THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by – MARK GLASCODINE – 2011 Churchill Fellow

A review of careers advisory services (CAS) at universities in the United Kingdom for students with disabilities

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Signed

Date
Acknowledgements

This trip would not have been possible without Harry Anderl, my good friend and temporary carer, who ensured my attendance at meetings, took notes, asked difficult questions and made evening meals all the more enjoyable.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to this research by openly sharing their time and expertise, enabling me to gain an insight into this important subject, particularly Dr Eddie Tunnah, London South Bank University, for his invaluable assistance at the start of the project.

And finally, my sincere thanks to the Churchill Trust for supporting my research financially and thereby recognising its importance.
Executive Summary

Australia lags behind other developed countries in its support of students with disabilities. Australians with disabilities experience disadvantage in the areas of education and employment; Australia is now ranked 21st out of 29 OECD countries (2010, OECD).

Mark Glascodine is a careers advisor based in Melbourne, who specialises in working with people with disabilities. With the support of the Churchill Trust, over a five-week period in September and October 2011, Mark researched a range of programs to enable employability and to enhance outcomes for students with disabilities at university in the United Kingdom.

Appointments were set up with a range of stakeholders: careers advisory services (CAS) and disability services staff, employers, graduate recruiters, disability organisations, groups and individuals involved in developing tools and resources aimed at students with disabilities.

Following attendance at the biennial AGCAS conference, Mark visited 23 universities and 7 other organisations in England and Wales to discuss programs and services and to identify best practice. Cooperation was enormous; ideas and information were freely shared. This made the research interesting and very enjoyable. Based on this research, the following recommendations have been developed.

Recommendations for universities:

1. Collaborate in the provision of programs for diversity groups
2. Tailor current mentoring programs to students with disabilities
3. Extend mentoring and job search support for 12 months after students have graduated
4. Structure disability support services and careers services together
5. Careers departments consider changes to improve service to students with disabilities
6. Support a UTAS proposal to DEEWR for developing and managing two websites, one for careers advisors and one for inclusive course design for academics
7. Further develop relationships with local employers/SMEs to increase numbers of possible mentors
8. Target students with disabilities through job databases
9. Develop part-time, casual and WIL jobs at universities for all students, including students with disabilities
10. Develop a university skills award which is fully accessible and portable
11. Further develop university diversity and inclusiveness policy
12. Continue to embed employability skills in the curriculum
13. Careers departments use all available UK tools
14. Develop and maintain NAGCAS interest group for students with disabilities (already initiated).

Recommendations for DEEWR:

1. Introduce an equivalent to the ‘2 tick’ accreditation for disability employment
2. Introduce a funding model similar to the UK disabled student allowance
3. Increase DEEWR spending to facilitate employment of graduates with disabilities
4. Conduct further research to obtain the destination statistics of students with disabilities
5. Undertake further research to understand the difference between declared disability figures at universities in the UK and Australia.

Through presenting and communicating this research within NAGCAS, CDAA, NDCO and other organisations, the outlook for disabled graduate employment will be improved.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Aims of the Project

This research project was conducted over five weeks and involved visits to 23 universities and 7 other organisations in England and Wales. There were four main aims:

1. to understand the context in the United Kingdom for employment issues facing graduates with disabilities and how these are being addressed by the British Government, universities and other interested parties
2. to identify best practice for students with disabilities in terms of how they are being prepared for employment
3. to learn about the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) and its Disability Task Group (DTG) and Disability Development Network (DDN)—their organisational structures, what works well in terms of assisting students with disabilities, with the view to establishing similar mechanisms in the National Association of Graduate Career Advisory Services (NAGCAS) in Australia
4. to gain an appreciation of the services, tools and products that have been produced, including the scope and philosophy behind the website usemyability.org in the UK, as well as the possibilities for use by professionals working with students with disabilities.
2 The Research Program

Leaving on 10 September 2011 and returning on 17 October 2011, the trip took five weeks and covered just over 4000 kilometres within the United Kingdom*.

Highlights of the trip include:

• attending the biennial ACGAS conference at Nottingham University
• visiting 23 universities in England and Wales, from Teesside University in the North to Plymouth University in the South: some older, long-established universities and some newer universities. The visits varied from one-hour meetings with a careers advisor with a specialist focus of students with disabilities, to six-hour sessions with a range of involved parties
• meeting with former and current members of the ACGAS Disability Task Group (DTG)—a committee which acts as a voice for issues relating to career outcomes for students with disabilities—and about five Disability Development Network members (DDN is essentially a discussion group)
• finding out about the website usemyability.org and other inclusive teaching tools from the project leader Val Chapman, and Phil Gravestock, senior member of the National Teaching Fellowship (NTF) team
• meeting with Michael Kenny, Robin Spruell and Dan Mitchell from Blind in Business. Particularly impressive was Michael’s technique to promote disability employment to board members and the work Robin and Dan do in schools and universities to encourage employment options and instill confidence in people with vision impairment in the UK
• attending a session of the Disability Café by Helen Cooke for graduate recruiters about recruiting disabled students and graduates
• meeting with Tony Payne, Head of Student Experience at York St John University. Tony was the original driving force behind the Australian disability websites http://www.adcet.edu.au/ and CATS (Creating Accessible Teaching Support) http://www.adcet.edu.au/Cats/
• meetings with a number of public and private support organisations which work with the higher education (HE) institutions, e.g. Graduate Prospects, JISC Techdis (which supports inclusivity through policy and practice assistance to the higher education sector using software/assistive technology)
• meetings with the Employers’ Forum on Disability (EFD) and a number of consultants who work with employers, universities and students with disabilities.

