

# DRC 2008/09 Annual Report

The University of Cambridge's Disability Service



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE





## Foreword

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The Disability Resource Centre (DRC) is one of the key support services at the University of Cambridge, offering specialist provision to students with a wide range of disabilities and specific needs in line with their rights and protections under the Disability Discrimination Act. Through the DRC the University puts into practice its commitment to excellence and equality of opportunity, and the core value of freedom from discrimination.

The DRC aims to be an exemplar service delivering the best possible professional practice within given resources, providing expertise and specialist services throughout the collegiate University. Since 2008 the DRC has come under the management of the Human Resources Division and sits within the Equality and Diversity policy area. The DRC is governed by the Joint Committee on Disability which deals with operational issues, and the University's Equality & Diversity Committee which oversees equalities policy development and implementation and legal compliance. This year has also seen the formation of the new DRC Development Forum with representation from across the collegiate University. These relationships ensure that the DRC function continues to work positively and collaboratively with University Schools and Divisions, and with the Colleges.

This Annual Report reflects a year in which much progress has been secured under the leadership of John Harding, DRC Manager, and the DRC has maintained the clarity of vision that has underpinned recent improvements to this service. As a result, the DRC is well placed to deliver the advice and support sought by students and the staff supporting students in their educational establishment.



**Indi Seehra**  
**Director of Human Resources**

## Foreward

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The 2008 - 2009 DRC Annual Report reflects upon a challenging but successful year for the DRC. The DRC and its staff have skilfully navigated a significant programme of organisational change, including the development of new roles, the integration of new staff members, the development and improvement of existing processes and services and the instigation of exciting new projects. During this period the DRC team have consistently maintained high professional standards and ensured that specialist services to students and staff have been delivered effectively. I commend the team for their hard work and dedication.

In my new role as Chair of the Joint Committee on Disability and as the University's Disability Equality Champion, I look forward to supporting and helping the team in achieving their aims for the coming year and beyond.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Bampos', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Dr Nick Bampos**  
**Chair of the Joint Committee on Disability and University**  
**Disability Equality Champion**

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# 1. Overview

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The 2008/2009 academic year has been one of major change for the Disability Resource Centre (DRC). A Human Resources Divisional review of the DRC was completed in November 2007 and the vast majority of the recommendations from this review have now been implemented. This report follows the interim report published in March 2009 (covering the period July 2007 – March 2009), and provides a full update of activity for the last complete academic year 2008/2009. From 2009 onwards the DRC's annual report will be published each November.

Significant organisational changes include the incorporation of the DRC within the Human Resources Division to provide the DRC with a coherent reporting structure. The old University Disability Adviser post was adapted to become the new DRC Manager role in order to address the workload issues highlighted in the review and to increase the role's managerial effectiveness. As a result, responsibility for disability policy now rests with the Equality and Diversity Team, of which the DRC is now an integral part. The DRC continues to advise on policy development in relation to disability.

In another related change, Human Resources Business Managers (HRBMs) will now manage the case-work for disabled University staff. The DRC will still manage the case-work for disabled College staff.

Internally, the DRC has reorganised its administration team, with the expanded Office Manager role now deputising for the DRC Manager and the two administrators having a wider responsibility for financial control and website design and development, alongside general administration duties. Our Student Relate case-management database has dramatically improved our data capture and reporting capacity. As at 13th June there were **1061 active students** on the database. We have also restructured the office space to optimise working space.

Work to review the Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) support process has now been completed and recommendations will be implemented for the 2009/10 academic year. The DRC has expanded the bank of approved educational psychologists to ensure we have the operational capacity to deal with the increasing year on year rise in demand for assessment and support:

- **56%** rise in Educational Psychologist reports commissioned/administered from 2007 to 2008
- **235%** rise in SpLD students receiving study skills support from 07/08 – 08/09

## Overview cont.

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Whilst all these changes have been occurring the DRC staff have made tremendous efforts to sustain levels of service provision against a background of increasing applications for support and advice and increasing case complexity.

- **38%** rise in number of active Non-Medical Assistants (NMAs)
- **45%** rise in complex disability cases

The new 2009/2010 academic year presents the DRC with many challenges and opportunities. As in 2008/2009, key projects and activities for the DRC have been drawn together into an overarching DRC Development Plan. They include:

- completion of the Service Level Agreement (SLA)
- the establishment of the DRC Development Forum
- The Asperger Syndrome project, funded by the Baily Thomas Charitable Fund
- Combined Equalities Scheme and Equalities Impact Assessments
- completion of the DRC website redesign project
- completion the DRC's procedures manual
- operating the ongoing monitoring and evaluation process for staff and students
- benchmarking and implementing best practice
- completing the final actions from the SpLD review and monitoring the success of those recommendations that have been implemented
- Developing a clear communications strategy and reviewing and improving both the Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) and Non-Medical Assistance (NMA) processes.
- The annual disability lecture this year will focus on the theme of 'Neurodiversity'.

Key themes for the year which have been identified from the DRC's user surveys and from the Action Plan from the Disability Equality Scheme will be:

- Working to encourage early disclosure
- Raising awareness of inclusive teaching and learning practice in conjunction with colleagues across the collegiate University
- Raising awareness of our duties and responsibilities as an institution under the Disability Discrimination Act
- Funding and support for disabled international students and graduate students
- Addressing Stigma
- Reasonable Adjustments
- Achieving 'two ticks' employer accreditation

## Overview cont.

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A particular challenge for 2009/2010 will be the transfer of the management of Disabled Students' Allowances from local authorities to the Student Loans Company (SLC). As many are aware, this transfer has not gone smoothly nationally, due to the problems associated with the Students Loans Companies administration of DSA, and many students are not in receipt of the finances they need to access the material and human support they require to access their studies effectively. This is a major issue both for the University of Cambridge and for Higher Education Institutions nationally. The DRC has been working with national bodies, such as the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) and SKILL (the national organisation for disabled students) to help the SLC improve its service to disabled students, but there is still much to do.

