

Equality NEWS

A publication of the DARE-Learning project

Issue 2 (3)/2013

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From the editor

I would like to say that often there is talk of the „issue” of persons with disabilities, and yet these people constitute an opportunity and potential rather than a problem. (...) I believe universities could create a certain sense of new normality. That means it is normal to have disabled friends, students, or lecturers. It is normal that they join us in academic life, that we accept limitations of others knowing that one day they can be ours. That we understand how much persons with disabilities can contribute to social life.

Professor Irena Lipowicz
The Polish Ombudsman

“**E**quality News” (Polish original “Wiadomości o Równości”) is a series of four publications prepared and developed by four eminent European academic centres: the Jagiellonian University of Kraków, Pierre and Marie Curie University of Paris, Charles University of Prague and Aristotle University from Thessaloniki. They all collaborate as the DARE-Learning partnership, aiming to increase the participation of disabled persons in knowledge society through their university education. The publications are designed to make the academic community more familiar with the notion of equal treatment of persons with disabilities as well as to ensure their full access to education, taking into account the consequences of disability. Understanding such an approach and familiar with the articles offered by the DARE-Learning partnership, educators have now the opportunity to considerably improve their professional qualifications and learn about solutions which will make their daily toolbox better equipped; what is more, they can develop such solutions themselves.

The subjects and articles presented in the series contain reader-friendly explanations of the provisions of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, a document ratified by all the DARE-Learning partnership countries (France, Greece, Czech Republic, and Poland). The Convention was drafted on the basis of profound understanding of the principle of empowerment and independence of persons with disabilities as regards taking decision concerning their own lives. The contributions published here show that the implementation of what is enshrined in the Convention is good and needed as it supports the development of civil society, social economy, tolerance, and democratic values.

The third issue of Equality News focuses mainly on the quality of education in the context of disability as it is often claimed that educational support for persons with disabilities lowers that quality. Here we showcase some specific examples suggesting to the contrary, i.e. that reasonable support for disabled students in the teaching process constitutes a part of a system aimed at high-quality university education, an excellence for which several actors are responsible including lecturers, disability support service and students.

We hope the readers can find some inspiration in what they read here and we invite you to visit our educational portal at www.DARELearning.eu.

Ireneusz Białek
The Jagiellonian University of Kraków
DARE-Learning project coordinator

Equality in the educational process

**Małgorzata Perdeus, Dagmara Nowak-Adamczyk,
Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service (DSS)**

It is alright, I'll stick to the tips you sent me, but if the student in question fails to show off her knowledge, I'm going to fail her, too.

The sentence by one of the teachers at our university quoted above must have been an expression of the fear that supporting persons with disabilities might mean efforts aimed at exempting them from performing their duties, doing things for them and lowering academic criteria following some misunderstood political correctness. Such doubts are understandable in fact. Until recently, there were no mechanisms that would help solve difficulties encountered by disabled university students. It is not easy to find information on how to do it. Not everyone (including persons with disabilities) finds it obvious that equality does not mean privileges but rather the opportunity to fulfil the same obligations, thanks to having the same rights as those enjoyed by others. That is why a DSS consultant was actually glad to hear that honest sentence. She could have answered: That is right! The student should be failed, if she is unsuccessful in her examination after the adaptations have been made. Then you will be sure that she failed because she did not know enough. That is equality per excellence.

What are adaptations?

Adaptations are modifications made to the course of the studies which result in the certainty that the key elements of the university course have been retained and the academic standard has not been lowered. At the same time, they are adjusted to the student's disability-related abilities and limitations, thanks to which one can

be certain that in the course of the academic year he/she will be given the opportunity to fully acquire the required knowledge, skills or competences as well as to present them during the examination on equal terms with his/her fellow students. The realistic assessment of his/her achievements is important both for himself/herself and his/her future, which in a sense depends on the quality of the education he/she has received. This is also important for the teachers who, with their signatures and authority, confirm the level of the achievements presented by individual students through assessing him/her at the end of the semester awarding them a specific grade for his/her performance.

