information online, and to enable access to relevant scanned documentation by staff in other campuses. The Team noted that the project has been well received.

4.7 The Service puts strong focus on its staff training programme, and is **commended** for its excellent performance management rate for annual appraisal of eligible staff. Because strong partnerships across the University are essential to the Service's effectiveness, the introduction of a new Assistant Director role, to concentrate on this area, is a promising development. The Review Team *suggests* that the Director of SDS reviews the effectiveness of the Assistant Director roles when taking forward some of the recommendations from the review, particularly in relation to the development of stronger partnerships with Schools and Services across the University.

4.8 The volume of adjustments at the start of academic year is high, which can put additional pressure on the Service. The Review Team therefore **recommends** provision of short-term, sessional staff to help reduce pressures in this area (see 3.12). Whilst it is recognised that Student Support structures in Schools are generally promoting the Service to students declaring disabilities at pre-induction stage, it is *suggested* that this approach should be adopted more uniformly across Schools.

4.9 The Service uses a range of evaluation methods such as: student surveys; more focused evaluations of the services it provides to students, such as the mentor service; a series of team meetings; and case studies*.* Some comments indicated that student surveys, though important, are too long, with a feeling that students are being over-surveyed, and that surveys do not always provide the Service with the data it requires. In addition, the Review Team noted from their discussion with students a view that online surveys could be more accessible. It is therefore *suggested* that a review in consultation with students in this area could look at improving the usability of online surveys. The Service is looking at improving survey response rates, and is considering other ways of gathering feedback. The Review Team *suggests* that the Service makes wider use of student focus groups to enhance student engagement (see section 3.7). Furthermore, the Team *suggests* that the Director and Assistant Directors assess the usefulness of data gathered in order to reflect on the Service's opinion-sounding strategy, perhaps in consultation with the Student Survey Unit.

4.10 The Review Team noted from discussions and from the Analytical Report that the Service's KPIs were under review and that the Service is planning to introduce more meaningful and relevant KPIs in relation to implementation of adjustments. The Team **commends** the work being undertaken to maximize the usefulness of KPI-related targets. The Review Team *suggests* that mainstreaming adjustments may reduce the number of students disclosing a disability as some disabled students may not need any further adjustments to be made and would therefore have no need to disclose.

5   Effectiveness of the management of enhancement and sharing of good practice

The review team identified many areas where the Service is clearly managing enhancement and sharing good practice, as highlighted by the commendations noted throughout the report and in the Analytical Report[9], some of which are referenced below. During discussions at the review the Service commented on areas where it felt it would make further enhancements. The following areas of enhancement and good practice are highlighted, as well as areas noted for further enhancement:

5.1 **Accessible and Inclusive Learning.** The Service is working to embed the University's policy internally (see 3.13), and the Review Team notes[10] positive comments from Russell Group colleagues and from other Scottish institutions. The Review Team **commends** the Service for its positive approach and its successful work in taking forward a sector-leading policy. Although the University has yet to achieve full AILP implementation, progress has been made within a short timescale.

5.2 **Service restructure.** The aims of the restructure should enhance the service provided to students, and should essentially reduce waiting times for students. Another key benefit will be the provision of a more coordinated service for students.

5.3 The 2-day **Transition Event for students with Asperger Syndrome** was a very positive event which will become mainstreamed as an annual SDS event. It provides a good example of how the Service looks for new ways to support disabled students, in this case with a special sensitivity to the importance of the transition from school to the University.

5.4 **Staff development.** The Review Team noted that the Service exhibits a range of strengths in staff development, for example the development of the Advisors' Guide.

5.5 **Mental Health Strategy**. The work of the Service in enhancing support for students with mental health issues is **commended**. The Review Team noted excellent feedback from students in relation to the mental health mentoring service. The mental health mentor scheme is clearly working well. SDS is working with colleagues across the University in developing a new Mental Health Strategy and Support for Study Policy.[11] SDS staff work regularly with Student Counselling colleagues to deliver mental health training to academic colleagues.