*Refer to Appendix A for a full itinerary.
3 UK Environment

3.1 UK University Sector

There are approximately 2.5 million university students in the United Kingdom and about 300,000 graduates (first degree) graduating each year. Approximately 10% of these have a declared disability.

The British Government has set a target of 50% of those aged 25–34 years to be qualified with a bachelor degree by 2020; currently this figure stands at 43%. In order to meet this target, the number of universities has grown to about 140 throughout the UK and continues to grow; in the 1980s there were about fifty.

The more traditional, long-established universities now share the field with regional/community-focused universities, many of which have developed from former polytechnics. With distinct characteristics, these two kinds of institution have developed different strategies to cater for the needs of different types of students.

1. The ‘National’ group, which includes the Russell Group of universities, plus a few others. These are characterised as follows:
   • a strong research focus
   • higher academic entry requirements
   • 75% of students in the 18–25 age range
   • students living on campus or close to the university, away from home
   • academic rather than vocational courses.

   Graduates from these institutions are highly sought-after by the larger and more prestigious companies.

2. The ‘Local’ group, the Millennium/92 group of universities. These are characterised as follows:
   • less research-led and more teaching orientated
   • more community focused
   • lower academic entry requirements
   • more vocational courses
   • more than 50% of students living locally
   • greater age range (only 50% within the 18–25 year age range)
   • a higher proportion of part-time students
   • a higher proportion of first-generation university students
   • a higher proportion of ‘equity’ groups (e.g. disabled, ethnic, lower socioeconomic groups).

3.2 Current UK Legislative Environment

The British Government has recognised that the distinction between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ is no longer viable, and is in the process of implementing strategies to lessen the divide. A Higher Education White Paper, Students at the Heart of the System, published in June 2011, is advocating change. It acknowledges that students are becoming better informed about the educational services on offer and their quality and, as users of services, are increasingly demanding and driving the sector towards teaching excellence. In a tight economic environment, the White Paper proposes a model for a sector that is more sustainable and responds, with more agility, to create a better student experience, better quality graduates and fairer access through increased student mobility. It acknowledges that universities require
looser controls to become more competitive, more flexible and more diverse in order to provide for a more diverse student population. The number of universities and further education colleges is expected to grow in the UK, along with the variety of modes of learning and innovative approaches.

Widening participation through ease of access is a cornerstone of the White Paper (the most disadvantaged young people are seven times less likely than the most advantaged to attend the most selective institutions). Changes to the way funding is organised will provide opportunities for targeted financial support to enable students who were previously excluded to attend the more prestigious institutions. The White Paper also proposes that greater emphasis be placed on quality internships and that stronger links are developed between the HE sector and the largest group of employers, the SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises).

The White Paper further emphasises the importance of embedding employability skills in the curriculum.

If this document becomes legislation, universities in the UK will also be required to publish graduate outcomes on their websites to assist prospective students with their selection, which will, arguably, force all universities to become more proactive in creating equitable systems, services and programs, and will consequently lead to greater inclusivity in employability skills development. Students with disabilities have previously missed out on this important stage in their education for a range of reasons, but primarily because they have focused on one thing; that is, finishing their course. Depending on the extent and demands of their disability, they have avoided what they have perceived as non-essential activities, such as developing employability skills, leaving this till after they have graduated and need to get a job. In a competitive labour market, this is far too late. Most of the jobs, and probably all of the best ones, have already been taken long before graduation.

3.3 UK Implications and Trends

With more universities touting for students and charging higher fees, and with potential students and their parents becoming more savvy purchasers of higher education services, the environment is becoming more competitive. Competition will further increase if university statistics on graduate employment become freely available for comparison. Obviously, universities will be less likely to cooperate willingly with each other in this environment.

The increased focus on graduate outcomes is leading to a shift in responsibility for employability away from careers departments to faculties (to which graduate outcomes can be more easily traced). Vice chancellors are requiring faculty heads to report on how they are assisting students to develop employability skills; new positions with specific responsibility for this have been created inside faculties, while centralised careers departments are providing assistance or consulting on program development and delivery. Some universities are adopting service level agreements between faculties and careers departments to develop and define the responsibilities of each area in increasing employment outcomes for graduates. This has provided an opportunity for careers departments to clarify their resource needs in servicing each faculty.

With increased emphasis on graduate outcomes, universities have also been responding to pressure to embed employability skills in the curriculum and to ensure students see that gaining employability skills is as important as meeting the educational challenges of the course.
Currently about 10% of students in the UK have a declared disability (AGCAS Disability Task Group, *What Happens Next? A Report on the First Destinations of Disabled Graduates*, 2011). This figure has increased rapidly over the last decade as participation in HE has widened. Inclusivity is not universally incorporated into courses; university disability support services provide practical support to assist students to study and they organise reasonable adjustments, while academic course managers have the responsibility of actioning any required course adjustments. It appears that in the United States of America, all courses have to be inclusive so that adjustment is minimised; however, this is unconfirmed. In the UK, it appears that there is no movement towards uniformity in the inclusivity of courses. Some are in the early stages of developing this. Leeds Metropolitan University, under the guidance of the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Policy and Implementation is a leader in this area; other universities are introducing holistic diversity and equality policies. In order to deliver these policies, some universities have established diversity and equality committee structures around an existing hierarchy.

