

# **THE VALIDITY OF SHIFTING FROM NOTETAKING TO LECTURE SUPPORT AS AN 'APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATION' FOR STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

All universities throughout Australia organise notetaking for students in one form or another. For many Disability Officers this can be one of the most time consuming, expensive and frustrating forms of support offered to students with a disability. While there are broad similarities between the way all universities undertake this task, there is still a very individualised approach to this particular form of support specific to each institution.

Disability Support in all universities has been developed mostly on a 'reactive' basis. As services are required, the development of the support has taken place. This makes it extremely difficult for Disability Officers to gain a clear picture of the resources needed and what processes work best.

Another key factor is that the base keeps shifting. The number of students registered with each service has dramatically increased each year and the types of adjustments needed has significantly broadened. These factors, together with the continual changes in technology means that DLO's constantly need to be creative, innovative and have their eyes open to these relevant changes.

At The University of Newcastle, the Disability Support Service has made a subtle, yet significant shift when it comes to providing support to students. Now the University offers 'lecture support' rather than just notetaking. This shift means that the student has a fuller range of options and the responsibility is shared amongst a slightly larger group. This form of support is offered at other universities also.

The workshop therefore will focus on the following:

- What are the benefits of making the shift from Notetaking to Lecture Support;
- Are there any negative components of this shift;
- Resource implications for either systems;
- How do we advocate for these resources on a national, state and local basis.

It is envisaged that the workshop will explore these issues and devise the basis of a 'where to from here' plan that can be utilised by Disability Officers throughout Australia.

## **FORMAT OF WORKSHOP**

The workshop will be in the form of participant involvement. It is envisaged that this workshop will provide a forum for Disability Support Staff to explore the issues around supporting students with a disability in lectures and tutorials.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION IN RELATION TO THE EXPERIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE**

### **BACKGROUND**

Up until this year the Disability Support Service (DSS) at the University of Newcastle provided notetaking as a form of support for students who were unable to take comprehensive notes due to their disability. The categories of disabilities that are supported by notetaking included:

- Vision impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Deafness
- Dyslexia and other learning disabilities
- Psychiatric disabilities
- Back injury
- Manipulative disabilities
- Some chronic illnesses

In Semester 1 1995, 17 students were receiving notes with 48 subjects being covered. In 1999, the number of students increased to 54 with 82 subjects being sought.

This system proved to be inefficient, cumbersome and expensive. It was therefore decided that another process was required and that a "Lecture Support" system would be trialed.

### **RATIONALE**

The reasons mentioned above were not the only reasons it was felt that a shift to the new system would be beneficial. There have also been changes in lecture delivery and, with advances in technology, more lecture support resources are available in lecture theatres themselves (ie tape and video recording facilities, PC projection facilities). This means that much of the information required is available through mechanisms other than 'notetaking'. This includes:

- Comprehensive lecture notes supplied by the lecturer;
- Copies of overheads;
- Audio tapes of lectures;
- Copies of power point presentations;
- Video tapes of lectures;
- Lecture material available through the web.

## **PROCESSES**

The initial process is still a time consuming procedure. At this stage students are required to fill in a "request for lecture support" application. This information is entered into an Excel Database.

To find out the names of the lecturers for each subject, the departments are contacted by email via the departmental secretaries. It is sometimes necessary to initially look the subjects up on the web to find out which department needs to be contacted, as the names and the codes of the subject are not always an indication of the association.

The lecturers are all then contacted via email requesting information regarding support currently available. Where an email address is not available then the letter is sent via internal mail. These responses are entered into the database.

The students are emailed an abridged copy of the database. The information they receive includes only the 'subject', 'lecturer' and 'support available' columns. A cover letter is included.

Students are to contact the DSS if they feel the support outlined is not sufficient.

## **ADVANTAGES OF THE NEW SYSTEM**

At this stage, it seems that this new system is going to run more smoothly than the previous notetaking system. Once the initial organisation is completed, there is less time involved with supporting the system through semester. The students in most cases are receiving the support directly through the lecture, via the web, or through the library. Some students still prefer to remain anonymous and get the notes sent to the DSS. Therefore some notes are still being picked up from our office. The number of students doing this however is significantly less than with the notetaking system. This is probably the most beneficial aspect of changing systems. The cost of this system will work out to be significantly less than the notetaking system. The exact cost for this semester will be calculated and included in the next report.

## **DIFFICULTIES WITH THE NEW SYSTEM**

The main issue at this stage is that any new system takes time to develop and for the bugs to be ironed out. It must be noted that this is still a system that takes a reasonable amount of time to implement. In fact, the time factor is not a great deal less than the notetaking system in the initial stage.

Some of the lecturers are reluctant to provide the support requested or to utilise the resources in the lecture theatres. I would suggest that a letter from the Vice Chancellor or from the Academic Registrar outlining the responsibilities of the teaching staff is needed in relation to this. (A letter is currently being drafted – will be available at the Disability Committee meeting)

When the notes on overheads are available though the web, it is not always easy to locate the sites. When they are found, they are often in formats or programs that are inaccessible to the students.