5.6 **SDS videos**: the aim of the video project where students with mental health issues talk about support they received is **commended.** The Review Team encourages the wider

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[9] Analytical Report Section 4, p. 18
[10] Analytical Report Section 4, p. 18
[11] The Support for Study policy was approved by Curriculum and Student Progression Committee at its April 2015 meeting.

University to help SDS in spreading the message that seeking support can make a difference.

5.7 The Service recognises the need for further work on developing relations with Schools. It is *suggested* that in the context of awareness-raising of the work of the Service holding an Open Day could be helpful to promote the Service further, possibly held in conjunction with other Services.

5.8 The Review Team **commends** the ongoing development of a thematic based website for student experience services which will enhance the wider promotion and visibility of student services as a whole including SDS. To help the Service further with wider promotion of the Service across the wider University, the following *suggestions* are made: provision of drop-in sessions for students and staff; attendance at the scheduled staff meetings of Schools and Services to discuss any disability-related issues, to provide training and to raise awareness of services the Service offers to students and staff; annual staff feedback meetings to raise awareness of Service developments and enable staff to provide feedback on services provided by SDS; the highlighting of services to students at key points in the academic year such as the approach to examination periods, possibly using VLE and social media.

5.9 The Review Team **commends** the Service's proactive approach towards sharing good practice and developing partnerships, and encourages the Service to continue to look for opportunities via partnerships with the IAD, with QAC and College QA committees, with those in Schools responsible for disabled student support, and with others. The new Assistant Director role will be beneficial in this area of activity.

6   Service-specific remit

6.1 In relation to the remit item (Appendix A 3.3.1) on issues affecting the implementation of support for disabled student in Schools, the Review Team emphasizes that a key requirement is the need to ensure that there is clarification of roles and responsibilities of Co-ordinators of Adjustment within Schools in order to share adjustments with relevant staff, and subsequently the responsibility of all staff being to implement those adjustments, with the aim of improving effectiveness and consistency in this respect.

6.2 The Service requested the Review Team to consider as a remit item (Appendix A 3.3.2) mental health mentoring provision and processes, including ways in which the Service can promote a clearer identity for this provision. The Review Team found that mental health mentor provision is very strong, receiving excellent feedback from students, and that the work of mental health mentors forms a key strand of the Service's provision. Further enhancements through the work of the Mental Health Strategy Group should help to clarify where responsibilities lie, and to promote a clearer identity for this provision. It is noted that there are plans to promote mental health well-being across the whole University next year as part of the Mental Health Strategy. The impact of the embedding of the strategy could usefully be monitored to assess its effect on the

demand for the mentoring service. The Review Team questions, however, whether the current level of support is sustainable as numbers of students with mental health issues increases, and notes the Service's concerns over waiting lists. It is therefore **recommended** that more resource, both in terms of time and space, is allocated for this key area. This investment is probably a prerequisite to expanded promotion of a service that is successful but for which demand already outstrips availability.

6.3 Remit item 3.3.3 concerned support for international and EU students, requesting the Review Team to comment on how robust and equitable current processes are compared to those for UK students, and to consider also the significance of the contextual background of the review of Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) for in English-domiciled students funded by Student Finance England (SFE)). In relation to the service provided to disabled international students, the Review Team noted that although pre-arrival information is provided (for example factsheets available both in web format and hard copy for overseas students, information provided in the Undergraduate Prospectus, and on the web site at University, College and School level), there can nonetheless be a lack of clarity in the expectations of international students, who may expect the same arrangements to be in place as those of their home country *(3.11).*

6.4 The Review Team notes that the Service is successfully tackling emerging challenges with regard to the changing funding context within the UK, including the potential for increased demand on the service's Disabled Students Support Fund (DSSF) due to the DSA changes for English-domiciled students, and is monitoring access to this fund. It is *suggested* that SDS monitors the issue of parity of provision for English students and other disabled students who can access the DSA, so that any concerns can be raised as necessary with the University.

6.5 The Review Team considered remit item 3.3.4 regarding raising awareness of major pressures around suitable physical space which impact on service provision. The Review Team notes the challenge faced by the Service through the need to make efficiency savings whilst at the same time dealing with waiting lists. The Service is considering how better to utilise space, for example through making evening appointments available. Whilst there is an approach towards more flexibility around space sharing (for example in other parts of the campus, King's Buildings, Chaplaincy, Moray House School of Education and New College), there is nonetheless a need to look at distributed provision. The Review Team **recommends** that Schools liaise with SDS to flag up any additional appropriate space they may have available.

