The Inclusive Practice Panel (IPP)
Thursday, 21st April 2016

MINUTES

PRESENT: Dr Kathy Baker (KCL, retired) (Chair), Mr Nic Charlton (Learning Technologist, International Programmes), Ms Diana Maniati (Inclusive Practice Manager, International Programmes), Mr Sebastian Naicker (Senior Subject Matter Expert, International Programmes), Mr Tim Wade (Director: Student Services, International Programmes), Mr David Walmsley (Head of Student Disability Services, UCL: Specialist Adviser to the Panel), Mr James White (Undergraduate Student Member)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Robert D'Ath (Quality Officer, International Programmes) (Secretary), Mr Craig Johnson (Admissions Co-Ordinator, International Programmes) (Assistant Secretary)

APOLOGIES: Ms Beatrice Hyams (Head of Programme Management, International Programmes), Mr John Olivel (Postgraduate Student Member)

Part One – Preliminary Items

APOLOGIES

452.   The apologies for absence are recorded above.

WELCOME

453.   The Chair opened the tenth meeting of the IPP by welcoming members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIR

454.   The Chair noted that this was the final meeting of the IPP for the 2015-16 academic year. All members were thanked for their efforts over the course of the year. It was noted that the scope of the IPP's work had changed over the years and was contributing more widely to the University's activities. This proactive approach was applauded, and the Chair further noted that the work of the members had been commended to the Academic Committee.

MINUTES

Received:

455.   **(IPP 10/1)**, the minutes of the ninth meeting of the IPP held on Thursday 21 January 2016.

Agreed:

456.   **That the minutes of the ninth meeting of the IPP be approved as an accurate record of the meeting**

MATTERS ARISING

457. **Minute 381:** To *note* that efforts to appoint an External Member to the IPP were ongoing.

458. **Minute 405:** To *note* that the Head of Programme Management would be reviewing the Programme Director's Summary, an element of the Annual Programme Planning and Review process, over the summer with a view to including a section for reporting on the accessibility of programme specific materials.

459. **Minute 438:** To *note* that the addition of extra data fields to Accessibility Manager may be resolved with the release of the new version of SITS 9.0. If this issue is not resolved with the new version of SITS, it will be necessary to contact the development company, Tribal, to find an alternative solution

460. The upgrade to the new version of SITS would be going live in the next week. It was thought that the increased functionality of the new system and improved accessibility may mean that additional data fields would no longer be required. However, this would not be known for certain until the upgrade had been fully implemented.

461. **Minute 443:** To *note* that an audit was being conducted by the Institution and Student Mailings Manager to document all materials that are provided to students in prison. Cases involving students studying from prison are still handled on a case by case basis. The issue surrounding prisoners' limited access to the internet, despite regular access being an entry requirement of the International Programmes, is still to be considered.

462. It was noted that approximately 60 students are currently studying from prison.

Agreed:

463. **The Senior Subject Specialist: To provide an update on the workings of the new version of SITS at the next meeting of the IPP. This would be accompanied by a demonstration of the new admissions process.**

Part Two – Matters for Discussion

THEMATIC REVIEW OF SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Noted:

464. The Director: Student Services provided an oral update to the panel on the progress made in response to the recommendations arising from the Thematic Review of Special Examination Arrangements.

465. Work had started in a number of areas, notably with the revised documentation on Inclusive Practice. This was still being finalised.

466. It was expected that a number of actions would have been completed by the next meeting of the IPP, at which point a full update would be provided.

Agreed:

467. **The Director: Student Services: To provide the Panel with a further update on progress at the next meeting of the IPP.**

468. **The Thematic Review of Special Arrangements would remain as a standing item on the IPP agenda to monitor progress as actions are implemented.**

CHANGES TO THE GUIDELINES FOR DISABLED STUDENT ALLOWANCE (DSA)

Noted:

469. The Inclusive Practice Manager provided an oral update, accompanied by a tabled paper, on the changes to the guidelines for the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA). The Government announced the changes in 2014. After a period of consultation, the changes would take effect from September 2016. The main changes affecting UoLIA are surrounding provision for all students and the need to make it as inclusive as possible rather than requiring separate adjustments for individuals on a case by case basis.

470. The Panel was informed that the changes to the guidelines would have the greatest impact on students studying on-campus and would only affect a small number of students studying with the International Programmes.

471. The Panel discussed how to meet the guidelines. The Specialist Adviser to the Panel noted there should be an emphasis on pre-empting student needs, so that requirements are anticipated rather than reacted to. Also, due to the changes to the DSA, students may think that there will be less support available, although this may not actually be the case. The Government guidelines expect universities to make 'reasonable adjustments' to assist disabled students, and the International Programmes would continue to support its disabled students as far as possible.