The Employers’ Forum on Disabilities (EFD) has developed a disability employment benchmark standard for their members, involving an online assessment tool. The Department of Work and Pensions through Jobcentre Plus (Disability Employment Services (DESs) are the equivalent in Australia) offers a ‘2 tick’ accreditation towards a disability employment standard. Employers who use the ‘2 tick’ disability symbol make five commitments regarding recruitment, training, retention, consultation and disability awareness.

These commitments are:

1. to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and to consider them on their abilities
2. to discuss with disabled employees, at any time but at least once a year, what both parties can do to make sure disabled employees can develop and use their abilities
3. to make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment
4. to take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make these commitments work
5. to review these commitments each year and assess what has been achieved, plan ways to improve on them and let employees and Jobcentre Plus know about progress and future plans.

The ‘2 tick’ award is important for demonstrating an organisation’s commitment to becoming a disability confident organisation. Shell UK, for example, has been through the accreditation process. Although some are sceptical that the award will reflect genuine commitment to disability employment, it is an important first step in convincing employees and customers of the need for inclusivity. Furthermore, the process of gaining the accreditation provides the organisation with considerable knowledge and this empowers them to move towards more inclusive hiring and more flexible staff management practices.

### 3.4 UK Impact on Careers Departments and Other Services for Students with Disabilities

Anecdotal evidence indicates that people with disabilities who obtain work early on in life, will probably continue to work throughout their lives. On the other hand, if disabled
graduates are not employed within a reasonable period after graduation, demoralisation can set in and there is an increased likelihood they will never work.

A research project by Helen Cooke (details in section 3.5) on behalf of the Lloyds Group to review the aspirations of disabled students, as well as how and why they choose to apply to certain employers found that:

- 91% of students regularly consulted disability support managers, while only 22% consulted a careers advisor. It appears that they would rather seek advice from someone they know and trust, and with whom they feel comfortable, than careers and employment services who would be better equipped to assist them.
- 74% of respondents said they had either attended or planned to attend graduate careers fairs. They did not want events for disabled students only, because they do not wish to be labeled as disabled. They may need practical assistance, but do not want to draw attention to themselves. One possible option discussed was restricting the first hour of a careers fair to those with access difficulties.
- Of the respondents consulting a careers advisor, 74% said they would be much more likely to apply to an organisation if the careers advisor presented that organisation as 'disability confident'.

Working with students and graduates experiencing disability involves a number of challenges, in addition to the usual career planning activities. Extra time and expertise is required to understand the specific needs of the individual during their course. The workload of careers departments is becoming increasingly difficult to manage; staff members are time poor and cannot possibly service all the students in their institutions. Typically, there are just five careers advisors for 20,000 students. These careers advisors were often supported by career information officers, administration support officers and/or an IT support officer. It is highly unlikely in this scenario that the career needs of students with disabilities will be met.

University careers advisors are generally aligned to a faculty and have a focal point or special interest area, such as disability. These focal point roles are generally limited to being a point of contact or disseminator of information to others in the team, rather than a ‘go-to’ person for a particular group of students. Some universities, however, do have an identified careers advisor for students with disabilities. The benefit of having a named advisor who covers disability among other things is that students with disabilities can book an appointment, without actually disclosing that they have a disability.

As technology replaces human contact, online support is becoming the preferred method for distributing information and resources to enable employability skills development. This presents new challenges in ensuring that these mechanisms are inclusive. The AGCAS DTG recommends the development of a tailored disability section on the careers website as it can effectively raise awareness and possibly prompt a visit. A further advantage is non-disclosure to a person; these students often wish to avoid disclosure.

Mentoring programs can generally be found in most universities and, while these are available to all students, some have been developed from attempts to target diversity groups including those with particular ethnic backgrounds, first-generation university students, and international students, for example ‘Diversi-tees’ at Teesside University and ‘Outlook’ in the Merseyside area (a great program but no longer in operation due to lack of funding). Mentoring programs are known to be highly effective in equipping students for life after graduation, and while the mainstream programs are open to students with disabilities, very few seem to take up the offer. Nor are they particularly keen, perhaps because of the extra workload involved.
3.5 UK Support for Professionals Working with Students with Disabilities

The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) is the professional association for HE careers advisors and others who provide careers and employability services to current students and graduates. One of AGCAS’s aims is to ‘promote excellence and innovation, equality of opportunity and continuous quality improvement in Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in Higher Education’. The Disability Task Group (DTG) was set up within AGCAS to provide training and information to AGCAS members and the Disability Development Network (DDN).

The DTG has seven elected committee members, who meet twice a year (travel costs covered by AGCAS), and it provides one training event per year. It also produces the annual Disabled Graduate Destination report (*What Happens Next? A Report on the First Destinations of Disabled Graduates*, 2011) for universities and politicians, as benchmark information.

At least three disability graduate recruitment consultants exist in the United Kingdom; they focus on graduate recruitment employer practices, university training and/or student employability skills development. They are ideally looking for academically gifted graduates with a first or a 2.1 (equivalent to a High Distinction or a Distinction in all subjects in Australia). Their clients tend to be the large companies, often London based. These companies are also likely to be members of the Employers’ Forum on Disabilities (EFD). EFD is the UK version of the Australian Network on Disabilities (AND) and the two organisations cooperate extensively.

Helen Cooke, founder of My Plus Consulting, is an HR professional disability consultant who helps organisations understand and address issues concerning the employment of disabled graduates, with a focus on leveraging the potential that exists within this cohort. Helen provides assistance in tailoring solutions concerning graduate recruitment, including attraction, recruitment, retention and development of graduates with disabilities.