Adaptations are modifications made to the course of the studies which result in the certainty that the key elements of the university course have been retained and the academic standard has not been lowered.

In the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities adaptations are called reasonable accommodations. This means necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments made to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Such an accommodation should be effective in a particular case yet without imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed. Looking for right solutions in the educational process one must take this point of view into consideration. Consequently, it is necessary to accept the need to award some additional rights to a certain group of people. It is not easy at times: how to consider equal someone who seems to have more rights than others? And even so, how to define the boundary of the adaptation and capture the moment when the

action taken is not an exercise in equality anymore but a privilege actually distorting the balance to the detriment of persons without disabilities? It is highly important to be open looking for innovative solutions and creative, thinking out of the box, sometimes cluttered with habits and routines. Consciously answering the question what is the reason for and aim of a given action one is able to see what it can be replaced with without losing sight of the actual value and ability the student should have acquired upon completing the studies. Such a notion of adaptation leads precisely to the possibility to assess the student in terms of his/her knowledge and abilities rather than considering some additional aspects and limitations (for instance those resulting from disability and its consequences). Adaptations are the more beneficial and effective, the more they are fruit of cooperation in developing them between the teachers and lecturers, who are responsible for the delivery level of a given university course, the student, who knows his/her limitations and abilities, as well as the university disability support service offering back-up for the two other actors in terms of substance and technology.

Legal regulations

For many years, activities aimed at supporting students with disabilities were an expression of the good faith of universities which in that way responded to the year-on-year increase of persons with various health problems. Currently, it is already a legal obligation. Ratified by Poland in September 2012, the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities mentions the need to ensure the full accessibility of education for persons with disabilities (Article 24). It is indicated in the Polish Higher Education Act that creating conditions for persons with disabilities which facilitate their full participation in the process of education as well as research is one of the basic obligations of universities (Article 13). The Jagiellonian University supports its disabled students following those regulations, and the operational principles of such assistance are described in the Ordinance 122 of the Jagiellonian University Rector of 10 December 2012 concerning: the adaptation of the educational process to the needs of persons with disabilities and those with particular health conditions. The ordinance concerns action taken throughout the academic year and the adaptations offered during examination sessions are treated as merely one of the aspect of the entire process. It specifies which documentation should be presented by a student applying for studies adaptation, where it is kept, and who within the university may get access to it. At the same time, the ordinance does not change whatsoever the decision-making pattern in student affairs, while the Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service (JU DSS) is entrusted the role of a unit that is consulted and provides technical facilities. It also

specifies building administrators as co-responsible for the appropriate level of accessibility of the university in terms of physical space. Pursuant to the ordinance, the student approaching the JU DSS will discuss his/her difficulties in accessing education related to his/her health issues with a consultant for student affairs and is obliged to furnish specialist documentation which confirms his/her current health status. What follows is arrangements of the educational-process adaptations which he/she expects and which at the same time are realistically implementable. And so JU DSS consultants must get in touch with staff at university faculties and/or institutes to agree the conditions in which classes/lectures are delivered and course-completion credits awarded on a given university programme. Once consent of the competent university body (the dean or a dean-appointed person, head of doctoral studies) has been given, the suggested adaptations are communicated to the teachers working with the student. As his/her situation may change in the course of the academic year, and some new needs or adaptation opportunities may come up in the said period, such accommodations may be granted for a single term.

