e-Accessibility Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 16 January 2015 at 15:00 in H/G09

Present
Helen Petrie (Chair)
Linda Brosnan (Secretary)
Matt Cornock
Jo Fletcher
Dave Swallow
Thomas Ron
James Browne

14-15/1 Apologies
Apologies were received from Steve Campbell, Julie Allinson, Amanda Wright and Mike Dunn.

14-15/2 Minutes of the last meeting
The minutes of the meeting held on the 30 April 2014 were approved.

14-15/3 Matters arising
a 13-14/7, Software for creating equations
There was no progress to report on this issue.

During discussion the following points were made:
- Details about the different software available at the University for creating equations would be useful for both staff and students.
- There have been concerns raised about the Microsoft Word equation editor as it can only be used to produce simple equations. It was explained that this software has recently improved. A member of the Forum suggested ‘MathType’, as an alternative to this software.
- Disability Services and the Department of Chemistry were working on a project to develop an equation editor with accessibility features.

It was agreed that progress on this item would be an agenda item at the next meeting in April.

Action – Secretary and MD

b 13/14-24, second bullet point, ‘TechDis’
It was reported that following a review of TechDis it was announced in December 2014 that this service would cease to exist from 1 January 2015. From this date expert advice and guidance on inclusion and technology would be provided by Jisc.
Some of the information on the ‘tips and tricks’ section on the TechDis website was being used by Disability Services to create an information pack for academics staff supporting disabled students.

14-15/4 Review the Membership and Terms of Reference

It was noted that there had been a number of changes to the membership of the Forum including the appointment of a new Chair.

The Chair agreed to write to Tom Stoneham, the previous Chair of the Forum to thank him for his contributions to the work of the Forum.

Action - Chair

The YUSU Disabled Students Officer reported that this would be his last meeting. The Chair thanked him for his contribution to the work of the Forum.

14-15/5 Feedback from the meeting of the Disability and Accessibility Group held on 11 February 2014

The Forum noted the feedback from the Disability and Accessibility Group and during discuss the following points were made.

- Lecture Capture Service
  It was explained that the ‘Replay Service’ mentioned in the final paragraph would be discussed further under Agenda Item 9.

- Using computers in examinations
  The Examinations Officer explained that their preference would be for students to use a computer in a PC classroom for examinations. But it was acknowledged that this might not be possible if a student was using specialist software, for example, speech recognition software.

  It was explained that a disabled student who had always used their own laptop may find it difficult to use a computer for examinations.

  A member of the Forum suggested that a list of the commonly used assistive technologies that are available on University computers would be helpful.

- Videos on the University website
  It was explained that videos without captions are available on department YouTube channels. The Chair agreed to ask members of staff in departments to review videos on the University website and identify those without captions. The relevant Head of Department would then be contacted about updating the videos.

  Action – Chair

14-15/6 Update from E-Learning Development Team

- VLE
  There have been no further updates to the VLE following the upgrade in the Summer.
New guidance on VoiceOver for Mac users is now available but has not so far been tested by users. The Chair offered to have an expert VoiceOver user review this guidance.

**Action - Chair**

It was reported that the new VLE interface will be more attractive to students but there may be issues with the staff interface. The Chair agreed to discuss the latter with the Manager of the E-Learning Development Team.

**Action - Chair**

**14-15/7 Update on accessibility testing project (Protea)**

- **Testing of the VLE**

The Chair explained that during the testing of the VLE upgrade there were a number of accessibility issues highlighted. These were reported to Blackboard who agreed to make changes to resolve the issues. It was noted that any changes to the accessibility of the system would need to be tested before going live.

It was agreed that any accessibility issues with the VLE should be reported to Matt Cornock.

- **Moocs (Massive online open courses)**

The Chair explained that there is a European funded project currently looking at the accessibility of Moocs.

**14-15/8 Review of Assistive Technologies**

There was nothing to report on this issue.

**14-15/9 Lecture Capture Service**

It was explained that concerns about the accessibility of the University Replay System had been raised at a recent meeting of the Disability and Accessibility Group. In particular, the system does not appear to have the facility to add captions or transcripts of the lecture for students with hearing impairments.

During discussion the following points were made:

- The University Replay System does in fact support the addition of a transcript or captions to the audio recording the problem is the cost/effort of producing such additions. This could be provided by the lecturer or a specialist company.

- The number of departments requesting lecture capture has increased.

- This facility is available in forty lecture rooms on campus. The rooms were weighted on the number of lectures timetabled and the strategic importance to a department. Details can be found at [www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/key-areas/digitalrecordingoflectures/timetabledlectures/](http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/key-areas/digitalrecordingoflectures/timetabledlectures/).

- There has been some resistance from departments and concerns raised that it would reduce attendance at lectures. It was noted that there is no statistical evidence to support this view.

- A department requested a trial to video recording some of their lectures. Concerns were raised that a substantial investment would be required to support video recording of lectures.
- The University Replay system needs to be championed by departments as a learning resource that supports all students, for example, disabled and international students and students with caring responsibilities.

- Under the Equality Act 2010, the University has a responsibility to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled students which will increase due to the changes to the Disabled Students Allowance.

- A Group of students have been asked to look at crowdsourcing as a revision technique and this may include describing the visual aspects of powerpoint presentations.

14-15/10 AOB

It was reported that the Reading on screen website ([www.readingonscreen.com](http://www.readingonscreen.com)) provides advice and guidance about using digital devices for reading.

14-15/11 Dates of future meetings

30 April, 10:00-11:00, RCH/102

LB/January 2015