6.6 The Review Team is supportive of initiatives that expand the Service's availability to students. Considering the approach to raising awareness across the wider University about the Service's restructure, the Review Team *suggests* that this might be done in several ways: for example, through Open Days for Schools, at College level, and at University level through committees including through the Disability Committee and any related sub-committees.

7 List of commendations and prioritised recommendations:

7.1 Commendations

	Key strengths (not prioritised)	Paragraph ref/remit item Ref
1	The Review Team **commends** Student Disability Service for setting and attaining high standards, in line with the University's reputation.	2.1
2	The Review Team **commends** the Service for the positive aims of the project to restructure the Service.	2.3.6 and 4.4
3	The Review Team **commends** the Service for the excellent work that is being done in service development.	3.15
4	The Review Team **commends** the partnership work of the Service, Student Systems and Information Services in developing the Road Map for the Service which focuses on improving processes.	3.25
5	The Review Team **commends** the Service for its inclusive and open approach.	4.3
6	The Service's front-line staff, who are highly skilled in ensuring that students see the right person, are **commended.**	4.5
7	The Review Team **commends** the Service for the improvements it is making to internal administrative systems.	4.6
8	The Service puts strong focus on its staff training programme, and is **commended** for its excellent performance management rate for annual appraisal of eligible staff.	4.7
9	The Team **commends** the work being undertaken to maximize the usefulness of KPI-related targets.	4.10
10	The Review Team **commends** the Service for its positive approach and its successful work in taking forward the AILP.	5.1
11	The aim of the video project where students with mental health issues talk about support they received is **commended.**	5.6
12	The Review Team **commends** the ongoing development of a thematic based website for student experience services which will enhance the wider promotion and visibility of student services as a whole including SDS.	5.8
13	The Review Team **commends** the Service's proactive approach towards sharing good practice and developing partnerships	5.9

7.2 Recommendations and suggestions for enhancement/Areas for further development.

Recommendations are prioritised and ranked in order of importance. Suggestions are made for potential enhancements, to be considered by Information Services. Suggestions are not formal action points and are not tracked for completion. Recommendations are tracked through initial response report and year-on report.

	Prioritised recommendations for enhancement/Areas for further development (grouped by theme)	Ref.	Suggested responsibility of:	Suggested priority level (1= high, 2=moderate, 3 = low)
	Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy (AILP)			
1	The AILP is a positive and important development. The Review Team **recommends** to senior managers, including key University committees such as the Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee and EUSA that they: **i.** enhance engagement with the policy by communicating it more widely across the University, as well as bringing greater awareness of the implications of AILP; **ii.** help strengthen the policy through further work on implementation and embedding across the wider University.	2.3.2 3.13	Senior managers, committees (cascaded via Senate and beyond), EUSA, Heads of Colleges, Heads of Schools Learning and Teaching Committee, Disability Committee	1
2	It is **recommended** that it might be helpful for a focused, small-scale audit of the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy to be conducted to investigate how successful implementation of the policy has been, as well as to identify any obstacles to full implementation.	3.14	SDS, Disability Committee, key academic colleagues	2
	Communications			
3	The Review highlighted the need for strong two-way engagement in order for communications to be effective, and **recommends** actions for the wider University in this area, ensuring inclusion of the Student Disability Service, EUSA Disability societies and disability access specialists in all relevant discussions across the University, particularly	2.3.7, 3.3, 3.6, 4.2	University: Estates and Buildings, EUSA, Access specialists	1