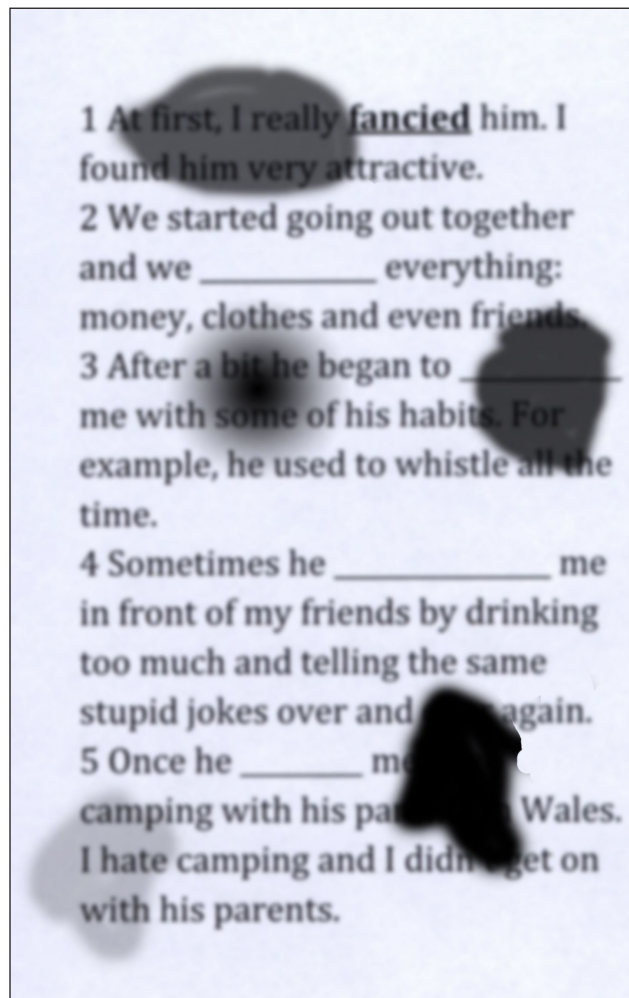
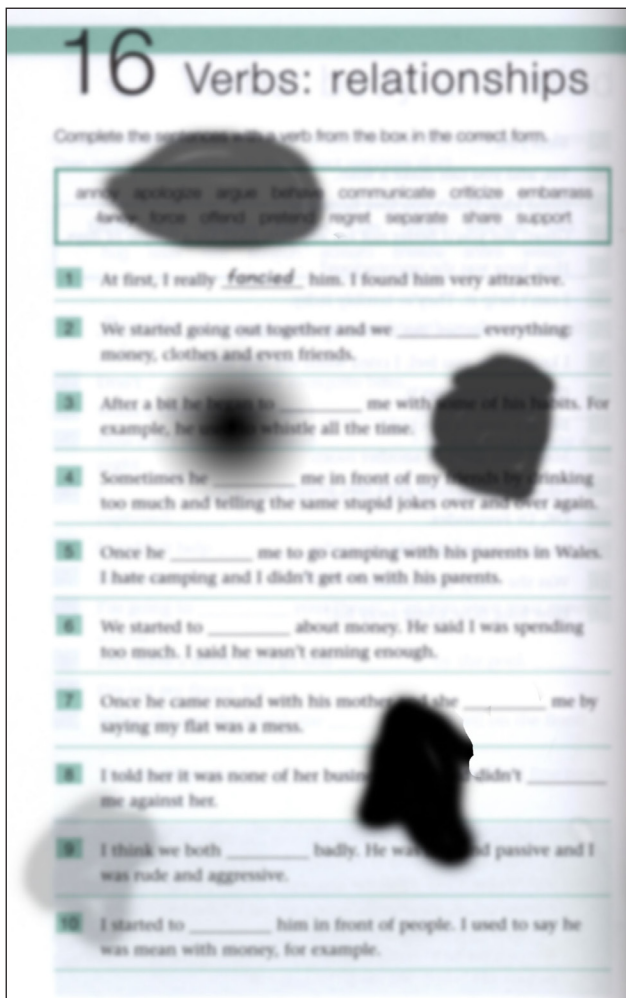
Maria's case

To follow the way of thinking concerning the adaptation of the educational process to the needs of a disabled person, it is worthwhile to have a closer look at Maria, a humanities student at the Jagiellonian University:

— Maria is a full-time first-year student of humanities with impaired vision. Her sight difficulties began when she was an adolescent as a result of an illness, diabetic retinopathy, due to which the focus of her vision is reduced and she sees dark spots in places instead of the whole picture. Consequently, she experiences major difficulties when reading texts printed in standard fonts. How could Maria's written examinations be adjusted so as to ensure her equal rights in university study?