EmployAbility is a not-for-profit organisation that was founded in 2006 by Tab Ahmad ([www.employ-ability.org.uk/](http://www.employ-ability.org.uk/)). It provides employment opportunities and information for students and graduates with disabilities, employers and university staff working with disabled students.

Blind in Business is also a not-for-profit organisation, which provides services to blind and partially sighted students and graduates to identify and achieve their ambitions, as well as advice and training to employers and schools.

The Association for Higher Education Access & Disability (AHEAD) based in Ireland is an independent not-for-profit organisation promoting full access to, and participation in, further and higher education for students with disabilities to enhance their employment prospects on graduation. Their website ([www.ahead.ie](http://www.ahead.ie)) provides a great deal of useful information for students and their parents, employers and careers advisors working with people with disabilities.

The National Bureau for Students with Disabilities (SKILL) is now defunct, but its website still exists and it has a wealth of information about disability employment issues ([www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)).
4 UK Observations, Trends and Best Practice

4.1 UK Issues for Students with Disabilities

In the United Kingdom, while they are in secondary education, a disabled student’s school takes responsibility for managing all adjustments. Transition of students with disabilities into university is good, and life at university is generally well managed; however, transition between university and employment needs improvement.

Disability support officers often facilitate the process into and through university, providing advice on how to apply for funding, where the nearest Assessment Centre is located and, subsequently, ensuring all adjustments are organised, as well as providing other assistance which will help the students to complete their course and enjoy their time at university. In order to qualify for funding, it is up to the student to disclose their condition and apply for an allowance. In the UK, the disability student allowance is provided to the individual. The university providing resources can then charge against the individual’s allowance. This provides more choice and control to the individual, as well as ensuring there is no benefit to the university in taking fewer students with disabilities. In Australia, funding for disabled students is given to the university as a lump sum, not assigned to the individual; however, it appears, the university has considerable outlay for diversity, which is not fully recoverable from the Government. Consequently, there appears to be less incentive to admit more students with disabilities in Australia.

The responsibility for making courses inclusive in the UK rests with the learning and teaching and/or curriculum development areas. Some universities, for example Leeds Metropolitan University, are doing inclusiveness much better than others (see section 3.3). It has been suggested that full inclusivity of courses has now been adopted in the United States of America, thus minimising adaption issues for diverse students and potentially reducing costs in the long term.

Transition between university and employment in the UK is highly unsatisfactory. After completion, none of the government–university support services that students were accessing are available. Only when students find a job will funding be provided. Funding for any reasonable adjustment is provided through the government-funded Access to Work scheme (equivalent to Australia’s Job Access). This is very similar to the situation in Australia.

In an ideal world, there is no gap between graduation and a job. Good students have taken in all the employability skills information available, done work placement/graduate internships and applied for and been offered a job before they graduate. In reality, students with disabilities, as well as some able-bodied students, may be struggling to complete their course and focus all their energies on passing their degree, rather than learning employability skills through mentoring, volunteering, skills awards, part-time work, work placement or graduate internships. As a result, they complete their degree and then begin to focus on getting a job.

The skills and experiences of students with disabilities often don’t look so good on paper. The skills they have developed coping with their impairments, however, are often impressive and should not be underestimated by potential employers.

Embedding employability skills development within the curriculum is essential for students with disabilities who would otherwise avoid undertaking any extra-curricular activities to further enhance these skills.
Many students with disabilities also suffer a lack of confidence and experience in the world of work and therefore avoid these opportunities to gain employability skills. Mentoring has been shown to help in both these areas.

4.2 Mentoring

Universities are becoming more competitive, fees are increasing and students are demanding more value for money. Equally, the student population is becoming more diverse, even for the ‘national’ group of universities in the UK. Mentoring programs can increase a student’s likely employment, which improves the employment figures of the university. Mentoring is particularly beneficial to students with disabilities.

Mentoring involves a mentor from a company, usually in the student’s preferred field of work, agreeing to meet with the mentee from 4–8 times over 6–12 months. There is considerable effort in managing the matching of the mentor/mentee and guidance for both about what the program is and isn’t designed to do.

Mentoring programs have been developed and run for all students, as well as for some diversity groups, including ethnic, first-generation and international students. These programs are often open to disabled students, but very few disabled students seem to take up the options.

There are three challenges to running a mentoring program for students with disabilities: finding a mentor, finding mentees (as stated earlier, students with disabilities often lack confidence and do not put themselves forward, or else they do not understand the benefits), and finding and funding a program manager.

Furthermore, employers may need help in gaining the disability confidence necessary to participate in mentoring programs.

Local universities rely on forging relationships with local companies in the UK for mentoring programs to flourish. Involving local SMEs is very important because they represent 80% or more of businesses, but ensuring their involvement can be difficult. One model in operation is the LEADER model (Local Employers Acting on Diversity, Equality and Race) that is used by Southampton Solent University. LEADER taps into the SME group and some of the larger local companies. Fundamentally, it helps these companies to keep abreast of issues regarding diversity and how these may impact their businesses. Often, universities are one of the biggest employers in the area and have significant dealings with small local companies. LEADER was initially chaired by the university, but is now chaired by locally based companies. It holds regular meetings, supplemented by a half-day conference each year, bringing all interested parties together, with outside speakers on a chosen theme. LEADER has an experienced advocate in Hilary Wiseman, Wiseman Consultants (ex HSBC).