	for example with Estates and Buildings around disability requirements in relation to new builds and to renovation work on old buildings.			
	Student engagement/representation			
5	The Review Team **recommends** that the Service makes wider use of student groups to enhance student engagement, for example through the student/staff liaison committees.	3.7	SDS	2
5	The Review Team **recommends** that student representation on relevant committees and groups be further enhanced, particularly in relation to consultations over estates issues.	3.8	SDS, EUSA, Estates and Buildings	1
	Training			
6	The Review Team **recommends**, that lines of responsibility for ensuring adjustments are implemented could be made clearer, and suggests for example ensuring regular meetings between SDS and CoAs in Schools.	3.3 (ii)	SDS/School CoAs	1
7	It is **recommended** that Schools find effective ways to implement a requirement of attendance at regular, relevant training sessions.	3.5	Schools (Directors of Professional Services) (possibly reinforced by HR) – relevant staff working with disabled students.	2
	Space/estates issues			
8	The Review Team **recommends** deeper School engagement between Schools and Timetabling, ensuring that Schools are clear on their role in relation to responsibilities for ensuring accessibility for disabled students, and that Advisors know the buildings that are to be accessed	3.17	Schools (Heads of Schools)/Head of Timetabling Unit	
9	The Review Team **recommends** that *Estates and Buildings* considers an audit of disabled access to buildings so that priorities for improvements can be identified and progressed, where reasonable.	3.19	Director of Estates and Buildings	1
10	The Review Team **recommends** as a matter of urgency completion of the review of the PEAPs process (by *Estates and Buildings*) to	3.20	Director of Estates and Buildings,	1

	ensure responsibility for developing and monitoring PEAPs, both in Schools and the wider University, is clarified.			
11	The Review Team strongly **recommends** that there is clearer definition of roles and responsibilities in Schools in relation to fire evacuation.	3.21	Heads of Schools/School Directors of Professional Services	1
12	In relation to pressures of space, the Review Team **recommends** Schools liaise with SDS to flag up any suitable additional available space they have.	6.5	School Directors of Professional Services	2
13	The Review Team **recommends** that the Student Disability Service management team monitors the impact of the restructure on students and staff in the Service.	4.4	SDS	2
	Resources			
14	The volume of adjustments at the start of academic year is high, which can put additional pressure on the Service. The Review Team therefore **recommends** provision of short-term staff to help reduce pressures in this area	3.12/ 4.8	SDS	1
15	It is **recommended** that more resource, both in terms of time and space, is allocated for the area of mental health mentoring provision.	6.2	Head of SDS	1

8 Conclusion

The Review Team has overall confidence that Student Disability Service has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement processes and procedures in relation to its management of the student support experience, management of quality and standards and management of enhancement and sharing good practice. The Review Team was provided with examples of good practice and effective management of enhancement, as noted above.

Student Disability Service is making an effective contribution to the student experience, with for example user satisfaction evident, in particular with the quality of the mental health mentoring provision which is functioning well. The Review Team noted, however, that there are areas where the enhancements to the student experience can be made, with suggestions noted above. The Service evidenced that it is self-evaluating and self-reflecting, against both

internal and external indicators and drivers, in order to ensure the high quality and standards of its provision.

The University is encouraged to maintain its awareness of the considerable and growing pressures facing the Service, and to provide the necessary levels of support to enable the Service to meet the specific challenges it faces, particularly in relation to estates and resource issues that affect the Service.

The Service demonstrates that it has effective quality structures in place, with a clear approach towards the setting and maintaining standards. Good governance structures are in place, although more work could be done on the roles of committees and related communications structures.

The Review Team commends the Service's approach to restructuring, acknowledging the challenges it faces in doing so, and suggests monitoring the impact of the restructure on students and staff in the Service.

The Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy, implemented in 2013, is a very positive and important development contributing to the Service's aim to mainstream and embed equality for disabled students. The Review Team considers that the policy can be made more effective through further work across the University on implementation and embedding of the policy.

In relation to the student experience for international students, and to managing their expectations in relation to levels of adjustments they receive whilst studying at the University of Edinburgh, the Review Team felt that one area of enhancement could be the early provision of relevant information on disability support at recruitment stage which might help to better manage their expectations.

The Review Team expresses thanks to Student Disability Service for its input and co-operation in this successful review.