Thinking about what specific exam-format adaptations should be offered to the student, one must bear in mind that there exists a whole range of possible potential solutions which are useful to partially sighted persons and might be considered in Maria's case:

1. an enlarged sans-serif font of examination sheets (e.g. 18 points),
2. using devices which enlarge the standard print (e.g. an electronic magnifier),
3. using a computer with appropriate magnification or sound software,
4. support provided by an educational assistant, who in an appropriate way would record the answers dictated by the student,



Simulation of the vision of a person with diabetic retinopathy. Left: an example exercise, right: its adaptation. Educational material sourced from "Test Your Vocabulary 3", Penguin English Guides, 2007, p. 28.

5. oral examinations.

What are the differences between these options?

To implement the first three options necessary technological facilities are required. In the case of the Jagiellonian University the equipment is available, so such solutions could potentially be used in practice. Option 4 would require engaging persons playing the role of educational assistants. The last solutions seems easy to implement, yet its form is markedly different from what applies to all the students.

7 principles of educational support

The consultants from the Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service make the selection of a given solution conditional upon the seven principles of educational support, guidelines that are key for arranging reasonable adaptations of the educational process. So what should be done in the case of Maria? Let us analyse those principles using her example.

Principle 1. Personalisation

The selection of a given solution must be strongly individualised taking into consideration the student's health and the ways she has used to manage such situations so far, as well as the specificity of her university programme. This is important as not all the persons with the same disability will experience the same difficulties and have the same learning strategies. People are different and so there is no reason why such differences should not exist as regards the students' needs related to the adaptations of their educational process. Different barriers to study and their possible compensations can exist in the case of persons born partially sighted, and different ones in the case of those students who sustained a sight loss at one point in their lives. The conclusion is that such specific needs discussed with the student should be compared with the organisational capabilities of the university institute whose teachers will in practice apply specific examination adaptations, if the student applies for them to the dean in charge of student affairs and obtains his/her consent.

7 principles of educational support

Principle 1. Personalisation: adaptations of the university study process of persons with disabilities are always prepared in response to his/her individual educational needs stemming from the specifics of his/her health at a given time as well as the specifics of a given university course, including the conditions in which it is delivered.

Principle 2. Empowerment, or respecting the autonomy of persons with disabilities and their right to decide about themselves.

Principle 3. Developing the potential of disabled persons related to the course of their university studies. This means selecting such adaptations which would let the student acquire knowledge and develop practical skills.

Principle 4. The reasonableness of the accommodation, that is suggesting adaptations that are reasonable in economic terms and effectively ensure equal opportunities for the disabled person as well as maintaining the academic standard.

Principle 5. Maintaining the academic standard, or preparing adaptations without compromising the substantive criteria binding for all the student on a given course/programme.

Principle 6. Adaptations as close as possible to the standard course of the classes/lectures, that is such that are not privileges for persons with disabilities but reasonably ensure equal opportunities for them as regards access to the educational offer considered optimal on a given university programme.

Principle 7. Equal rights and obligations, that is focusing not just on exercising equal rights by persons with disabilities but also (thanks to ensuring such rights) on making sure that the students' obligations are fulfilled as they are by non-disabled students.

Principle 2. Empowerment

Discussing Maria's needs related to written examination adaptations with her, one must remember that it is the student who is responsible for his/her studies and all the arrangements made related to them. Maria has the right to make a sovereign decision as to the kind of examination accommodations she applies for. That decision may reflect the suggestions made by a consultant at the JU DSS, it may be different, or she may decide not to apply for any educational support using the Service at all. It may also be wrong and be linked to failed future examinations. Like anyone else, Maria may make a mistake and should bear its consequences. This is a learning lesson based on experience and she should not be shielded from it, at the same time her autonomous decisions concerning adaptations of her studies should be respected.

Principle 3. Potential development

When suggesting specific types of examination adaptations to Maria those strategies should be considered which will most effectively help her develop the potential related to her university programme. It is pointless to concentrate on skills which are not going to be beneficial to her. For instance, if daily computer use is not Maria's preference, the ability to use the computer well for exam purposes may be an additional barrier.

