ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Assistive Technology is hardware and software, which has been designed to improve the ability of the user to access computers or study more independently. The University provides some forms of assistive hardware and software in its Student Computing Centres to support accessibility. These are detailed below.

In addition, Students with disabilities in Higher Education, who are in receipt of **Disabled Students' Allowance** can be recommended and provided funding to purchase equipment that enhances their independent study.

**Please note:** funded support through Disabled Student’s Allowance is not provided by the University but, Disability Services can support you to complete your application.

Go to: [**Disabled Students Allowance**](http://www.studentfinanceni.co.uk/portal/page?_pageid=54,1268397&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)  for further information on eligibility and the types of funded support available to students with disabilities and long term conditions.

The following are some examples of assistive technology, which you may find useful:

Software

Hardware

Voice recognition software

Large Monitors

Reading and Writing Tools

CCTVs

Scanning and Reading Software

Ergonomic keyboards

Screen Reading Software

Scanners

Screen Magnification Software

Anti-glare screens

Mind Mapping Software

Trackerballs

Ergonomic Furniture

Software

Voice recognition software

(e.g. IBM ViaVoice, Dragon Naturally Speaking)

Voice recognition systems are an alternative to standard computer input. They enable individuals with dyslexia, visual impairment or manual dexterity difficulties to dictate a document to the computer as an alternative to using the keyboard and mouse. Consistent speech patterns are required. VR systems need a powerful computer or laptop.

Reading and Writing Tools

(TextHelp: Read and Write Gold Software - 10 licences available in all SCCs)

Read & Write 9 GOLD is a literacy support tool designed to assist users of all ages who require extra assistance when reading or composing text. The software provides continuity by supporting users throughout education from primary through to tertiary level and into the workplace.

Read & Write GOLD is a discreet integrated solution comprised of many features designed to assist students with their reading and writing. Functions include text-to-speech, phonetic spell checker, word prediction, speaking dictionary and a scanning facility.

Scanning and Reading Software

(Kurzweil 3000 - 5 licences available in the Main Library)

Kurzweil 3000 is an alternative to Texthelp Read and Write. Kurzweil 3000 is a comprehensive reading, writing and learning software solution for students with reading difficulties and learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, attention deficit disorder or those who are English Language Learners.

Screen Magnification Software

(ZoomText Magnifier Reader - 20 licences available in all SCCs)

Zoom Text Magnifier/Reader allows users with a visual impairment to access a PC through screen magnification and voice synthesizer feedback. The software enables users to see and hear what they are doing in all PC applications; Zoom Text is able to read documents, web pages and email - which the user is able to listen to using headphones or the computer's speakers.

Mind Mapping Software

(MindView Version 4 - 20 licences available in all SCCs)

MindView is a visual learning and mind mapping software tool. It is most widely used for building graphic organisers, such as concept maps, mind maps, idea maps, diagrams and webs.

The software is effective in developing mind maps. A mind map is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks, or other items linked to and arranged around a central key word or idea. Mind maps are used to generate, visualise, structure, and classify ideas, and as an aid in study, organisation, problem solving, decision making, and writing.

Hardware

Large Monitors

(17" - 21")

Are an important equipment item for visually impaired users. As mentioned above, this is particularly important if someone is using screen magnification software, as it will ensure a larger proportion of information can be viewed on screen at any one time.

CCTVs

Provide enlargement for paper based text and are invaluable to users who wish to read handouts or use books without the need for enlargement by photocopying. Using CCTVs is often essential for visually impaired library users as it allows them to skim text and select relevant sections, which they may wish to enlarge by photocopying later. This allows much more independent research and saves considerable expense in wasted copies.

Ergonomic keyboards

Are keyboards, which are specially designed and shaped. Ergonomic keyboards have altered layouts. Some features include two-way tilts, wrist rests and split angle key layouts, and in some cases the whole shape and layout of the keyboard has been radically altered. Single-handed models are also available. The keyboards are designed specifically to reduce strains, movements, twists and tensions and thus reduce the pain and effort of typing. They are most suitable for students with dexterity difficulties.

Scanners

When used in conjunction with read-back software as mentioned above, are invaluable for any user who experiences reading difficulties for whatever reason.

Trackerballs

Are an alternative means of accessing mouse controls. They are useful for people who have fine motor control difficulties and those who find it difficult controlling a standard mouse.

Ergonomic Furniture

Such as tables and chairs which are height adjustable to suit the specific posture and support needs of individuals to enable them to operate a computer and study for longer periods of time.

Anti-glare screens

Are useful for people who suffer from visual disturbances or epilepsy, cutting down on reflections and screen glare.