Mentoring programs also assist students to overcome the fear of stigma or prejudice. Students who have disclosed their disability at university will already have overcome this to an extent, but new fears often arise when it comes to disclosing a disability to a potential employer. A mentoring experience provides an opportunity to discuss one’s disability in a safe setting, to ask questions and to test assumptions about the workplace and how one will be received, as well as uncovering relevant information about career interest areas. The mentoring experience can help to determine whether disclosure is wanted, necessary or appropriate, especially if the disability is not visible.

The main benefits to the mentee are developing self-confidence and knowledge of a field of interest; however, engaging a student with a disability when they are focused on completing
their degree (which can be very challenging when dealing the additional challenges of a disability) is difficult. It is probable that the encouragement of disability support workers has been pivotal in encouraging students with disabilities to engage in mentoring programs.

4.3 Champions for Students with Disabilities

Research by Helen Cooke has shown that 22% of disabled students would listen to a careers advisor, but 91% would rather listen to their disability support advisor. This highlights the trust students with disabilities give to disability support officers, with whom they often develop a good relationship compared with careers advisors whom they rarely see. More effective services may be provided through forging close links between careers advisors and disability support officers who can combine their expertise.

4.4 Jobs on Campus

Universities are big employers, so facilitating part-time jobs is feasible and would be a great experience for students towards developing employability skills. Universities have and can use a variety of hardware and software programs to help with this: ‘Unitemps’ (www.unitemps.co.uk) and ‘job shop’ (www.jobshopuk.com), and some universities have developed their own. Jobs for students with disabilities should also be specifically identified as a job for a student with a disability.

4.5 Tools and Resources

UK universities have an incredible resource in JISC Techdis, part of the HE Academy. JISC Techdis supports institutions in their implementation of inclusive software (or assistive software). JISC Techdis has already worked with Leeds Metropolitan University to develop policy about inclusive teaching and an implementation plan.

A key tool in the development of disability practice for careers services in the UK is a web-based searchable resource ‘usemyability.org’. This was completed in 2011 as a project funded by National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) called ‘Employability and Disability’, led by the Centre for Inclusive Support at the University of Worcester. The site can be used by any students, university staff and employers to assist in the transition between university and the workplace.
5 Comparison of UK vs. Australia Student Facts

These figures have been included to provide a very general comparison of the HE environment for students with disabilities in the United Kingdom and Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>62.2 million</td>
<td>22.3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of students at university</td>
<td>2.5 million</td>
<td>1.1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates (bachelor degree) per year</td>
<td>300,000 (260,000 domestic)</td>
<td>160,000 (115,000 domestic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of universities</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion declared disabled</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4–5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion declared disabled 10 years ago</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3–4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government target % of those aged 25–34 years, with a bachelor degree by 2020</td>
<td>50% (43% in 2010)</td>
<td>40% (29% in 2008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from AGCAS, NAGCAS, DEEWR, HESA and Bradley Report, 2008.
6 Recommendations for Australia

In an ideal world, there is no gap between graduation and a job—while at university, students develop sound employability skills and undertake relevant work placements or internships. Before completing their course, they have applied for and been offered a position in the workforce.

This seamless transfer from university to work is not a reality for many students, whether able-bodied or disabled. Managing a disability can be time-consuming and tiring, so the tendency for students with disabilities is to focus on completing their degree rather than learning employability skills and getting a job. Related to this is a lack of confidence in matters of the world of work.

There is a real need for more active, quality and targeted support for students with disabilities during their time at university and in the year following graduation. The 19 recommendations that follow are based on my observations and ideas generated during the trip and are not intended to be exhaustive; some of these will be no doubt already be under way in Australia. The first 14 recommendations are for universities and the last five are for DEEWR.

6.1 Recommendations for Universities

6.1.1 Collaborate in the provision of programs for diversity groups

In the United Kingdom, competition for student enrolment between universities is growing. In Australia, it is also growing, particularly with, potentially, a My University website which could show graduate destination and employment data.

However, with relatively small numbers of students in diversity groups, it is simply not effective to operate institutionally based programs due to the labour-intensive nature of the work; that is, sourcing and training mentors and mentees, and managing the programs. If the competitive environment can be eliminated or reduced for equity groups, so that universities do not compete openly, they could then work together by ‘ring-fencing’ students from diversity/equity groups. This will allow universities to provide mentoring programs more efficiently and cost effectively. As well as sharing of the costs of a program manager, this creates a larger pool of potential mentors and mentees.

Initiatives like the recent diversity forum, hosted by Monash University in 2011, but open to all Melbourne students, is a good example of what can be achieved. This was based on a similar initiative started in New South Wales.

6.1.2 Tailor current mentoring programs to students with disabilities

Mentoring programs in the UK were originally developed to assist diversity or equity groups, whether race, age or disability. UK universities have opened them up to all students; however, recent funding cuts have caused the closure of some of the programs.

It is acknowledged that mentoring provides huge benefits with regard to building confidence and industry knowledge for mentees, and may even be sufficient to allow them to apply for jobs they wouldn’t previously have considered. Mentors and the organisations in which they work also benefit.

In Australia, many universities have developed mainstream mentoring programs that could be extended to students with disabilities.
In Australia, the WAM (Willing and Able Mentoring) program for students with disabilities has been developed by Kevin Murfitt at Deakin University, but is open to all universities. It has grown over the last 10 years and is now used by seven universities in Melbourne and two in Sydney. It currently costs $1000/student, so generally the universities involved fund no more than ten places.