Principle 4. Reasonableness of the adjustment

Maria's examination adaptations whose application would be supported by the Service should be reasonable. This reasonableness should be considered looking at efficiency, or ensuring best possible benefits for the student, but also for the university: accommodations

which actually make Maria's opportunities more equal given her disability, the attainment of the educational goals set and economic feasibility. Seeking reasonable solutions one may conclude that all such criteria cannot be met, e.g. a given adaptation may actually make her opportunities more equal but at the same time cause the non-fulfilment of the substantive criteria of her university course that lead to reaching the educational objectives set. In that case it may become obvious that a given person is unable to be a student on a given programme. When a student claims the right to enjoy unreasonable adaptations, e.g. very costly (in the presence of alternative solutions), lowering the substantive criteria, or being excessive privileges, the JU DSS may decline its support.

Principle 5. Maintaining academic standards

The student's adaptations should be compatible with the substantive requirements applying to all the students on a given course. Consequently, accommodations should focus on technicalities and organisation, maintaining the substantive scope of the course.

Principle 6. Adaptations as close to the standard course of the class/lecture as possible

Considering the optimal adjustment of the examination format to Maria's needs related to the specificity of her disability, first and foremost such solutions should be sought which would be as much as possible similar to the format of the tests applicable to all the students on the course. If their knowledge is to be examined by means of a test, first such adaptations should be sought which would retain that format.

Principle 7. Equal rights and obligations

The adaptations of written examinations suggested to Maria would mean making her educational opportunities more equal given her disability. Thanks to them the student will have a chance to present her knowledge in a manner that is accessible to her and that knowledge should be required of her as diligently as in the case of students without disabilities. In that case disability is not an exemption from meeting the requirements laid down in the curriculum of her university programme.

Which adaptations were offered to Maria?

The student decided to take written examinations using the computer with sound software. She entered her answers to the questions in a separate document on a computer which was made available to her by the JU DSS for examination purposes. As such exams are time-consuming, she was given some extra time, 50% more than the other students. She was thus advised to apply for the exam organised in a separate room so that she could use the extended time undisturbed. She did not accept that option saying she would like to take the test with her fellow students.

Having won the consent of the Vice-Rector for student affairs, the JU DSS, with the student's agreement, sent her teachers/examiners special tips on Maria's examination strategies. The JU DSS also suggested that the examiners adapt the test sheets to the electronic format supporting screen reading software.

Thanks to such activities, more persons with disabilities can start and complete university studies. This is a value not to be underestimated and it merits the effort. Sometimes, however, even despite much endeavour, success is not possible. Not everything can be appropriately adjusted, sometimes the adaptations show the student his/her choice of university programme was wrong, and sometimes he/she decides to discontinue the studies. That may be a defeat yet it is of value as the student is given an opportunity to compete with others on an equal footing and be fully responsible for his/her actions and decisions as well as their results. This is frequently their first ever chance to manage their affairs independently after having been constantly cared for and after things were done for him/her. This is a vital experience, as it is lived in the presence of masters and guides, that is teachers/lecturers can become for them.

Małgorzata Perdeus – a co-founder of the Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service, she has completed a graduate programme at Metrum School for Trainers in Katowice as well as a course at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw; a coordinator of a work package focusing on the preparation of a training-course agenda in the DARE-Learning project; a trainer delivering disability awareness workshops for Jagiellonian University academic teachers and administrative staff.

Dagmara Nowak-Adamczyk – is a consultant in charge of student affairs at the Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service, educator, member of the Expert Committee on Disability at the Polish Ombudsman, and co-author of numerous educational materials for academic teachers and university students on equal treatment related to disability. At the JU DSS Ms Nowak-Adamczyk offers the students educational support options. She is currently preparing a PhD dissertation in social sciences.