At the core of our services remains the provision of quality advice, guidance and support to disabled students and those staff supporting them; effective and innovative disability equality training provision delivered both through bespoke training for specific identified needs and in conjunction with the Equality and Diversity section and the Centre for Personal & Professional Development (CPPD); the provision of resources and equipment for disabled students and staff; and advice and guidance in relation to the DDA. Through the provision of these services we aim to build key relationships with all our stakeholders to ensure a positive student experience and the opportunity to succeed.



**John Harding**  
**Disability Resource Centre Manager**

## 2. Staffing

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<u>Head of Service</u>	John Harding MA, PGCE, PGDip.ADDS
<u>Office Manager</u>	Snehal Sidhu
<u>Disability Advisers</u>	<b>SpLD</b> Helen Duncan PGCE, DipSpLD, SpLD APC, AMBDA  <b>Non-SpLD</b> Margot Chadwick (job- share)  <b>Non-SpLD</b> Sue Hughes (job-share)
<u>Disability Development Consultant</u>	Kirsty Wayland (part-time)
<u>Asperger Syndrome Project Officer</u>	Joanna Hastwell
<u>Office Administrators</u>	Jennie Hastie Sonya Kirk
<u>Temporary SpLD Administrator</u>	Charlotte Yates
<u>Disability Support Co- ordinator</u>	Carrie Roberts (part-time)
<u>Study Skill Tutors</u>	Kitty Malone PGCE, Dip. RSA Jane McGurdy Dip SpLD (OCR)

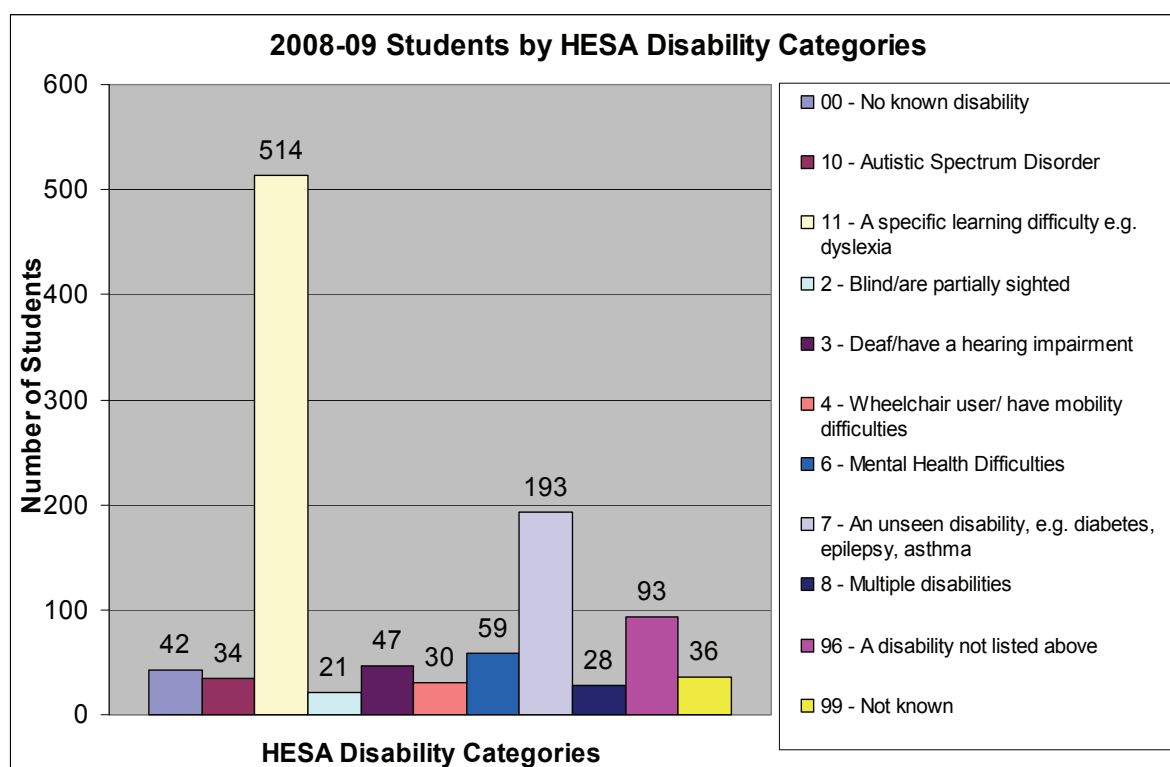
### 3. Student Data (all Categories)

All data accurate as on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2009.

Data is collected on disclosure and the support students are receiving. All communications sent or received regarding a student are recorded and attached to their student record within our bespoke Student Relate case management database.

Category	No. of active student clients
Undergraduate	684
Postgraduate	377
Total	1061