An estimate indicates that there may be as many as 100 students with disabilities per year at each university on average. Ten places a year is not enough for such a valuable resource. A more realistic target would be at least 50% of students with disabilities participating in a mentoring program, but this can only achieved with reduced or subsidised costs, or an alternative source of mentors.

Students with disabilities seem reluctant to join the mentoring program. One of the issues, as in the UK, is that students with disabilities often don’t have time for extra- and co-curricular events, as they need all the time to focus on completing their course and then say ‘Now, I’ll find a job’. This needs further investigation before extra places are generated.

6.1.3 Extend mentoring and job search support for 12 months after students have graduated

Universities should also consider offering the program to students in the 12 months after graduation. This would not only minimise the isolation felt by many of these students who have not found work but also increase their exposure to the world of work and reduce the risk of them remaining unemployed in the long term.

Intensive job search support should also be provided for disabled graduates for the 12 months following the completion of their course.

6.1.4 Structure disability support services and careers services together

Universities should consider aligning disability support services and careers services so that they are physically and organisationally closer together, potentially under student services or student experience (reflecting the trend towards the increasing requirement for academics to enhance the student experience). Ideally, services such as counselling, volunteering, mentoring, sport and recreation, would all be co-located. Benefits include simplifying cross-referrals and the cross-fertilisation of ideas.

6.1.5 Careers departments consider changes to improve service to students with disabilities

If not already being implemented, careers departments should consider:

a) Nominating one of the generalist careers advisors as the focal point person for communication on students with disabilities; this individual could also be responsible for improving service, developing offerings and organising training, liaising with and developing a good relationship with the Disability Support Unit.

b) Approving training for generalist careers advisors on disability awareness/creating confidence in working with students with disabilities.

6.1.6 Support a UTAS proposal to DEEWR for developing and managing two websites, one for careers advisors and one for inclusive course design for academics

a) Support a DEEWR funding proposal for a website to assist careers advisors when they work with students with disabilities. The funding will cover the development and maintenance of a ‘usemyability.org’ cloned website, tailored to the Australian environment.

b) Support a DEEWR funding proposal for a website to assist development of inclusive course design for academics and course designers. University of Tasmania
UTAS has already developed an initial Creating Accessible Teaching Service (CATS) tool, which would help students with disabilities, but more work is required.

6.1.7 Further develop relationships with local employers/SMEs to increase numbers of possible mentors

The mentoring programs tend to find their mentors directly and through the larger companies, often through the Business Council of Australia (BCA) or AND (Australian Network on Disabilities). The pool of potential mentors is limited, and tapping into small and medium-sized enterprises is essential. Universities can also leverage alumni networks and university suppliers. The LEADER program (Local Employers Acting on Diversity, Equality and Race) at Southampton Solent University in partnership with local employers/SME network provides a good model for launching mentoring programs. A similar program might be explored through ACCI or the other state Chambers of Commerce.

A recent successful project building SME relationships has been carried out at Griffiths University in Queensland.

6.1.8 Target students with disabilities through job databases

Universities have access to a range of in-house and external web-based job databases. As an extension of this service, which already operates in careers departments, employers who are planning to recruit students with disabilities could be identified.

6.1.9 Develop part-time, casual and work integrated learning (WIL) jobs at universities for all students, including students with disabilities

Universities are big employers, so the development of a pool of part-time, casual and WIL jobs on campus is feasible. Allocating a percentage of these to students with disabilities would facilitate the development of employability skills and an understanding of workplace culture in an accessible and potentially less threatening environment for these students.

6.1.10 Develop a university skills award which is fully accessible and portable

Universities should consider developing a skills award system to encourage involvement from students in part-time and volunteer work (on- or off-campus), or other activities that develop employability skills. The award needs to be accessible and portable, such that a written version can be attached or given with the degree transcript.

6.1.11 Further develop university diversity and inclusiveness policy

Australian universities are required by legislation to have a diversity and inclusiveness policy. This should be made more robust, effective and all-encompassing, for students and staff.

Some UK universities have established an overall objective to promote diversity and inclusiveness, and a committee to deliver change by creating a focus and structure around the existing hierarchy; at the same time, these measures are helping to create cultural change in each faculty or support service.

From a strategic cost management point of view, it makes sense in the long term to move in this direction. More inclusive courses will reduce the costs of diversity and create an inclusive environment.

6.1.12 Continue to embed employability skills in the curriculum

In the UK, universities are embedding employability skills development in the curriculum. This is already occurring in Australia and should continue as it will ensure faculties and
teaching staff take an active interest in the employability skills development of their students, along with the careers department. This will help students with disabilities as they will receive employability skills training as part of the curriculum, which they may not otherwise have made time to acquire.

6.1.13 Careers departments use all available UK tools
There are some great tools and resources available on UK websites that could be used in Australia. These include the websites of usemyability.org, AHEAD (www.ahead.ie) and SKILL (www.skill.org.uk).

Many Australian universities have inclusivity support departments to help academics develop more inclusive courses. Inclusiveness policy and tools are available from JISC Techdis, part of the HE Academy in the UK.

6.1.14 Develop and maintain NAGCAS interest group on students with disabilities (already initiated)
AGCAS in the UK has developed task groups with the many stakeholders to address issues and generate new ideas. AGCAS already has a task group that allows members to discuss, collect and share information about disabilities. NAGCAS is now doing the same. At the NAGCAS conference last year, the concept of special interest groups was initiated and this year NAGCAS is continuing and expanding the concept.