Many of the overheads or PowerPoint presentations on the web are cumbersome and take up a lot of pages. The printing costs are proving to be prohibitive for the students. One student has brought this to our attention, so we have made a PC available to her so she can come into our office and print the work with no expense to herself. This system is OK for now, however it will end up being a cumbersome process if the numbers of students needing to do this increases.

### **AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT FROM LECTURERS**

As indicated above, there was a mixed response from the lecturers. Some lecturers had comprehensive notes, tapes, and copies of overheads available, while others had nothing and felt it wasn't their role to supply them.

### **PRELIMINARY STATISTICS –SEMESTER 1 2000**

**Number of subjects:** 116 (increase of 34 from sem2 '99)  
**Number of students:** 63 (increase of 9 from sem2 '99)  
**Number of emails sent to lecturers:** 105  
**Number of subjects where notetakers employed** 11 + yr4 Med

Liz Shanley  
October 2000

**SAMPLE MEMO TO LECTURERS**



*The* UNIVERSITY  
*of* NEWCASTLE  
AUSTRALIA

**M E M O R A N D U M**

STUDENT AND ACADEMIC SERVICES DIVISION

**Student Support Service**

*Telephone: (02) 4921 5766*

*Fax: (02) 4921 7065*

*TTY: (02) 4921 7040*

*E-mail: Liz.Shanley@newcastle.edu.au*

**TO** : (LECTURER)  
**FROM** : Liz Shanley, Disability Liaison Officer  
**SUBJECT** : **Lecture support for students with a disability**  
**DATE** :

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I am writing in relation to lecture support for a student who is registered with the Disability Support Service. This student is undertaking (NAME OF SUBJECT) this semester and has been assessed as requiring lecture support.

This support can be in the form of one or a combination of the following forms:

- Comprehensive lecture notes supplied by the lecturer;
- Copies of overheads;
- Audio tapes of lectures;
- Copies of power point presentations;
- Video tapes of lectures;
- Lecture material available through the web.

Could you let me know by (DATE 2 DAYS FROM DAY LETTER SENT) what you are able to supply to this student? I will then inform the student and get them to make contact with you to arrange a system for collection.

I believe that (NAME OF SUBJECT) is held in (ROOM NUMBER). This lecture theatre is equipped with a range of technology including an audiocassette. It would be appreciated if you would be able to utilise this equipment to provide the necessary information to these students.

All documentation pertaining to these students' disabilities is held with the Disability Support Service.

I have included a copy of the extract of the "Students with Disabilities: Code of Practice for Australian Tertiary Institutions" that was distributed to all departments via Dr Hilary Winchester, Chairperson of the Teaching and Learning Committee.

Please contact me if you have any questions or wish to discuss this further.

Regards,

Liz Shanley  
**Disability Liaison Officer**

## SAMPLE LETTER TO STUDENTS



*The* UNIVERSITY  
*of* NEWCASTLE  
AUSTRALIA

## MEMORANDUM

STUDENT AND ACADEMIC SERVICES DIVISION

**Student Support Service**

*Telephone: (02) 4921 5766*

*Fax: (02) 4921 7065*

*TTY: (02) 4921 7040*

*E-mail: Liz.Shanley@newcastle.edu.au*

Dear Student

Lecture Support will be offered in one or a combination of the following forms: lecture notes supplied by lecturer, copies of overheads, audiotapes of lecturers (held in library or with Department), notetaking.

The Disability Support Service will facilitate the process of lecture support; however once established this support may be located in other areas on campus such as the libraries, departmental offices, direct from lecturers or the Adaptive Technology Centre.

Notetaking may not always be provided for all subjects requested. If you feel that you are at a disadvantage by receiving alternatives to notetaking, please make an appointment to discuss the issue with the Disability Liaison Officer. Please note that notetaking in **NOT** available for tutorials and laboratory classes unless specifically negotiated with the Disability Liaison Officer.

Documentation from your doctor or specialist outlining this specific need may be required to support your application.

The Disability Support Service wants to ensure that you receive appropriate accommodation and support for your studies. You may wish to discuss any difficulties with the Disability Liaison Officer.

Liz Shanley  
**Disability Liaison Officer**

SAMPLE REQUEST FOR LECTURE SUPPORT FORM



The UNIVERSITY  
of NEWCASTLE  
AUSTRALIA

MEMORANDUM

STUDENT AND ACADEMIC SERVICES DIVISION

Student Support Service

Telephone: (02) 4921 5766

Fax: (02) 4921 7065

TTY: (02) 4921 7040

E-mail: Liz.Shanley@newcastle.edu.au

REQUEST FOR LECTURE SUPPORT

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ STUDENT NO: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_ COURSE: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ ALTERNATE NO: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Subject</b>		
<b>Lecturer's Name</b>		
<b>Room Number</b>		<b>Day / Time:</b>
<b>Specific Requirements</b>		

<b>Subject</b>		
<b>Lecturer's Name</b>		
<b>Room Number</b>		<b>Day / Time:</b>
<b>Specific Requirements</b>		

<b>Subject</b>		
<b>Lecturer's Name</b>		
<b>Room Number</b>		<b>Day / Time:</b>
<b>Specific Requirements</b>		

<b>Subject</b>		
<b>Lecturer's Name</b>		
<b>Room Number</b>		<b>Day / Time:</b>

<b>Specific Requirements</b>	
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I have read and understand the letter overleaf

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_