Table 3.1 Total Active Student Clients



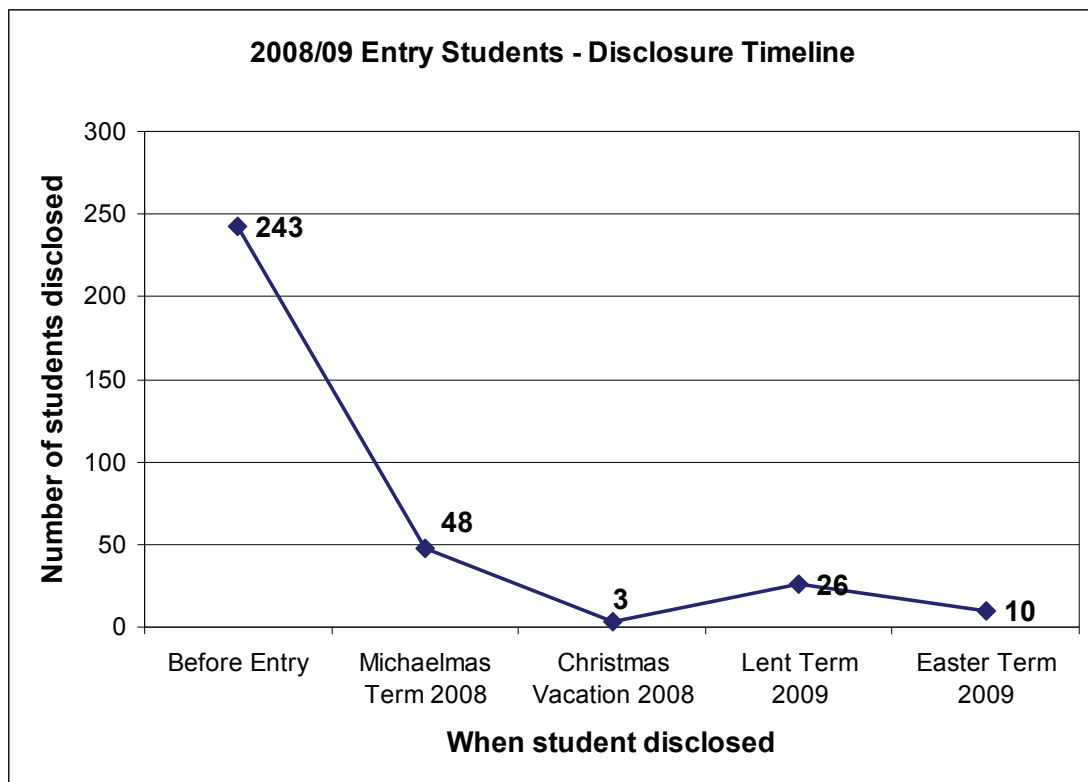
Graph 3.1 Numbers of Students by HESA Disability Categories in 2008-09

42 students had no known disability but were supported by the DRC, this would include students who have broken limbs or other types of temporary impairment (less than 1 year) or are in the process of being assessed for a disability.

### 3. Student Data (cont.)

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The DRC has a dedicated advisory team to support those students who declare a disability. Helen Duncan supports all students who have a specific learning difficulty (SpLD) and Margot Chadwick and Sue Hughes support students with disabilities other than SpLD.



Graph 3.2 Disclosure of the cohort of students who were admitted in 2008-09. (This includes post-graduate and undergraduate students)

## 4. Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) is a term that covers a range of conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

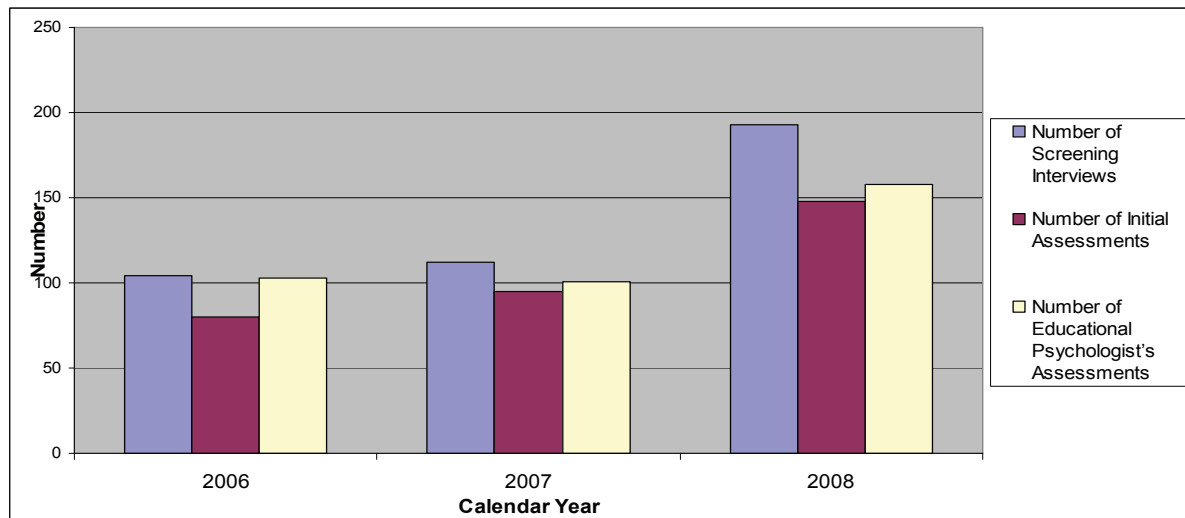
### 4.1 Intake

Level of Study	Students with a SpLD (2007 entry)	Students with a SpLD (2008 entry)
Undergraduate	109 (of which 85 declared at entry)	108 (of which 67 declared at entry)
Postgraduate	54	63 (of which 44 declared at entry)

Table 4.1 Breakdown of Students with a SpLD who started in 2007 and 2008

Calendar Year	Number of Screening Interviews	Number of Initial Assessments	Number of Educational Psychologist's Assessments
2006	104	80	103
2007	112	95	101
2008	193	148	158

Table 4.2 A 3-year comparison of the SpLD assessment process



Graph 4.1: A 3-year comparison of the SpLD assessment process

## 4. Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

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### 4.2 General Enquiries

While assessment related activities form the most significant percentage of the overall work of the SpLD department at the DRC, there are many other areas of responsibility undertaken. These include all general enquiries relating to SpLD and all matters in connection with prospective applicants, actual applicants and offer holders. The number of general enquiries regarding students with SpLD received at the DRC has grown significantly over the last three years and this trend appears to be continuing. This has resulted in an increase in initial interviews between the SpLD Advisory team and students. 104 initial interviews were conducted in 2006, 112 in 2007 and 193 in 2008.