6.2 Recommendations for DEEWR

6.2.1 Introduce an equivalent to the ‘2 tick’ accreditation for disability employment
DEEWR should consider adopting a disability employment awards system for organisations, similar to the ‘2 tick’ system in the UK as offered by the Department of Work and Pensions and managed through Jobcentre Plus (equivalent to our DESs).

6.2.2 Introduce a funding model similar to the UK disabled student allowance
The UK disabled student allowance system allocates funding to individual students, not to the university. This should be considered in Australia. This funding mechanism would encourage universities to accept more students with disabilities, as these students would bring the allowance with them. This supports the ‘choice’ recommendation in Price Waterhouse’s recent report recommending the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). It also supports the concept suggested in the Bradley Report that ‘these funds will follow the student, and not be allocated to the institution’.

6.2.3 Increase DEEWR spending to facilitate employment of graduates with disabilities
All the funding for improved disability employment seems to go to DESs. Further research is required to understand the complexities. DESs have a focus on non-graduate employment, as that is the way they are structured. Current government funding levels for DESs only support the hiring of employment consultants for non-graduate positions. Separate extra funding needs to be established which allows hiring of graduate orientated employment consultants. A recent Australian of Human Resources Institute (AHRI) survey of members highlighted that employers are not experienced in using or even knew about DESs. Furthermore, companies wanted to recruit disabled graduates for their graduate schemes, but were finding it difficult. Potentially, DESs, which have an established system of support, could add a graduate recruitment program, if additional funding were available. Only one DES would be
required per major city/state, and support through the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator (NDRC) could facilitate liaison with companies. Essentially, the DES in the city/state would act as a one-stop shop for linking universities and students with companies hoping to recruit students with disabilities.

6.2.4 Conduct further research to obtain the destination statistics of students with disabilities
DEEWR needs to report graduate destination statistics of disabled graduates by general type of disability. The UK figures show that, on average, disabled students are only slightly behind able-bodied graduates, but certain disability types such as mobility limited and those with mental health issues are significantly disadvantaged. Without the figures, it is very difficult to develop good policy.

This could be part of another DEEWR quality initiative Review of the Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) being consulted on in early 2012.

6.2.5 Undertake further research to understand the difference between declared disability figures at university in the UK and Australia
Students with a declared disability represent between 4% and 5% of the Australian university population, and this number has only grown by 1% in the last 10 years. In the same timeframe the UK’s figures have doubled to 10%. Why is there such a discrepancy between the UK and Australia?

Potentially, an initiative for students with disabilities could be undertaken, similar to the planned DEEWR quality initiative for 2012, Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.
7 Conclusion

The United Kingdom already has some good supports, great tools and resources to assist students with disabilities attending university with access to careers advice. The British Government Higher Education White Paper has heralded significant changes to the sector and offers both scope and challenges for those working with diverse groups. There is still a long way to go for fully inclusive practice, however. Australia faces similar issues and can benefit enormously from advancements in the UK.

The recommendations are only the starting point; the implementation will be key. Widespread communication of the report will be important, with dissemination of the recommendations not only through organisations such as NAGCAS, CDAA, NDCO and ADDE, but also to politicians, DEEWR, the NDRC and DEA, AHRI and other influencers involved in the disability employment field. This will be critical.
APPENDICES

A. Itinerary

Week 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Travelled to Nottingham and attended AGCAS session for international delegates about Nottingham and the UK context</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13–15</td>
<td>Attended AGCAS 2011 conference at Nottingham University</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Attended workshop on how EmployAbility (a private disability graduate recruitment consultancy owned by Tab Ahmed) can help both careers advisors and students with disabilities apply for and get jobs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Met Peter Kay (Careers Advisor with a disability focus) from Nottingham University regarding careers advice for Asperger’s sufferers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Met Peter Smith (Careers Advisor) from Nottingham Trent regarding programs for students with disabilities</td>
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Week 2

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<tr>
<th>Month</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>19 (am)</td>
<td>Met Val Chapman (Director) from Worcester University regarding disability content web sites and inclusivity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19 (pm)</td>
<td>Met Phil Gravestock (Head of Learning Technology) from University of Gloucester regarding inclusive field trips</td>
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<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Met Kate Waugh (Disability Support Manager (DSM)), Katie Holmes (Careers Advisor) and Jo Fair (Head of Careers) at Birmingham City University.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Attended Helen Cooke’s Disability Café meeting in London with 15 employers/graduate recruiters</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 am</td>
<td>Met Helen Cooke, AGR/EDF (Disability Graduate Recruitment Advisor) regarding employers and employment of graduates with disability</td>
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<td></td>
<td>22 pm</td>
<td>Met Bryan Jones (Head of Disability Services) and Julian Rhys-Williams (Head of Careers) at Middlesex University</td>
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### Week 3

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<th>Month</th>
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| September | 26 (am) | Met representatives Michael Kenny, Robin Spruell and Dan Mitchell from Blind in Business  
Met Vicki Chinn from London School of Economics (LSE) |
|         | 26 (pm) | Met Andy Kneen, HR Advisor and Head of Disability Movement at Shell UK  
Met Tracy Abbott from the Employers’ Forum on Disability (EFD) |
|         | 27 (am) | Met Karen Ferrett (Careers Advisor) and Pam Bairstow (DSM) at Oxford Brookes University |
|         | 27 (pm) | Met Peter Quinn (Head of Disability Advisory Service) at Oxford University |
|         | 28     | Attended a skills workshop for graduates with disabilities run by EmployAbility |
|         | 29     | Met Catherine Klimes (Head of Careers) and several other staff members involved with assisting disabled students to develop employability skills at Northampton University |
|         | 30 (am) | Met Alison McHale (Careers Advisor with focal point responsibility for disabilities), Claire Gandy (Head of Student Services), Victoria Jackson (Head of Disability), Manuel Madriaga (Senior Lecturer, Research and Evaluation) at Sheffield Hallam University |
|         | 30 (pm) | Met Hilary Whorral (Careers Advisor with focal point responsibility for disabilities, and DTG member) and Clare Shanks (Disability Coordinator) at Sheffield University |

