

### Technology Change for Inclusion

## 12 steps towards Embedding Inclusive Practice with Technology as a Whole Institution Culture in UK Higher Education

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This briefing is an abbreviated version of a research paper ([www.techdis.ac.uk/getTCI](http://www.techdis.ac.uk/getTCI)) by JISC TechDis that contains the full outcomes of the Technology Change for Inclusion (TCI) initiative. A series of interviews were held with senior staff in UK Higher Education Institutions to elicit good practice in embedding inclusive practice with technology as a whole institution culture. The good (and poor) practice uncovered has led directly to the formulation of the 12 Steps highlighted in this Briefing. Where this issue is led directly by a Deputy or Pro-Vice Chancellor it has been shown to have the most impact and effect, although these effects are very difficult to attribute to such a change in cultural ethos (see Step 12). Submissions of case studies exemplifying institutions' successes in this area would be welcome – please contact [helpdesk@techdis.ac.uk](mailto:helpdesk@techdis.ac.uk)

### Introduction

**“If a teacher today is not technologically literate - and is unwilling to make the effort to learn more - it's equivalent to a teacher 30 years ago who didn't know how to read and write.”<sup>(1)</sup>**

Technology needs to facilitate all users (staff and students) in achieving the most effective possible service provision. There are many pockets of good practice across a wide range of institutions concerning the use of technology to create an inclusive learning experience<sup>(2)</sup>. However, often these pockets do not join together to create fully inclusive teaching across a whole department, school, faculty or institution. Nor do they effect change at a higher level, influencing policy and strategy to better facilitate replication of this good practice more widely by way of an improved inclusion culture and ethos.

Leaders must take action when they see good intentions and positive progress dwindling away due to inappropriate priorities (“We've done SENDA, that box has been ticked”<sup>(3)</sup>) and ensure those charged with implementation are fully briefed and resourced and appropriate targets are developed – this paper provides leaders with a framework for achieving inclusive use of technology across an institution. This must be driven by a senior manager, ideally the Deputy or Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic, or Learning and Teaching) or equivalent. This leaflet briefly introduces 12 Steps they can take to move effectively towards this goal – supporting research and more detailed suggestions of how these 12 Steps might be implemented can be found in the full paper at [www.techdis.ac.uk/getTCI](http://www.techdis.ac.uk/getTCI).

**Step 1.**

**Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic / Learning and Teaching) formulates and leads the inclusive practice action team.**

Senior managers are pivotal in ensuring that all staff across all levels of the organisation embrace their responsibilities, shifting a potential mindset of 'this is the responsibility of specialist staff' to 'this is the responsibility of all staff' <sup>(4)</sup>. Visible leadership commitment to a pragmatic and practical approach to inclusion and technology is vital. The inclusive practice action team will almost always include the individuals responsible for Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (and Assessment Validation); IT and Network provision; Disability or Student Support; Quality Control or Assurance; HR and Administration provision; Marketing; Library and Information provision; Staff Development; and Learning Technology or E-Learning; at specific times also possibly including the roles responsible for procurement and estates.

**Step 2.**

**Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor directs Department / Faculty Heads to facilitate the gathering and effective sharing of good practice in inclusive use of technology.**

Change should be grounded in the larger mission or diversity statements adopted by the institution, but "there is a danger of 'organizational schizophrenia' ...manifesting itself in a mismatch between organizational goals and achievable practice on the ground" <sup>(5)</sup>, which means cross-institutional collaboration is a vital component of any change initiative moving towards widespread inclusive practice.

**Step 3.**

**Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor, Academic Office, Heads of Staff Development, Learning Technology and Disability Support ensure Learning, Teaching and Assessment Handbooks appropriately encourage, reference and signpost achievable inclusive practice with technology.**

Learning and Teaching Handbooks often do not reference technology in terms of enhancing the fitness for purpose of learning, teaching and assessment. This leads to a lack of awareness among the general teaching staff of technological solutions to learning and teaching inclusion issues. It is the responsibility of the Head of Staff Development to ensure that free staff development resources available to support teaching staff in using technology to effect more inclusive learning, teaching and assessment <sup>(6)</sup> are available to their staff and that they understand the range of benefits of engaging with these materials. It is the responsibility of the Pro-Vice Chancellor leading this initiative to take steps to ensure they have the time and resource to do so.

**Step 4.**

**Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor and Staff Development Head ensure the Learning and Teaching Strategy explicitly references inclusive practice principles and is translated into institution-wide practice by means of contextual exemplars and targeted staff development.**

Learning and Teaching Strategy must state explicitly values supporting scholarship in teaching, using evidence-based research to inform professional practice, and creating a diverse, inclusive culture – all of which can be attained through the effective use of technology. Staff development must highlight the exemplars within each discipline (home grown where possible - see Step 2) of inclusive teaching methods that emphasise the maintenance of academic standards and excellence <sup>(7)</sup>.

**Step 5.**

**Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor directs Heads of IT / Networks, Disability Support, Staff Development and Learning Technology / E-Learning to ensure free and Open Source technologies are widely**

available to staff, and all training stresses the importance of inclusive practice and the benefits to all users of their routine usage in teaching and learning.