### 4.3 Current Issues

Nationally, 2008/9 saw the introduction of changes to the process through which the Student Loans Company (SLC) administer the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). The centralisation of the administrative process of DSA has resulted in excessive delays and has caused significant difficulties for students with SpLD as many are now undertaking their courses without the necessary support measures having been provided through their DSA, despite early applications. This national problem has significantly increased the workload for the SpLD team in trying to ameliorate the students' difficulties and has over stretched the DRC's loan pool resources. In addition, the SLC's introduction of an initial recommendation of a 10 hour allocation of study skills support on an ongoing review basis has further increased administration time for the SpLD team. Requests for any additional study skills support required, over the 10 hour initial allocation, need to be made via the Student Loans Company and accompanied by an Individual Learning Plan with an explanation of why further sessions are needed and how they will be used. This process needs to be completed for every student who requires study skills support, on an ongoing basis.

The SpLD Working Group, which reviewed the SpLD provision, recommended changes which included a revision of the assessment process itself to bring this in line with the professional bodies' guidelines on best practice. Instead of having a diagnostic assessment conducted partly by an Educational Psychologist and partly by a Disability Adviser, students are now being assessed solely by an Educational Psychologist. As a result, the DRC has expanded the number of Educational Psychologists in its bank. This is now effectively managing the increase in the time involved in the diagnostic assessment as well the increase in number of students requiring assessment.

The number of Educational Psychologist's diagnostic assessments conducted for students with SpLD through the DRC has grown significantly in the past year. 103 assessments were conducted in 2006, 101 in 2007 and 158 in 2008.

## 4. Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

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### 4.4 Staff Development and Networking

Staff working in the DRC's SpLD Advisory team are actively committed to personal and professional development and establishing effective internal and external networks. Activities this year will include attending the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) conference, the Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education (ADSHE) annual general conference, developing SpLD workshops, delivering student induction programmes and meeting staff across Colleges and Departments.



The DRC Team

## 5. Study Support

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Specialist Study Skills Support continues to be provided at the Disability Resource Centre. There has been a marked increase of 259% between 07/08 and 08/09 in the number of students awarded and receiving study skills as part of their Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

**N.B.** The funding for the DRC's '5 Scheme' is now restricted and this is why the number of hours shown in 2008/9 is lower than 2007/8 (see Table 5.1). The '5' Scheme allows for 5 initial sessions of study support to be put in place whilst funding arrangements are being confirmed.

Type	2007-2008	2008-2009
DSA Study Skills	22 clients	79 clients
DRC 5 Scheme	216 hours	125 hours

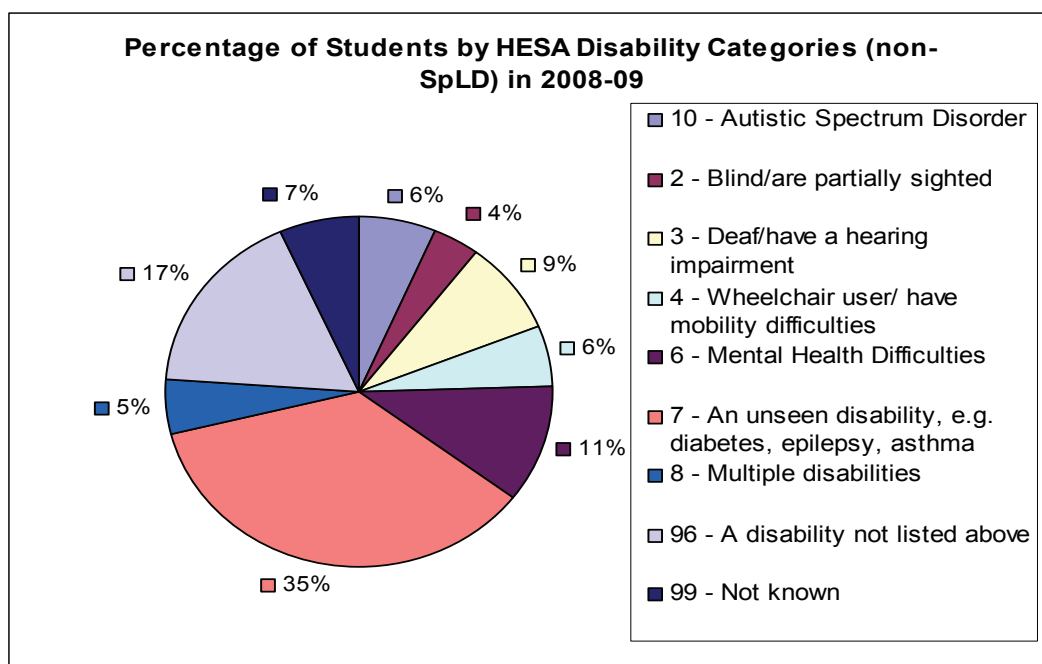
**Table 5.1 Specialist Study Skills Support provided in the last two years**



## 6. Non-SpLD Disabilities

Non-SpLD case work typically ranges from initial enquiries from sixth formers and/or their parents through to approaches from final year students who are perhaps finding existing chronic conditions exacerbated by the effort of the run-up to final examinations.

The DRC arrange introductory visits for potential applicants with significant impairments to enable them to assess for themselves whether Cambridge is the place they would like to study. For those students with complex support needs who decide to apply, the bulk of the planning work (such as scoping the non-medical assistance they will need) can and should be completed in the six months before the student actually arrives in October. This is to ensure that adequate accommodation and support are in place for the start of their first term. The terms are too short and intensive to leave this planning until it is known whether or not an applicant has met the offer conditions. The demand for this work significantly increased in the 2008 entry group.



**Graph 6.1 Disabled students (with a disability other than a SpLD)**

## 6. Non-SpLD Disabilities

### 6.1 2008-09 Intake of Students

Of the 207 applicants, 169 achieved a place. Significant work is done with applicants, not all of whom actually arrive as students. Typical complex cases include:

- Students with comprehensive support packages, the planning and implementation of which requires a number of meetings and/or correspondence with College, Faculty/Department, Funding Authority (for DSA), Needs Assessment Centre, Client and the Client's previous support system (e.g. Social Services and parents).
- Clients needing 24 hour care, involving the College (and to a lesser extent the Faculty) carrying out significant building works to accommodate the client
- Clients who are Braille users, involving detailed planning to produce accessible materials.