472. The Specialist Adviser to the Panel also advised that as students are not obliged to disclose disabilities to the International Programmes, it emphasised the need to maintain strong communication links and make students aware that support was available.

473. The Learning Technologist suggested that a list of disabilities and requirements disclosed by students should be produced to evaluate how well the International Programmes is meeting disabled student requirements. This would help anticipate any future needs. This would be aided by consultation with academics.

474. Through improvements in the use of technology throughout the student lifecycle it emerged that inclusive learner provision can benefit the entire student body, not only those with specific access requirements.

475. It was suggested that the Undergraduate Student Member present these changes to the DSA Guidelines to the Student Voice group to receive a student reaction to the anticipatory element of inclusive learner provision.

476. A member queried how the term 'reasonable adjustment' was defined. The Specialist Adviser to the Panel noted that the wording is deliberate as requirements are varied. For a large organisation such as UCL, cost is no defence and it is more to do with the core competencies of each course. It was emphasised that there should be a dialogue between the University and students. There is no set budget for this as all funding is from the University's central budget and any adjustment may also benefit other students. Also there is a need to maintain academic standards.

Agreed:

477. **The Director: Student Services and Inclusive Practice Manager: To undertake an analysis of the range of disabilities disclosed to the International Programmes to help anticipate student requirements. It was requested that this analysis also provide information on how disabilities are disclosed demographically.**

478. **The Undergraduate Student Member: To present the changes to the DSA Guidelines to the Student Voice Group to receive a student reaction to the concept of inclusive learner provision.**

ACCESSIBILITY AND HOW IT IS INCORPORATED INTO THE APPROVAL PROCESS

Received:

479. **(IPP 10/2),** a paper that had been submitted to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Sub-Committee (LTAS 23) outlining the current status and suggested recommendations for incorporating accessibility into the International Programmes' approval process.

Noted:

480. The paper has been endorsed by LTAS. It was pointed out the process is quite stringent. The Chair noted that it was pleasing to see inclusivity being considered in this way.

481. The Secretary asked the Panel for comments to put forward to the Head of Programme Management.

482. It was suggested that a broader recommendation could be included first that advised panels to comment on the general inclusivity of the materials.

483. The Learning Technologist suggested that the recommendation for study materials to be provided in PDF formats could be expanded to include other formats, allowing accessibility on a wider range of devices.

484. It was suggested that, rather than providing sub-titles or a transcript as mentioned in the first recommendation, it would be preferable to have both. The Learning Technology Officer informed the panel that interactive transcripts were currently being developed, which are synchronised with videos/oral presentations and allow navigation of the media from within the transcript itself.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENT EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Noted:

485. The Director: Student Services provided an update to the Panel on a paper that had been submitted to the Vice Chancellor's Executive group. This paper addressed and sought guidance on three issues currently under consideration by the IPP: study materials and all aspects of delivery required to be accessible by design, rather than through adjustments; additional responsibilities to HE providers following the introduction of changes to the DSA Guidelines; where responsibility lies for matters relating to protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act other than disability.

486. It was thought that the issue surrounding care of protected characteristics would be best dealt with centrally. The issue in general affects other central academic bodies such as the School of Advanced Study (SAS) and the University of London Institute in Paris (ULIP).

487.   An effort should be made to ensure that the information regarding Inclusive Practice and the Equality Act is visible and easily available.

488.   The Specialist Adviser to the Panel noted that other Institutions have outsourced the process of collecting data on protected characteristics. However, this carries the risk of seeming impersonal. He added that a more personal, in-house approach should ensure a better response from students.

489.   One strategy for adopting a more personal approach was to avoid the use of legal terms in the application form while also prompting students to disclose. It should be clearly explained why data are being collected and the way in which they will be used.

Agreed:

490.   The Director: Student Services: To report on any developments in this area at the next meeting of the IPP.

CONFERENCES ATTENDED BY IPP MEMBERS

Noted:

491.   The Inclusive Practice Manager attended a conference addressing the changes to the DSA guidelines and delivered an oral report to the Panel.

492.   The Inclusive Practice Manager noted that a range of questions at the conference were put forward from a legal perspective focussing on what the term 'reasonable adjustment' meant for HE providers. The information provided at the conference reinforced the earlier point that reasonable adjustments cannot be refused at large institutions based on a financial argument.

493.   The Learning Technology Officer and the Inclusive Practice Manager attended a conference on Inclusive Practice. There was discussion at the conference from lecturers who deal with disabled students on campus, noting that adjustments to a course can benefit all students.

494.   Provision of lecture notes was discussed. Lecturers noted that there was reluctance to issue notes to students in advance of lectures in case it discouraged students from attending.