9   Appendices

Appendix A

Remit for the Periodic Review of Student Disability Service:

3. 1 University standard remit

The University standard remit for student support service reviews consists of three overarching themes:

The remit consists of three overarching themes:
- Effectiveness of the management of the student support experience.
- Effectiveness of the management of quality and standards
- Effectiveness of the management of enhancement and promotion of good practice

3. 2 Remit items from the wider University

Communication:

3.2.1 Communication between Student Disability Service and administrative and academic staff in Schools and Colleges; understanding of issues in relation to adjustments; implementation and mainstreaming of adjustments and effectiveness of policy in this area. Embedding of Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy across Schools.

Service provision in general and to particular cohorts of students:

3.2.2 Interaction between the Service and Online Distance Learning students/support for ODL students. (Lessons we can learn from in order to refine our message to ODL programmes.) *It was noted that it would be helpful in relation to this theme to note any relevant both from the review of ODL in CMVM and the work of the task group on Student Representation for Distance Learners.*

3.2.3 Service provided to International Students; approach to non-UK students in relation to managing the transition between commonly accepted levels of support in students' home country to the standardised level of support in the UK/Scottish system as offered at the University. Are international students with specific learning barriers effectively flagged up at the point of application?

3.2.4 Effectiveness of service for students with mental health difficulties, with particular focus on service delivery for PGR students)

3.2.5 Accessibility of the service, for example through its publicity and appointments

Interaction with IT:

3.2.6 New forms of IT to support disabled students. Managing IT adjustments for disabled users, in particular for those taking centrally organised exams; communication with other units of exam requirements for disabled students for centrally organised exams
3.2.7 Effectiveness of web-based resources

Staff training/guidance:

3.2.8 Effectiveness of delivery of Staff training in relation to support for disabled students, particularly training for Personal Tutors.

3.2.9 Promotion/presentation of guidance (e.g. on website). How to keep staff updated on availability of provision and how best to achieve this.

Estate-related areas to consider:

3.2.10 Alignment/links with Accommodation Services and Estates and Buildings in relation to needs of disabled student, e.g. in relation to physical access, fire evacuation; effects on staff of estate-related issues.

Equality and Diversity

3.2.11 "Intersectionality" - i.e. students who have more than one protected characteristic - e.g. those who are disabled and from an ethnic minority for example. Given the importance of WP, the intersection of disability and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds

3. 3 Service-specific remit items

Remit items raised by Student Disability Services:

3.3.1 Issues affecting the implementation of support for disabled student in Schools.

3.3.2 SDS Mental Health Mentoring provision and processes (and/or Specific Learning Difficulties Tutor provision): are SDS referral processes robust; are there areas of duplication with IAD, Student Counselling Service, work in Schools? Are there ways SDS can promote a clearer identity for this provision; need for variation in approach? *Taken in the context of mentor provision in Mental Health having grown significantly*

3.3.3 SDS support for international and EU students, including DSSF allocation – are our processes robust and equitable compared to those for UK students?
Significance of contextual background – ongoing major review of disabled student provision in England, and implications for students at Scottish institutions.

3.3.4 Raising awareness of major pressures around suitable physical space (rooms available) which impact on service provision, and of the service's restructure, which is currently undergoing.

The University of Edinburgh

Periodic Review: Visit schedule

Periodic Review of: Student Disability Services 18th and 19th March 2015
Venue: Edinburgh College of Art, Board Room, Main Building

Day One

	Time	**Purpose**	**Attendees (Title & role)**	**Meeting Chair**
1.1	09.00 - 09.30	**Review team meeting** *To confirm:* • *the format of the review* • *chair for each meeting* • *lines of enquiry* • *highlight any points/themes to be pursued.* • *Any relevant issues*	Review Team	**Robert Mason**
1.2	09.30 - 10.15	**Meeting with Head of Support Service, Service management team and Periodic Review Liaison** *To discuss:* • *the Head of Support Service's overview in the analytical report* • *effectiveness of policies* • *management of the Service in relation to service users* • *strategic issues* • *lines of responsibility for management*	*Head of Student Disability Services and Management Team:* *Sheila Williams, Gael Campbell, Jan Gardiner, Martin Judd, Melanie Scott*	**Robert Mason**
1.3	10.15 - 10.30	Morning break	*Review Team*	
1.4	10.30 – 11.15	**Quality Enhancement Meeting** To discuss*:* • *Quality assurance, including reflection and action on student feedback.* • *Ways in which the services engage with students to monitor and improve the quality of services, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) service standards, key external benchmarks, results of any external reviews in the year of reporting.*	*Head of Student Disability Services and Management Team:* *Sheila Williams, Gael Campbell, Jan Gardiner, Martin Judd, Melanie Scott*	**Robert Mason**