Year	Total 'Fresher' Clients	Of which are Complex Cases
2007/08	162	20
2008/09	215	29

Table 6.1 Number of Fresher Non-SpLD Clients

### 6.2 Non-Medical Assistance (NMA) Scheme

The Non-Medical Assistance Scheme provides support for disabled students who require assistance to complete their studies effectively, for example, having the support of a note taker in lectures or physical assistance in the laboratory. Mentors provide a range of support for students with mental health issues, those on the autistic spectrum or needing support with transitional issues. The organisation, recruitment and matching of NMAs to students is a complex set of tasks, and the successful operation of this process is the responsibility of the Disability Support Coordinator.

Category	2007 Cohort	2008 Cohort
Number of new students receiving NMA support	12	17
Total number of students receiving NMA support	34	29
Number of new NMAs recruited and inducted	23	36
Number of NMAs trained by the DRC	25	21
Total number of active NMAs	60	83

Table 6.2a Active Non-medical assistants  
in 2007, 2008 and 2009

## 6. Non-SpLD Disabilities

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The fact that a smaller number of students (29) are using a larger number of NMAs, (83), and the number of NMA tasks has increased significantly (79) is a clear reflection of the complex support needs of the 2008 intake.

Task	2007-2008	2008-2009
Mentor	17	10
Lab Work	6	5
Library	1	1
Note taking	36	52
Practical Support	3	9
Other	No data	2
Total tasks	63	79

**Table 6.2b Non-medical assistant task breakdown in last two years**

Task	2008-2009 NMA Hours
Note-taking	1864
Study Skills Support	529
Practical Support	211
Mentor	121
Assessment	95
Lab Assistance	81
5 Scheme	66
Library Support	29
Total Hours of Support	3010

**Table 6.2c Non-Medical Assistant hours for 2008-2009**

## 6. Non-SpLD Disabilities

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### 6.3 General Enquiries

The number of general enquiries regarding students with disabilities received at the DRC has grown significantly over the last three years and this trend appears to be continuing. 199 general enquiries were made during academic year 2007-08, compared with 97 from 2006-07.

The DRC dealt with a total of 284 general enquiries in the year from October 2008 – September 2009.

Type of Disability	No. of Enquiries
Specific Learning Difficulty	11*
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	45
Visual Impairment	19
Hearing Impairment	15
Mobility Difficulties	42
Mental Health problems	18
Unseen disabilities	45
Multiple Disabilities	5
Enquiries about the Cambridge Special Access Scheme	21
Advice about Disabled Students' Allowance	10
Other enquiries	53

**Table 6.3 Total General Enquiries for 2008/2009**

\* The figure for SpLD enquiries excludes those enquiries made directly to the SpLD team

Of these there were 17 enquiries from staff members about support available for their disability. Included in those figures are the 67 enquiries received from members of staff across the University about how they could best support students.

The DRC dealt with 17 complex cases for potential applicants that involved arranging visits to colleges or considerable amounts of correspondence.

## 6. Non-SpLD Disabilities

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### 6.4 Current Issues

The long-term absence of one advisory member of staff and the integration of new team members meant that the start of the academic year 08/09 was especially demanding, as all enquiries were referred to the non-SpLD team.

Over the course of the year 113 students (non-SpLD) were known to the DRC as in receipt of DSA with detailed needs assessments. The figure for the previous year was 63. These figures do not include the workload presented by overseas students who are not eligible for DSA.

The introduction of a monthly drop in session for Work Related Upper Limb Disorders or RSI led by a member of Computing Services has resulted in general raising of awareness of assistance available for these conditions. 15 members of the University were helped with the loan of ergonomic equipment from the DRC's loan pool.

### 6.5 Staff Development and Networking

During the reporting period the Disability Advisers attended a range of professional development events, such as NADP conferences, SKILL meetings, Student Loans Company briefings and Keytools workshops. They also delivered a number of specialist talks, such as the Role of a Disability Adviser, at the Association for University and College Counselling (AUCC) Conference in Liverpool and "Support for students with Aspergers Syndrome" to the Counselling Service.

## 7. Staff Support

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One of the key changes to come out of the recommendations from the 2007 review was the transfer of responsibility for the management of case-work for disabled University staff to the Human Resources Business Managers (HRBMs) and their teams.

### **7.1 Services provided by Human Resources for disabled University staff**

All enquiries from disabled University staff received by the DRC are logged and staff members referred to their relevant HR contact.

The DRC is working actively with the Human Resources team on an ongoing basis to ensure the transition of these responsibilities is managed effectively and to run training sessions on aspects related to this support.

### **7.2 Services provided by the DRC for disabled College staff**

The DRC continues to manage the case-work for disabled college staff (those staff members work solely within colleges).

If any member of staff is unsure of who to contact in relation to a disability issue, DRC staff are happy to provide advice and guidance.

## 8. Donations and Bursary Funds

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### 8.1 Disabled Students Bursary Fund

The Fund was established in recognition of the additional expenses incurred by disabled students and to contribute to the costs of acquiring essential services or equipment. The Guardians of the Fund consider applications twice a term and decide how best to allocate the available funds. This Bursary Fund is supported by donations (see table 8.1a).

In 2007-08, two awards were made totalling £1050 for specialist equipment.

In 2008-09, 19 awards have been made to fund study skills sessions, voice recognition software, human support and specialist work-stations. These totalled £6,099.50. We thank the funders for their generosity.

