Written response to the recommendations from Dundee College

**Introduction**

1. Dundee College welcomes the opportunity to respond to this important report.

2. The undernoted summary is a “pen-picture” of developments within Dundee College, covering the period 2002 to date, with specific reference to Disability.

**Background**

3. In 2002, Dundee College formed a Working Group with cross-college membership and representation to further address Disability issues, in the light of then current and impending legislation.

4. Initially, considerable investigative work was undertaken and a number of papers and reports were compiled to summarise the College’s status with regard to:
   - access to information, advice and support in gaining entry to Dundee College
   - audit and property survey of Dundee College in relation to the campus and facilities
   - identification of the needs of students and mechanisms and support to ensure that these students were being fully integrated into the learning experience
   - awareness raising initiatives for staff, students and other stakeholders
   - review and impact assessment of existing policies and procedures

5. The subsequent Action Plans have been prioritised and have informed developments at Dundee College, in successive years.

**Equality Group**

6. In recognition of other equally important developments, Dundee College then formed an Equality Group. This Group also had wide-ranging membership and representation and it co-ordinated the Sub Groups of Disability, Race Relations and Gender.

7. In 2003, Dundee College’s Equality Policy was approved by the Board of Management.

8. This Group has overseen the work of the three Sub Groups, to date, and in December 2007, following a review that has been undertaken by the Principal, the Equality Group will be designated as one of Dundee College’s Strategic Groups.
Equal Opportunities Committee’s Report

9 Dundee College has studied the report and focused on the recommendations.

10 This focus has informed the prioritisation of actions within Dundee College – taking account of other Sector guidance issued by the Association of Scotland’s Colleges (ASC), Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Equality Forward.

Implementation of Recommendations at Dundee College

11 Dundee College has responded (and will continue to do so) to both staff and students disability needs in a proactive way.

12 A Disability Equality Scheme was approved by the Board of Management and published in December 2006.

13 A Disability Action Plan has been compiled and will be reviewed in accordance with the legislation.

14 During the past five years, Dundee College has experienced an approximate 300% increase in the number of students who have been assessed and are in receipt of some form of support. The range in types of support are extensive and are tailored to meet the individual students’ needs.

15 Staff at Dundee College are aware of the Disability Equality Scheme and are committed to this.

16 Dundee College has integrated self-evaluation into all its operational planning activities. This will include regular evaluation of issues related to Equality.

17 Dundee College has developed key partnerships in relation to Equality. These include Dundee City Council – Social Work Department and also the Education Directorate. Arrangements that have been created for school pupils attending Dundee College have been noted as good practice (Scottish Funding Council).

18 Specific Responses to Recommendations in Relation to Lifelong Learning

We have read with particular interest the recommendations relating to Lifelong Learning and agree with them all. The recommendations as they relate to Dundee College have been agreed or are being addressed through our Disability Equality Duty Action Plan. Below are some detailed observations in relation to specific recommendations.
18.1 Recommendations 36-39

We fully endorse these in particular that service provision for the disabled features at strategic level and that more work is done to evaluate the impact of strategy across the sector which involves the learners themselves and that good practice is shared across the sectors.

18.2 Recommendations 41-42

It is good to see strong recommendations regarding Partnership Matters. We have found this document invaluable in setting up strategic and operational partnerships with key agencies involved in supporting students. This has not been an easy task and would suggest that work is done across the college sector to gauge the success of it, the difficulties encountered and ideas/practice to support others wishing to adopt this approach.

18.3 Recommendations 45-50

We could not agree more with these recommendations regarding Careers Guidance. We have found the range, quality and expertise available to disabled students to be relatively poor. For the majority of these students good careers advice supported by pro-active links to employers is crucial in helping them achieve their goals. We would argue for specific funding to be allocated to address this through a partnership approach between colleges, universities, Careers Scotland, relevant support agencies involved in employability stakeholders and employers.

With particular reference to Recommendation 49, Dundee College has been involved in creating a multi-agency Transitions Group which has been identified as good practice: it co-ordinates and ensures appropriate processes and support are in place to facilitate seamless and stress free transfer for young people from school to post school provision. We would be delighted to share this development.

18.4 Recommendation 51

We fully endorse this as requesting student payments is an unacceptable barrier to learning.

18.5 Recommendation 52

We have recognised the importance of ‘early start’ and familiarisation programmes as critical to student success. It can take a long time for students with additional support needs to become totally integrated into learning provision. This requires a
high degree of flexibility in the part of the provider but also requires flexibility in the part of the student funders.

18.6 Recommendation 54

We fully concur with this. Up-to-date information is required on appropriate career choices. (See response to Recommendations 45-50).

Given the complexity of working with these students it is essential that staff involved are appropriately trained to a high standard, BRITE meets part of this need but more is required. We suggest the model of the Certificate in Adult Guidance is examined as an approach.

18.7 Recommendation 56

There is a dearth of qualified specialist support staff available in these fields. There needs to be a commitment to provide this training to interested people wishing to pursue careers in these fields.

18.8 Recommendation 57

We welcome the recommendation that DSA or an alternative apply uniformly across the tertiary sector. The current ASNLA provision for non-advanced students is not comparable with DSA and does not meet the cost of appropriate support provision. However we also suggest that an evaluation of DSA is conducted to gauge its impact and effectiveness as part of considering a different approach as suggested in Recommendation 63.

18.9 Recommendations 64-65

‘Pretendy Courses’ are an issue. Some agencies are seeing colleges as alternative day care centres as there is a shortage of this type of community provision. It needs to be made transparent that colleges support lifelong learning. Also that all vocational courses are responsive to disabled students needs and where appropriate discrete tailored provision for the specific groups can be negotiated where there is an educational benefit to the learners.

18.10 Recommendation 66-67

We believe in principle that colleges should be as inclusive as possible. But, realistically can colleges respond successfully to students with very complex needs? These students will have enjoyed the benefits of specialist provision during their school years. Why should this stop at the school leaving age? There is
a serious question as to whether these students could cope in a college environment. If we go down this road the resource implications require to be addressed.

**Summations**

19 The report “Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities” provides a comprehensive and challenging range of recommendations.

20 Dundee College has an inclusiveness agenda and will continue to address all aspects of Equality.

**References**

21 Any copies of the Dundee College documentation referenced to in this paper can be obtained either by:

(1) using the College website: [www.dundeecollege.ac.uk](http://www.dundeecollege.ac.uk)

(2) making a request: [foi@dundeecoll.ac.uk](mailto:foi@dundeecoll.ac.uk)

Dundee College
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