

Date: January 2022

EPISODE 1 – SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION - WEBSITES AND APPS MENTIONED DURING THE PODCAST

1. DISABLED STUDENT ALLOWANCE ASSEMENTS

- 1.1 Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) is obtained following a detailed assessment and a grant is potentially available for disabled students who require support with accessing learning and anything related to study. Student Finance England (part of Student Loan Company) are responsible for the administration of this process. Currently the emphasis is on the student to progress this – the advice is to start the process as early as possible.
- 1.2 If a student changes University choice the DSA application doesn't necessarily need to be redone, but a change of course or subject might necessitate this and be advisable.
- 1.3 Any technology assessments carried out as part of a transition report would not 'count' as part of a DSA application but it can be used as part of the evidence within an application.

2. UNIVERSITY – VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS – ADVICE

- 2.1 The most popular VLEs - Blackboard, Moodle and Turnitin are not always accessible, and information on them is not easily accessible.
- 2.2 Materials which are uploaded need to be accessible, no matter the platform.
- 2.3 Issues with methods of uploading work have been encountered. Alternatives for students exist and targeted work and/or training may be needed.

3. SPECIALIST VS MAINSTREAM TECHNOLOGY – SHOULD THE SAME TECHNOLOGY BE USED AT HOME AND IN SCHOOL?

- 3.1 The technology used at home is relevant and may be a good starting point especially for older students who may be reluctant to use something bespoke for education and different from their peers.
- 3.2 Using both specialist and mainstream technology if suitable is advisable and offers the widest range of options to students. Consideration of specification and ability of specialist technology should be made, and mainstream alternatives sourced and offered as a trial alongside specialist technology. Price, sustainability and the support available are all important considerations when selecting equipment. There are usually both mainstream and specialist options which achieve the same goals.

4. COMPATIBILITY OF IPADS WITH SCHOOL IT SYSTEMS

- 4.1 This depends on which school systems are in use. If school uses a cloud-based web system, then an iPad just needs web access.
- 4.2 If a school uses its own servers, likely to be Windows based, then the iPad won't be immediately compatible. What the iPad is for will then need to be considered to see if it remains the best option?

5. BRAILLE TECHNOLOGY

5.1 There are a range of Braille options available: Braille Notetaker, Braille display, and Orbit Reader are some. It is key to start with the individual and where they are in terms of skills etc.

6. HOW BEST TO ASSESS FOR TECHNOLOGY?

6.1 With younger students, start with observation in class, trialling equipment and monitoring responses (from student, teachers, TAs etc) and from there select equipment to start.

6.2 With older students - meet with student and teachers and discuss possible solutions. Then move into trialling equipment with the student in different settings and for different purposes.

7. ISSUES WITH TRIALLING EQUIPMENT AND WORKING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITY RESTRICTED FUNDS AND CONTRACTS

7.1 Both VisionAid and Humanware can come out to show equipment to students and provide free trials.

8. VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (VLEs)

8.1 It is important to consider access to VLE in a technology assessment. VLEs may include Google Classroom and Teams in schools. General accessibility features exist, but page content and interfaces can be complex with lots of information per page.

8.2 Students are likely to require a high level of competence with their device in order to be able to access VLEs, so considering this in an assessment is important.

8.2 Don't forget to consider training for staff, who may need to modify or make accessible materials before they are uploaded to a VLE.

9. USEFUL WEBSITES

Audioboom: <https://audioboom.com/>

TPT Services - <https://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/>

NatSpec - <https://natspec.org.uk/>

CALL Scotland - <https://www.callscotland.org.uk/home/>

Accessibility on Apple devices - <https://www.applevis.com/>

RNIB Guide to Technology assessment - <https://www.rnib.org.uk/health-social-care-and-education-professionals/education-professionals/technology-and-independent-learning>

VIEW has information on VLEs - <https://viewweb.org.uk/accessing-vles/>

NatSpec provide training and resources:
<https://natspec.org.uk/services/assistive-technology/>

Information on Disabled Student Allowance:
<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa>

Thomas Pocklington Trust's Student Support Services:
<https://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/student-support/>

Vision Aid sell different brands of specialist equipment and come out to do demos:

<https://www.visionaid.co.uk>

Orcam:

<https://explore.orcam.com/>

A categorised guide to iPad apps for learners with complex communication support needs:

<https://www.callscotland.org.uk/blog/updated-aac-ipad-app-wheel-available-now/>

Listen to all the past episodes of RNIB Connect Radio's TechTalk podcast:

<https://audioboom.com/channel/techtalkpodcast>

Braillecast podcast past episodes:

<https://www.braillecast.com>

Users share experiences of different braille technology solutions:

<https://www.applevis.com/forum/braille-apple-products/braille-display-and-ios-vs-notetaker>