Expense	2007-2008	2008-2009
Specialist Equipment	£1050	£2275
Study Skills Sessions		£3064.50
Note-taking/Library Support		£760
Practical Support/Living Expenses		
Total Approved Grants	£1050	£6099.50

Table 8.1a Bursary Fund breakdown for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009

### 8.2 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 of Cambridge. These funds have assisted many disabled students access their learning over the last year. The donors include the following:

**Blatchington Court Trust**  
**Coutts & Co. Charitable Trust**  
**The Baily Thomas Charitable Fund**  
**The Boston Foundation**  
**The Bridget's Trust**  
**The Charlie Bayne Travel Trust**  
**The Constance Green Foundation**  
**Eastern Counties Educational Trust Limited**  
**The Platinum Trust**  
**The Varrier-Jones Foundation**

## 8. Donations and Bursary Funds

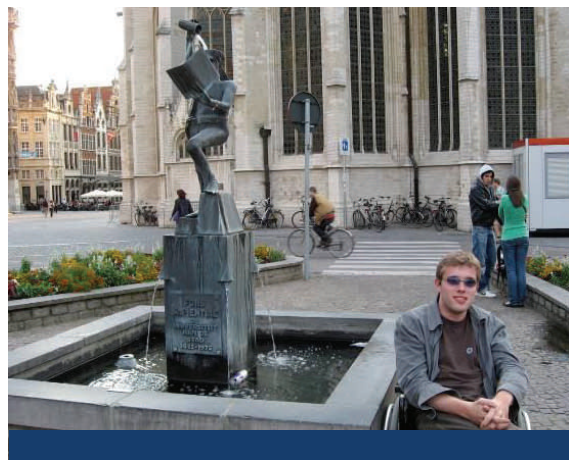
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### 8.3 Charlie Bayne Travel Trust

This Trust has been 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 undergraduate and postgraduate students with a disability at the University of Cambridge and at Anglia Ruskin University. The Trust is intended to assist students who face extra costs in travelling as a result of their disability. In 2009, four awards were made helping students to travel to Italy and Germany, Scandinavia, Uganda and London.



Anna Concannon, Scandanavia



Brian Sloane, Leuven



Chris Tong, Italy



Julie Woodson, London

## 9. 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; as part of the over-arching Equality and Diversity training programme and in conjunction with the Centre for Personal and Professional Development (CPPD). The purpose is to develop good practice in all interactions with disabled people, including staff, students and visitors, through the promotion of disability equality.

### 9.1 Training courses

The DRC training programme continued in 2008-9 to work across the University and Colleges to deliver training in support of disabled students, staff and visitors. Sessions promote disability equality by enabling staff to meet their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and working effectively and easily with disabled people.

Type	2007-08	2008-09
Participants on CPPD supported courses	77	79
Courses delivered supported by CPPD	11	10
Participants on DRC administered/bespoke courses	260	299
Courses administered by DRC/bespoke courses	20	18

**Table 9.1 Courses conducted in the periods 2007-08 and 2008-09.**

### 9.2 Courses Delivered in conjunction with CPPD

In 2008-9, 10 courses were delivered via CPPD to 79 people. Courses included issues of mental health, providing good customer care and an introduction to sign language. The year saw an increase in numbers of those attending 'Teaching Students With...' lunchtime briefings. Courses currently offered focus on dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties and Asperger Syndrome.

### 9.3 Bespoke training sessions

In 2008-09, there were 18 bespoke training sessions delivered. This included lunchtime sessions on student mental health, called 'How To' and delivered in conjunction with CPPD and the Counselling Service. These have been very successful and will continue into 2009-10. Further work has been undertaken with the Counselling Service in terms of training their peer supporters around Asperger Syndrome. Further new work around teaching and learning involved workshops for lecturers in the Department of English and for other departments on the Sidgwick site. Workshops were also delivered at Newnham and Downing Colleges in response to positive feedback from previous events. Additionally, within the DRC, new workshops for mentors were piloted.

## 10. Facilities and Resource Management

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### 10.1 PWF Room

The Public Workstation Facility (PWF), situated within the DRC in Keynes House, is run jointly by the DRC and the Computing Service, and designed to offer users open access to specialist assistive technology services in an accessible building.

Recently reduced in size, the facility now offers 2 high specification PCs with large screen monitors. Each workstation is situated on a height adjustable desk with ergonomic seating. Together with a colour printer there is also a Braille embosser for users who require output in Braille. Each machine has access to a scanner, some of which can be used in conjunction with specialist Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software to scan and read back text. Users also have access to their PWF home-space and Webmail email accounts.

Accessible software provided at the DRC PWF facility:

Formerly used for work related upper limb disorder (WRULD) drop in sessions (which have moved to the University Computing Service <http://www-tus.csx.cam.ac.uk/at/WRULD-Dropin.html>), the room is now used solely for computing demonstrations and as the location for the DRC's Loan Pool items.

Accessible PC software	Accessible Macintosh software
Texthelp Read & Write	Texthelp Read & Write v8
Inspiration	Inspiration
Kurzweil 1000 OCR	Kurzweil 3000
JAWs Screen Reader	iListen
Dragon NaturallySpeaking v8	
Supernova	
Zoomtext	

## 10. Facilities and Resource Management

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### **10.2 Recycling Policy**

Recognising that recycling conserves resources, reduces landfill and helps protect the environment, the DRC team makes a continued effort to comply with environmental legislation and, with guidance from the University Environmental Office. The department actively seeks ways to improve its recycling provision and to increase the volume of waste recycled.

### **10.3 Office Space**

Due to increased number of staff, a re-organisation of the DRC office space was undertaken in order to best utilise the existing space. Consultation with Estate Management (EM) allowed 11 work-stations in a space previously providing 8 work-stations.

### **10.4 Assessment Rooms**

The increase in demand for assessments and study skills sessions necessitated an increase from 2 to 3 dedicated assessment and study skills rooms. This was achieved by the vacating of a room previously occupied by the Cambridge Access Centre at Keynes House. Each assessment room is now fully equipped with a work-station.

