



## **NEON (South) Working Group**

### **Access and outreach for disabled learners**

**Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016 12.30 - 2.30pm**

Trudy Ing	Oxford Brookes University
Fiona	Oxford Brookes University
Lucinda Morton	Study Higher (Oxford Brookes University)
Ken Harris	Oxford Brookes University
Susannah Lloyd-Shogbsesan	Oxford Brookes University
Lee Byrne	Bucks New University
Kevin McMullan	Student Loans Company
Maureen O'Brien	Bucks New University

#### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Trudy Ing (TI) welcomed everybody to the group.

#### **2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising**

TI went through the October meeting's minutes with the group to confirm they were an accurate representation.

#### **3. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising**

TI confirmed that the minutes and papers from the NEON North working group meeting had been circulated. There were no considerable matters arising from these papers.

#### **4. Update on changes to DSA: Kevin McMullan (KM), IAG Partner Account Manager, Student Loans Company**

KM confirmed that he would circulate all information and figures mentioned in this meeting as follow up papers.

KM updated the group on DSA applications received to date for 2015/16 cycle. Currently, they're still receiving on average 800 applications per week; however this will begin to tail off from April onwards. In total, they've received 61,000 applications to date, with 19,000 still to be processed. They predict to have around 76,000 eligible applications in total for 15/16. This is an increase of 10,000 on the previous year. KM confirmed they had seen an increase of around 10,000 per year since 2013.

SL-S asked if it was possible to see a breakdown of applicants in terms of types of conditions. Is there a particular condition that has been generating more applicants since 2013?

ACTION: KM to investigate whether an analysis can be conducted and circulated.

KM confirmed the 2016/17 application cycle is open. Opened on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

LB asked for clarification on the advice now that continuing students have not been asked to reapply for DSA personally. KM confirmed that the SLC would be applying for DSA on behalf of most continuing students now. All students will need to do is sign a form to confirm the information is still correct. They will only contact students if they can't "auto roll-over" for example, if they are on more complex courses. In this case students will have to re-apply and they'll be informed when to do this. Application date is usually around mid-June.

KM said he'd set the group members up to receive e-updates for DSA.

Action: TI to check with Emily that all the attendees contact emails had been sent to Kevin.

KM highlighted the main points from the DSA guidance document:

- The DSA application time limit is 9 months after the start of the academic year. They will consider applications received after this time in circumstances, for example late diagnosis.
- There has been change of wording in the 'consent to share'
- DSA are training everyone on policy for 16/17
- Applications will be tracked

LB asked whether there will be any monitoring of institutions taking place by the SLC? Or perhaps a best practice review across institutions. As this is new to institutions it could be beneficial.

Action: Kevin to find out

KM told the group there is a student support seminar taking place in Leicestershire from 16-18 March. Information can be found here: <http://www.heiinfo.slc.co.uk/information-advice/hep-news/2016-student-support-seminar>

KM said he is happy to receive any queries to him directly – feel free to contact him.

## **5. DSA changes – provider prospective - Lee Byrne/ Maureen O'Brien (Bucks)**

TI asked if institutions were happy to share any good practice or any things they put into practice in light of the DSA changes

MO said Bucks have seen this as an opportunity to perhaps investigate other platforms that they use for students. They currently use 'Blackboard' but as their current package ends in April 2017 they will investigate other providers and look into lecture capture facilities etc. However, there will be a transition period before then.

SL-S has written a paper highlighting the changes to DSA and the expectations of the university in terms of the funding structure change. This paper has been taken to WPAG (Widening Participation Advisory Group) who have taken the paper to senior staff via the Academic Enhancement & Standards Committees. The hope is the Pro-VC for Student Experience will lead a working group on this area. Ian Scott, a Dean at Oxford Brookes, has written a paper on alternative forms of assessment also.

Action: S-LS to circulate this to the group if Ian is happy.

SL-S would be interested in finding out about different 'platforms' which could potentially be used in the future. LB mentioned the Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium (SUPC) as a potential place to get quotes.

Action: SL-S to contact the SUPC ([www.supc.ac.uk](http://www.supc.ac.uk)) to start conversations.

## **7. Autism – mentoring in schools (Trudy Ing)**

TI told the group about a new mentoring initiative where current Brookes students mentor autistic students in Year 12 in local school or colleges. Mentors and mentees are matched according to similar interests.

The aim of the mentoring is for both academic support and confidence building.

Sessions take place on a 1:1 basis, 1 hour per week for 8 weeks.

## **8. WP activities/disability practice issues: - update from each HEI on recent developments**

TI confirmed the Autism transition weekend will take place again this year. It ran last year for the first time and it was really well received. This is for students who are about to start Oxford Brookes University and have identified themselves as autistic. The aim is to help them transition successfully into a university environment.

Additions this year will include inviting parents on day 2 for a 'parents' conference' type event where they'll have the opportunity to hear from student support teams. TI would also like to invite parents of students with mental health issues.

SL-S told the group that if anyone was interested in building emotional resilience, Alan Purcey from the University of Oxford had written an interesting paper.

Action: SL-S to circulate paper

TI asked if Bucks had any similar transition initiatives running. There could be potential to collaborate and share best practice on this type of activity.

Action: TI and LM to discuss with Bucks' outreach team

## **9. Topics for next meeting**

If anyone has topics for the next meeting please email TI.

## **10. Date of next meeting**

TI said next meeting would be in June.

## **11. AOB**

LB asked if Brookes were means testing students who applied for the £200 to cover the funding shortfall. Brookes and Bucks confirmed they were both means testing students. LB had found that uptake wasn't as high as expected so needs to promote again.

TI asked the group to promote the meetings to get higher membership. Everyone agreed the meetings were worthwhile but it would be good to have more representation from other universities.

The group were told about the NEON Symposium coming up from 9-10 June at the University of Leicester. More details are here: <http://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/neon-events/neon-summer-symposium/>