		• *How do monitoring and quality assurance take account of all students?* • *Good practice and ways in which the service promotes continuous quality enhancement* • *University standard remit theme: Effectiveness of the management of quality and standards*		
1.5	11.15 – 12.00	**Service Specific Meeting 1**: The key focus of this meeting it to discuss: Service-specific Remit and the wider context of the University remit item Effectiveness of the management of the student support experience • *Support for students with mental health issues*	*Sheila Williams* *Martin Judd, Assistant Director, Jacquie Nicholson, Mental Health Mentor* *Marc Richelieu Student Counselling Service's Assistant Director (confirmed)* *Ali Newell Associate Chaplain University Chaplain* *Gavin Douglas*	**Fanney Kristmundsdottir**
1.6	12.00 – 12.45	**Student Experience Meeting 1** **Cover Remit items:** • University standard remit theme: Effectiveness of the management of the student support experience. • Equality and Diversity - "Intersectionality"	*Deputy University Secretary Gavin Douglas* *Vice Principal Equality & Diversity Jane Norman* *Shelagh Green Head of Careers Service*	**Shirley Hill**
1.7	12.45 – 13.00	**Break**		
1.8	13:00 – 14:00	**Lunchtime Meeting with Student Users** • University standard remit theme: Effectiveness of the management of the student support experience. • the effectiveness of the Service in contributing to a high quality student experience • effectiveness of way in which Service engages with students to monitor and improve the quality of service		9 students

		- students' experience of disability support across the university, in particular adjustments being implemented, and the role of schools - Any estate issues, ie accessibility/location of Service Covering remit themes: - views of ODL/International/non-UK students: managing transitions in support from home country to UK student interaction with IT/Support - Accessibility of the service, for example through its publicity and appointments - Equality and Diversity "Intersectionality"		
1.9	14:00 – 14.15	**Review meeting with students** Key themes from meeting	Review Team only	
1.10	14:15 – 15.00	**Service Specific Meeting 2 :** To discuss: - Effectiveness of support for particular cohorts of students – ODL, International Students/ EU - IT support for disabled students - Consider use of technology to enhance delivery, support efficiency and effectiveness of operation	*Martin Judd* *Jan Gardiner* *Melanie Scott* *Irene Purcell, SDS Technology Advisor, Kenny Beaton, IT Coordinator* *Advisors: Holly Curless and Jahanara Khatun.* *Front desk staff: Karen Lawson*	**Ronnie Millar**
1.11	15:00 – 15.15	Break		
1.12	15.15 – 16.00	**Service Specific Meeting 3:** *Theme:* - Estate-related issues How estates issues may affect staff who directly support students - Raising awareness of major pressures around suitable physical space	*Sheila Williams* *Gary Jebb (confirmed), Director of Estates and Buildings,* *David Casey, Design Manager, Estates and Buildings (apologies, but met review administrator after review)* Michelle Christian *Senior Manager, Accommodation Services (confirmed)* *Dash Sekhar, EUSA(**apologies**)*	**Polina Shipkova**
1.13	16.00 – 17.00	**Student Experience Meeting 2** To discuss:	*College Deans of Students;*	***Shirley and Ronnie***

		Partnership working with Colleges and Schools • Student experience-related matters including implementation and mainstreaming of adjustments and effectiveness of policy in this area • Enhancement: good practice in Schools which could be rolled out to other Schools; comments on any area where University processes may not be working • Communication between Student Disability Service and administrative and academic staff in Schools and Colleges • Issues affecting the implementation of support for disabled student in Schools • Communication between Student Disability Service and administrative and academic staff in Schools and Colleges; understanding of issues in relation to adjustments; implementation and mainstreaming of adjustments and effectiveness of policy in this area. Embedding of Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy across Schools	*Alan Cumming* *Pete Higgins* *Coordinators of Adjustment – School representation;* *Helen Hamer* coordinator of adjustments, School of Physics & Astronomy **(apologies)** *Emma Latto* Student Support Coordinator, School of GeoSciences (**apologies**) *Sara Hollywood, ECA Senior SSO* *Mark Cousins (Co-ord of Adjustments, ECA)*	