## 11. Information and Communications

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### 11.1 Events

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

#### 11.1.1 2009 Annual Disability Lecture

The 2009 Annual Disability Lecture was hosted by the DRC and St John's College. This year's lecture, *'Disabled People and the Economic Downturn'* was delivered by Professor Alan Roulstone of De Montfort University. Prof. Roulstone considered the additional impact of the recession on disabled people particularly in terms of work and employment and suggested various strategies to ameliorate this. The lecture attracted nearly 100 participants and was followed by an interesting question and answer session.

The DRC would like to thank St John's College and Ray Jobling for their continued support in hosting and co-sponsoring the event with the DRC and to the Equality and Diversity team for their support and assistance in coordinating the event.

#### 11.1.2 Widening Participation

DRC staff participated in the Oxbridge Road shows organised by the Widening Participation team. The DRC is very interested in exploring ways in which the key messages of the importance of early disclosure and application for Disabled Students' Allowances can be reinforced via Widening Participation activities.

### 11.2 Intra-University Networking

The DRC team have been working to develop effective networks with stakeholders across the University. Meetings and discussions have been held with College Nurses, CUSU, CUGU, Senior Tutors, HR, Admissions, the Board of Exams, the Education Section, the E&D Team, Assistive Technology, Counselling, Occupational Health and Health and Safety services as well as the Disabled Staff Network.

## 11. Information and Communications

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DRC staff attended the Societies Freshers' fair in October 2008 in order to publicise the services offered by the DRC and recruit non-medical assistants for note-taking. In addition, the DRC once again ran information sessions for disabled students as part of the University Open Days. Disability Advisers also met one-to-one with prospective students and their families.

DRC staff are also represented on the steering group of the Disabled Staff Network.

### 11.2.1 Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) Network

The DLO network continued to work hard to promote the needs of disabled people and to ensure access. The DLO network meeting welcomed Frances Dewhurst from Camtad (Campaign to Tackle Acquired Deafness) to talk about induction loops, their importance, and to discuss various ways in which they can be maintained and managed so they are available when needed.

### 11.3 Extra-University Networking

The DRC team have embarked on a series of benchmarking visits, to ensure that our provision is of a World Class standard and to assess models of best practice. Visits completed at the time of this report include the University of Oxford, the University of Manchester, the University of Essex and Anglia Ruskin University. These visits will continue over the course of this year and beyond. Remote benchmarking exercises have also been completed.

DRC staff continue to maintain strong links with and attend the meetings and conferences of national professional bodies, such as the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP), Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education (ADSHE), and SKILL (the national body representing disabled students) as well as the regional meetings for managers of HEI Disability Services.

### 11.4 Communications Strategy

The DRC team have begun work in conjunction with the Communications team to develop a DRC Communications Strategy.

## 12. Policies and Procedures

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### 12.1 Equality Impact Assessments

Current equalities law for Race, Gender and Disability requires organisations in receipt of public funding to ensure and demonstrate they are free from discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. The process used for doing this is Equality Assessment, whereby a policy, procedure or practice is reviewed with regard to its impact on these distinct groups.

Equality Assessments serve to identify aspects of policies, procedures or practices which have or are likely to have negative effects on the legally protected groups, or unequal positive effects between groups. Equality Assessments motivate specific action to remedy issues identified, and open subsequent University response to public scrutiny.

The University of Cambridge in 2008–09, prior to the establishment of its current Equality and Diversity (E&D) section, commissioned three Equality Assessments to be carried out by external consultants Schneider–Ross. These three documents focussed upon:

- Recruitment
- Student Admissions
- Student Attainment

The DRC has identified some of the key issues raised in these assessments that apply to the work of the DRC, such as improving disclosure rates, further developing monitoring and evaluation processes and enhancing awareness of available support for disabled students via widening participation activity and has incorporated them within the DRC Development Plan.

The DRC has also put itself forward as a ‘volunteer’ department for the internal roll-out of the Impact Assessments currently being trialled by the Equality and Diversity team within the Human Resources Division.

### 12.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to develop a robust method of monitoring and evaluation, the DRC developed an anonymous online feedback system which was sent out to all disabled students who have disclosed to the Disability Resource Centre. It asked them to evaluate the various services they have accessed via the Disability Resource Centre and the support they have received from the University as a whole. The results of this survey will feed into the DRC Development Plan and will help inform any subsequent policy and procedural changes at the DRC. A similar survey was conducted with staff who support students registered with the DRC

## 12. Policies and Procedures

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### **Disability Resource Centre (DRC) Student-User Survey 2008/09**

Some of the key findings included:

- 77.8% of all respondents either were unsure if they were disabled or said they did not consider themselves disabled.
- Of the respondents, only 46.9% of disabled home students are in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).
- 89.6% of all respondents felt that their disability or difficulty interfered with their ability to study.
- 45.8% of all respondents did not disclose their disability/difficulty on their UCAS application forms.
- Of those that did not disclose, over 50% either had an assessment or diagnosis or were aware of their disability.

### **Disability Resource Centre (DRC) Staff-User Survey 2008/09**

Some of the key findings included:

- 89% of respondents rate the disability advice and guidance they received as either good or excellent
- 94% of respondents rated the overall service at the DRC as either good or excellent
- 93% of respondents found that the DRC training they attended was useful or very useful

The DRC is happy to be contacted for further information about the surveys.

These findings highlight:

- that there is widely differing understanding, perception and acceptance of the term 'disability'
- that the take up of DSA is surprisingly low
- that although the survey demonstrates a largely positive view of the University's support of disabled students, nearly 90% of respondents feel their disability still interferes with their ability to study
- that there is a need to analyse the reason why such large numbers of students choose not to disclose and how this situation can be improved

## 12. Policies and Procedures

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### **12.3 Departmental Procedures Manual**

A Departmental procedures manual for all procedural tasks within the DRC is being written in order to standardise and record all department-specific procedures. A financial procedures manual has already been written and it is hoped that a consolidation of DRC procedures will aid in both internal and external transparency of procedures.