495.   Inclusive Practice was becoming more heavily considered in teaching, and was increasingly aligning with the concept of inclusive design in education. It was also noted that the on campus examples provided by the speakers reinforced the International Programmes' approach to design and delivery of new programmes. However, implementing these concepts into existing programmes retrospectively presented a challenge.

496.   It was suggested that the Learning Technology Officer enquire if it would be possible to commission a research project through the Centre for Distance Education (CDE) on the challenges of inclusive learner provision in distance learning. This would be investigated further with the Academic Project Manager.

Agreed:

497.   The Learning Technologist: to investigate the possibility of receiving funding for a research project on Inclusive Practice in distance learning with the Academic Project Manager

Part Three – Matters for Report

REPORT FROM THE INCLUSIVE PRACTICE MANAGER

Noted:

498. The Inclusive Practice Manager delivered an oral report to the Panel, providing an update on the activity of the Inclusive Practice Arrangements Panel (IPAP) since the last meeting of the IPP.

499. In the period of time since the last meeting of the IPP, 143 students had disclosed a disability.

500. Of these students, 82 had disclosed a disability but made no request for special arrangements.

501. The IPAP had considered 73 cases. 47 students had arrangements approved for the duration of the student lifecycle, and 24 had had arrangements approved on a year specific basis.

502. Further to these cases, the IPAP had considered an additional 21 requests for special arrangements that had not been made during the current reporting session. In some instances, these were students who had previously requested arrangements, but had only recently submitted their supporting documentation. Some cases were considered due to a change in the circumstances of students with previously approved arrangements and different who now required alternative arrangements.

503. The IPAP was awaiting supporting documentation from 30 students. These students would all be beginning their studies at the start of the 2016-17 academic year.

REPORT FROM THE LEARNING TECHNOLOGIST

Noted:

504. The Learning Technologist delivered an oral update on activity since the last meeting of the IPP.

505. The Learning Technologist has spoken with Publications and found no issues with materials had been reported by students.

506. The Learning Technologist noted that this did not necessarily mean that no issues existed; it was possible that students were not reporting them.

507. The Inclusive Practice Manager noted that there may be copyright issues with Optical Character Recognition (OCR) for PDFs. The International Programmes can provide OCR enabled PDFs to individual students but these cannot be put on the VLE. The Inclusive Practice Manager noted we should consider provision for individual students as books published before 2005 are unlikely to have a PDF version available.

508. The Inclusive Practice Manager noted this should be raised in the accessibility check-list. It was also recommended that subject guides and books be as current as possible to ensure that PDFs would be available from publishers.

509. The Learning Technologist noted we should look for a solution which is suitable for all, and over time there should be more e-text options. The issue of OCR in PDFs should not be a prevalent issue with new content being created.

510. Academics should be informed of the need to use more recent texts and amend the reading materials where possible so they are more inclusive.

511. The Director: Student Services noted that there was a project underway to audit all materials provided to students.

512. It was noted that the sentiment block, 'PULSE', was being added to all programmes' VLEs as part of a larger project to do with student retention. The PULSE product included a free text comment box that could be used for students to report any accessibility issues on specific VLE pages. It was further noted that this was a trial project and may not be adopted permanently.

513. Currently the comments submitted are not monitored. However, the data were being stored in a database for future analysis. It was possible to nominate an email address that would receive a notification each time a comment was submitted.

514. The Chair enquired about the status of the Accessibility Checklist for new content and the Web Content Accessibility Policy, presented to the IPP at the last meeting. It was noted that these would be finalised and submitted to Academic Committee for approval. Once approved, these documents should be shared across the International Academy.

515. The Senior Subject Matter Expert added that inclusivity should be included in all aspects of communication with students and these documents would be a useful resource.

516. The Learning Technologist informed the Panel that work on the audio content audit was almost complete.

517. The Learning Technologist is working with the colleges to improve content accessibility. This means if there is any new content the colleges will be able to evaluate its accessibility with reference to the content accessibility guidelines.

Agreed:

518. The Learning Technologist & Secretary: To finalise the Accessibility Checklist and Web Content Accessibility Policy and submit to Academic Committee for approval.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Examination Centres Survey

Noted:

519. Proposed questions for the survey of Examination Centres had been considered by the Panel at IPP8 in October 2015. The Chair requested an update on the progress of this initiative at the next meeting of the IPP.

Agreed:

520. The Director: Student Services: to provide an update on the status of the Examination Centres Survey at the next meeting of the IPP.

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Noted:

521.   The Panel noted the dates for the meetings of the IPP for the 2016-17 academic session.

        IPP11:   Thursday 22 September 2016
        IPP12:   Thursday 26 January 2017
        IPP13:   Thursday 20 April 2017

RESERVED ITEMS

Minutes 522 – 527 were considered under reserved items

 END

University of London International Academy
Chair confirmed
10/5/16