Strict demarcation between 'learning technologies', 'assistive technologies' and technologies that improve inclusive practice needs to be broken down, and its associated territoriality removed. Many technologies that can potentially aid the provision of an inclusive experience are free or Open Source, and can therefore be provided to all staff and students at no cost. Much of this software is capable of running from a memory stick and needs no installation <sup>(8)</sup>.

### Step 6.

**Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor engages Heads of IT/Network, Staff Development and Disability Support to ensure Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy facilitates the provision and use of specialist technologies and that they are appropriately highlighted to teaching staff.**

Provision of specialist 'assistive technology' is often based upon an outmoded concept of technology as 'compensation for an inability to do something' rather than a means of providing a learning experience for all that is fit for purpose. If the focus is on meeting need or providing a capability, as opposed to the technology *per se*, the technology will prove to be more durable and flexible <sup>(9)</sup>.

### Step 7.

**Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor ensures Heads of Procurement and Disability Support fulfil the legislative duty to involve disabled people in any decision which may affect them.**

There is a legislative requirement to involve disabled people in any process relating to accessibility or inclusion <sup>(4)</sup>. It is the responsibility of the Senior Management Team, represented by the Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor, to ensure that this fact is widely known and acted upon by all managers.

### Step 8.

**Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor facilitates appropriate management collaboration to overcome potentially conflicting technology interests.**

The Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor should personally ensure that Network Managers, Disability Service Managers and Learning Technologists work together to resolve conflicts between provision of accessibility features and network security or between marketing requirements and web accessibility, to facilitate inclusive provision.

### Step 9.

**Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor and Head of Disability Support engage Senior Management Team and inclusive practice action team to ensure the Equality Scheme (Single or Disability) works for the institution and is not merely a statement of intent.**

Diversity must be part of the institution's culture, and may need to be reflected in a top level mission statement – "Institutional mission statements can help institutions develop a sense of shared purpose and shape internal policy" <sup>(10)</sup>. It is vital that the role of the Head of Disability Support is that of facilitator, advising on policy change, rather than as the owner of this task.

### Step 10.

**Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor engages administrative, HR, information management and procurement functions of the university to adopt inclusive practice across the board.**

The commitment from university administration and Human Resources must be perceived as real – the incorporation of HR on behalf of the university's systems is essential <sup>(11)</sup>. It is unacceptable for any university to produce inaccessible electronic documentation when free guidance on how to avoid doing so with negligible time and cost implication is freely available <sup>(12)</sup>.

**Step 11.**

**Deputy / Pro-Vice Chancellor instigates senior management review of funding initiatives to ensure inclusive practice is being enhanced for all.**

Financial support must be pledged from within mainstream provision – while seedcorn funding is welcome, the institution must view inclusive provision as an ongoing process that needs financial assistance to embed into every facet of the institution's operation and maintain successfully.

**Step 12.**

**All members of the inclusive practice action team have to be aware that it will take time to thoroughly embed inclusive practice with technology across the institution, that the process will have no defined end date as new technologies come into use, and will show few direct relationships to the inevitable improved rates of retention, recruitment, results and student satisfaction.**

**References**

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4. Disability Rights Commission (2007) Understanding The DDA – A guide for colleges, universities and adult community learning providers in Great Britain. <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publicationsandresources/Disability/Pages/Education.aspx>
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6. For example, see JISC TechDis ([www.techdis.ac.uk](http://www.techdis.ac.uk)); Skills For Access ([www.skillsforaccess.org.uk](http://www.skillsforaccess.org.uk)), SCIPS ([www.scips.worc.ac.uk](http://www.scips.worc.ac.uk)) and Inclusive Teaching ([www.open.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching](http://www.open.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching))
7. For example, see the Higher Education Academy Subject Network ([www.heacademy.ac.uk/subjectcentres](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/subjectcentres)), Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning ([www.heacademy.ac.uk/cetls](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/cetls)) and various disciplinary-specific professional bodies ([www.paradigm-redshift.com/busprof.htm](http://www.paradigm-redshift.com/busprof.htm))
8. See JISC TechDis Get Free Software ([www.techdis.ac.uk/getfreesoftware](http://www.techdis.ac.uk/getfreesoftware)) and RSC Scotland Access Apps ([www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk/accessapps/](http://www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk/accessapps/))
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11. Gray, B.A. and Grocoff, P.N. (2007) Infusing Diversity into University Curricula. Lecture given to 'Developing an Inclusive Curriculum' conference.
12. JISC TechDis Accessibility Essentials volume 2 (Writing Accessible Electronic Documents with Microsoft Word) and volume 4 (Making the most of PDFs) ([www.techdis.ac.uk/accessibilityessentials](http://www.techdis.ac.uk/accessibilityessentials))

**JISC TechDis**

JISC TechDis aims to be the leading educational advisory service working in its field. It is a JISC Advisory Service with a mission to support the education sectors in achieving greater accessibility and inclusion by stimulating innovation and providing expert advice and guidance, in particular on disability and technology

JISC TechDis produces a range of materials to advise and support institutions in their adoption of inclusive practices while using technology innovatively. For further details see <http://www.techdis.ac.uk> or email [helpdesk@techdis.ac.uk](mailto:helpdesk@techdis.ac.uk).