### **12.4 Complaints and Grievances**

The DRC's Grievance Policy has been updated and published on the DRC website, providing the procedure to follow if a user of the service would like to make a complaint. In addition, all staff who are in contact with client records agree to a formal confidentiality policy.

## 13. Projects

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### **13.1 Students with Asperger Syndrome (AS) Project**

In November 2008, joint funding was identified to enable the DRC to develop a proposal for an Asperger syndrome Project Officer post in conjunction with Professor Simon Baron-Cohen from the Autism Research Centre (ARC), also based at the University of Cambridge.

The project commenced in August 2009 and one of the main objectives is to develop a model of best practice when working with students who have AS. The project builds on other national initiatives and will raise awareness of the barriers that students with AS face at university.

The project is due to conclude in August 2010 when the findings will be analysed and key themes identified. This data will inform DRC service development and best practice guidelines to assist staff in how to work effectively and support students who have AS.

Information for students will be produced, outlining useful services and resources that can be accessed from their transition into university to future studies or moving on to employment.

For further information on the AS project please contact Joanna Hastwell, the AS Project Officer on 01223 766863 or [jlh89@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:jlh89@admin.cam.ac.uk)

## 13. Projects

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### 13.2 Website

In September 2009 the DRC launched its new-look website. With support from Web Services and the Office of External Affairs and Communications, Administrators at the DRC undertook a usability review and redesigned the site, making great improvements to its design features, content, accessibility, and user navigation. A period of usability testing is to follow, as well as a smaller project to improve the site's graphics.

DRC website: <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/disability>

### 13.3 Transkills

The DRC is represented on the steering group of the Transkills project. This exciting initiative focuses on addressing the skills gap some students face between their secondary and university education, helping them to develop these key skills and to assist staff in identification and support methods.

### 13.4 SpLD Working Group

The DRC was represented on the SpLD Working Group which is a sub-group of the Joint Committee on Disability (JCD). The working group was tasked with carrying out a comprehensive review of the processes and procedures associated with the provision of support and access arrangements for students with specific learning difficulties. The group's report was presented to the Joint Committee on Disability during the 08/09 Easter term and the major recommendations with regards to initial and diagnostic assessment for students with specific learning difficulties and examination access arrangements have now been implemented.

## 14. DRC Priorities for 2009 - 2010

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### 14.1 Service Level Agreement

One of the key findings of the Human Resources Review of the DRC in November 2007 was that there was a lack of clarity concerning the range and nature of services provided by the DRC Team. In order to address this concern and to develop and maintain a high quality service the DRC is working to develop a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with all of its stakeholders within the University.

DRC staff attended a development day on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2009 during which the proposed structure of the SLA was agreed. Following on from this there will be a period of consultation with key stakeholders, e.g. Colleges, before the SLA is published. The target is for the SLA to be in place for January 2010.

### 14.2 DRC Development Plan and Forum

Until February 2009, progress within the DRC has been reported in reference to the recommendations of the 2007 DRC Review. Now that the majority of the recommendations have been implemented or are in the process of being completed, the DRC has produced a Development Plan to effectively project manage key development activities for the DRC. The DRC Development Plan is a rolling project plan detailing the department's major activities and projects.

The DRC Development Forum (see 11.2) will assist the DRC in the development of its service, projects and strategy.

### 14.3 Combined Equalities Scheme (CES) and Disability Equality Duties (DED)

The DRC team is working closely with the Equality and Diversity team to monitor the action plan connected to the 2006-9 Disability Equality Scheme (DES), and to prepare for the University's proposed Combined Equalities Scheme for 2010-12 in response to proposed changes to government legislation.

Key issues identified from the DES which be reflected in the action plan for the CES in relation to disability are as follows:

- Access
- Disclosure
- Stigma
- Unseen disabilities (such as mental health, HIV, chronic health conditions)
- Disabled graduate students
- Management and staff awareness and responsibility
- Disability Liaison Officers
- Reasonable Adjustments
- The 'two ticks' employers' scheme

## 14. DRC Priorities for 2009 - 2010

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### 14.4 Disabled Staff Network

The DRC supported the development and launch of the Disabled Staff Network and is represented on the network's steering group.

### 14.5 Disclosure

The DRC is keen to support activities and initiatives across the collegiate University which support the development of further opportunities to disclose disabilities, and which highlight the benefits to disabled students of early disclosure. The DRC is also keen to ensure that all disabled students are aware of the funding and support that is available to them and promotes this via the DRC website and other University publications.

### 14.6 Inclusion and Awareness

Feedback from students and staff from the DRC's user surveys have identified the following themes with the DRC intends to pursue this year:

- Raising awareness of inclusive teaching and learning practice in conjunction with colleagues across the collegiate University
- Raising awareness of our duties as an institution under the Disability Discrimination Act
- Improving funding options for disabled international students

### 14.7 DRC Reporting

Another key recommendation of the 2007 DRC Review was an improvement in data capture and reporting. As of 2009 the DRC will produce a service report on a termly basis and an Annual report each November. The increasing utilisation of the Student Relate case-management database has significantly improved the accuracy and currency of our data.

### 14.8 Monitoring and Evaluation

The DRC team has developed a comprehensive evaluation process for both students and staff that is designed to gather data to inform an annual quality review process. The first user surveys were completed during the 2009 Easter term and the complete process will be fully rolled out in 2009/10.

### 14.9 Governance

The DRC is governed by the Joint Committee on Disability which deals with operational issues, and the University's Equality & Diversity Committee which oversees equalities policy development and implementation and legal compliance. 2010/2011 will also see the formation of the new DRC Development Forum with representation from across the collegiate University. These relationships ensure that the DRC function continues to work positively and collaboratively with University Schools and Divisions, and with the Colleges.

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

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