### Week 4

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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Met Sue Stockwell (Careers Advisor with focal responsibility for disabilities, Jill Berry (Disability Services Manager), Steve Scott-Marshall (Senior Counsellor) and Bill Greenwood (Senior Careers Advisor) at Teesside University</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4 (am)</td>
<td>Met Tony Payne (Head of Student Experience at York St John University (formerly Head of Careers Service at Deakin, Australia and Careers Advisor at University of Tasmania)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4 (pm)</td>
<td>Met Simon Ball and Sal Cooke at JISC Techdis at HE Academy, York, Software for inclusiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Meeting Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Met Liz Bradley (Careers Advisor with focal point responsibility for disabilities, and new DTG member), Lynne Barnes (Deaf Studies), Catherine Badminton (Principal Disability Advisor), Lesley Cookson (Disability Assessor), Majorie Smith (Senior Disability Advisor), Fiona Valentine (Support Worker Coordinator), Julia Stickley (Business Support Coordinator) at University of Central Lancashire (Uclan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Met Sue Hepworth (Senior Careers Adviser with focal point responsibility for disabilities, and DTG member) at Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, near Liverpool</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 (am)</td>
<td>Met Monica Matsoic (Careers Adviser with previous responsibility for disabled, and ex chairman of DTG) and Anna Charles-Jones (Learner Development Disability Support) at Manchester Metropolitan University</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 (am)</td>
<td>Met Sarah Kite and Laura Demellweek from Graduate Prospects, Manchester</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 (am)</td>
<td>Met Delia Goodwin (Careers Adviser with responsibility for disabled) at Manchester University</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 (pm)</td>
<td>Met Karen Lennox (Head of Careers) at Wrexham/Glyndwr University, Wales</td>
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<td><strong>Week 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Met Jenny Ahren (Careers Adviser with responsibility for disabled) at University of West England, and DTG member</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Met John Hillsden (Head of Learning) and Mark Lintern (Head of Careers and Employability Service) at Plymouth University</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 (am)</td>
<td>Met Kate Boyes (Careers Adviser with responsibility for disabled students), Andrea Peoples (Head of Disability Services – Access Solent) and Phil Gibson (Head of Student Services) at Southampton Solent University</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 (pm)</td>
<td>Met Paul Barnes (Careers Advisor with focal point responsibility for students with disabilities, and current Chairman of the AGCAS DTG) at Portsmouth University</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 (pm)</td>
<td>Met Dr Eddie Tunnah, ex Roehampton University, AGCAS Disability Task Group member and co-writer of <em>What Happens Next? A Report on the First Destinations of Disabled Graduates</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>13–14</td>
<td>Consolidated notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Return to Melbourne</td>
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B. Resources and References


AHEAD, Association of Higher Education Access & Disability (www.ahead.ie)

Blind in Business http://www.blindinbusiness.co.uk/


EmployAbility, a private disability graduate recruitment consultancy owned by Tab Ahmed. http://www.employ-ability.org.uk/

Employers’ Forum on Disability (EFD) http://wwwefd.org.uk/ 

job shop http://www.jobshopuk.com

JISC Techdis (which supports inclusivity through policy and practice assistance to the HE Sector on software/assistive technology) http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk

My+ Consulting, Helen Cooke’s company website http://www.myplusconsulting.com


SKILL, National Bureau for Students with Disabilities (www.skill.org.uk).

The Disability Café http://www.disability-cafe.com/

unitemps http://www.unitemps.co.


Worcester University disability services and links to resources
http://www.worcester.ac.uk/student-services/disability-and-dyslexia.htm

Worcester University CILS, engaged in several broad areas of work on inclusive learning and teaching, mainly in the area of disability, http://www.worcester.ac.uk/discover/centre-for-inclusive-learning-support.html
C. Acronyms

AAGE: Australian Association of Graduate Employers
ACCI: Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
AGCAS: Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (UK based)
AGR: Association of Graduate Recruiters (UK based)
AHEAD: Association of Higher Education Access & Disability (Ireland based)
AHRI: Australian Human Resources Institute
AND: Australian Network on Disabilities
BCA: Business Council of Australia
CDAA: Career Development Association of Australia
DDN: Disability Development Network (part of AGCAS, UK based)
DEA: Disability Employment Australia
DES: Disability Employment Services
DEEWR: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DWP: Department of Work and Pensions (UK based)
DTG: Disability Task Group (part of AGCAS, UK based)
EFD: Employers’ Forum on Disability (UK based)
HE: higher education
HESA: Higher Education Statistics Agency (UK based)
LEADER: Local Employers Acting on Diversity, Equality and Race (UK based)
NAGCAS: National Association of Graduate Career Advisory Services
NDCO: National Disability Coordination Officer Program
NDRC: National Disability Recruitment Coordinator
NTFS: National Teaching Fellowship Scheme
OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SKILL: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities (UK based)
SME: small and medium-sized enterprise
UTAS: University of Tasmania
VECCI: Victorian Employers’ Chamber of Commerce and Industry
WIL: Work Integrated Learning