1.14	17.00:17.30	**Review team meeting** To discuss: • *Day One, outline initial comments, commendations and recommendations to discuss further on Day Two*		

Day Two

Session	Time	Purpose	Attendees (Title & role)	Meeting Chair
2.1	09.00 - 09.30	**Review Team Meeting** • *confirm plan for Day 2* • *highlight any points for discussion on Day 2*	Review Team	

Session	Time	Purpose	Attendees (Title & role)	Meeting Chair
2.2	09.30 - 10.00	**Meeting with Head of Support Service and Periodic Review Liaison** • *To discuss/clarify any questions arising from discussions on Day 1* • *To confirm arrangements for Feedback meeting to SDS staff*	Sheila Williams Gael Campbell	
2.3	10.00 – 10.30	**Service Specific Meeting 4:** *Themes:* • Staff Training/Guidance • Impact of Service restructure • Effectiveness of delivery of Staff training in relation to support for disabled students, particularly training for Personal Tutors • Promotion/presentation of guidance (e.g. on web site). How to keep staff updated on availability of provision and how best to achieve this	*Sheila Williams, Head of Student Disability Service and Jan Gardiner Assistant Director*	**Shirley Hill**
2.4	10.30 – 11.30	**Student Experience Meeting 3** To discuss: Implementation of adjustments as they relate to other relevant Support Services working with students with disabilities • Partnership working with Support Services • Communication • IT to support disabled students • Service provided to International students • Effectiveness of the management of the student support experience.	**Student Administration:** *Scott Rosie, Head of Timetabling Services* *Head Student Systems: Barry Neilson* *International office – Euan Fergusson* *Mark Wilkinson, Head of Student Experience*	**Ronnie Millar**
2.5	11.40 – 12.20	**Review Team tour of Student Disability Service**		
2.6	12.30 – 13.00	**Review Team lunch -**		
2.7	13.00 – 15.00	**Review Team Meeting** • *To discuss and gather team's comments on the review* • *To note/agree initial commendations and recommendations to be fed back to SDS*		

Session	Time	Purpose	Attendees (Title & role)	Meeting Chair
		• *To formulate feedback to be given to SDS*		
2.8	15.00 – 16.00	Feedback meeting • *Review Team to give feedback to Support Service on the broad outline of comments, commendations and recommendations that will be included in the report.*	*Head of Service and Senior Team*	

Appendix C

List of Documentation supplied for the Periodic Review of Student Disability Service
The information below can be found on the Wiki at:
https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/PRSS/Student+Disability+Services

Documentation
Analytical Report (See Wiki)
Annual Reports: http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service/about/annual-reports
Annual Service Evaluation: http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service/about/feedback-evaluation/evaluation
SDS Needs Assessor Validation Submission to the Scottish Government (See Wiki – Miscellaneous)
Mainstreaming Adjustments: Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Policies/Accessible_and_Inclusive_Learning_Policy.pdf
Mainstreaming Adjustments: Guidance for staff http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/inclusive/mainstreaming
List of Reasonable Adjustments (See Wiki - Miscellaneous)
University's Equality & Diversity Strategy http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/EqualityDiversity/Strategy.pdf
University's Equality & Diversity Action Plan/Outcomes http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/EqualityDiversity/Equality_Outcomes.pdf
Student Disability Service Strategic Plan (See Wiki)
SDS Key Activities (See Wiki - Miscellaneous)
Restructure project brief (See Wiki - Miscellaneous)
Restructure schedule (See Wiki - Miscellaneous)
Mental Health Mentor Report 2013/14 (See Wiki)
Advisors Guide: see "Advisors Handbook" and "Advisors guide to assistive technology" on our wiki page https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/DisabilityOffIntt/Guidance+for+staff+and+students

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Marion Judge
Review Administrator 01/04/2015

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