DARe-Learning project partners

The Jagiellonian University of Kraków

is Poland's oldest and also one of the largest universities, which while rooted in age-long tradition constantly develops dynamically as a centre of humanities and sciences, continuously present among the most popular academic schools in Poland (number one in the University Ranking List compiled by the Perspektywy monthly and the Rzeczpospolita daily in 2013). Established in 1999, the Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service is a centre of educational support for persons with various disabilities and those whose health conditions make it difficult for them to pursue university study. The Service's mission is to make sure these students have equal access to the educational offer of the university. It continuously carries out actions and projects aimed at disseminating information concerning inclusive education and the participation of disabled persons in social life.

The Pierre and Marie Curie University of Paris

is a school with a technical and medical slant and one of the best of its kind in France. It has its own, and France's oldest, Disability Support Service which offers assistance to around 250 students. The university boasts a comprehensive programme of support for its disabled graduates entering the open labour market. The programme has been developed in cooperation with large companies based in Paris.

The Charles University of Prague

is one of the world's oldest, founded by Charles the Fourth, a Czech and Roman king. It currently has 17 faculties where the students can pursue studies in humanities, sciences and medicine. Its Language Centre is based at the Faculty of Humanities and it actively works with disabled students using state-of-the-art working methods and innovative supportive technologies, particularly in foreign language teaching.

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

is the largest university in Greece. It comprises twelve schools which in total have 35 faculties and offer a very broad range of programmes and specialist courses. The university's Social and Health Policy Committee makes sure students with disabilities have equal access to its standard offer through necessary adaptations of the course of studies and teaching materials/textbooks.



UNIVERZITA KARLOVA
V PRAZE



What is the DARE-Learning training course?

Małgorzata Perdeus, Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service

The website www.DARELearning.eu features an e-learning course for academic teachers who wish to improve their qualifications as regards supporting students with disabilities. The course supplements and is an extension of a classroom-based workshop, the goal of which is disability awareness building and giving the trainees an opportunity to discuss and think over the presented attitudes towards the presence of disabled students in the academic community. The e-learning course covers information on various disabilities, educational problems they can bring as well what to do in order to reduce or eliminate the limitations. The

course touches upon both such “classic” disabilities as sight, mobility or hearing, and those stemming from mental-health difficulties or chronic diseases imposing lifestyle change, and consequently modifications in the way one pursues university study. The training also covers modules on speech disorders and specific learning difficulties. Apart from basic information, the trainee will find there descriptions related to subjects that are not directly linked to accessing academic knowledge, yet of much importance for a better understanding of the difficulties in how disabled persons function as university students.



Jan is a first year student of the Full-time Programme of Environmental Protection. At school, he was always good at science and voluntarily read everything about ecology that he could lay his hands on. At the moment he has no defined plans for the future, primarily because he is aware of the consequences of his disability but considers Environmental Protection as an excellent choice for him. Because of neurological problems that he developed in childhood after a car accident, he works at a slower pace than other students in the group. He walks on crutches but knows that, although it will take him more time, he can practically get everywhere. He is also a slow speaker and his speech is slightly unclear. He avoids writing in hand because his handwriting is rather illegible - he writes with crooked, indistinct letters and has problems keeping them all in one line. Since he finished elementary school this has ceased to be a problem and the computer is his element now. The biggest problems as he expects them will be in lab classes because in order to perform exercises one needs precision and skillfull hands, as well as during exams and tests.

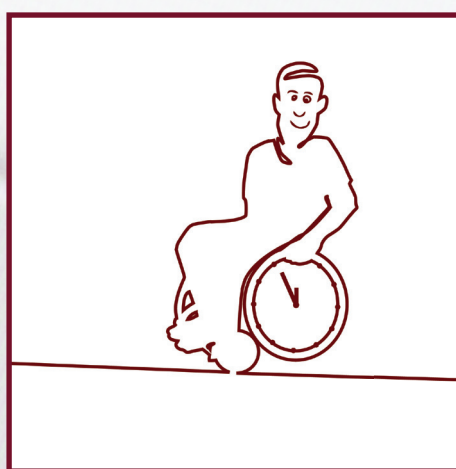
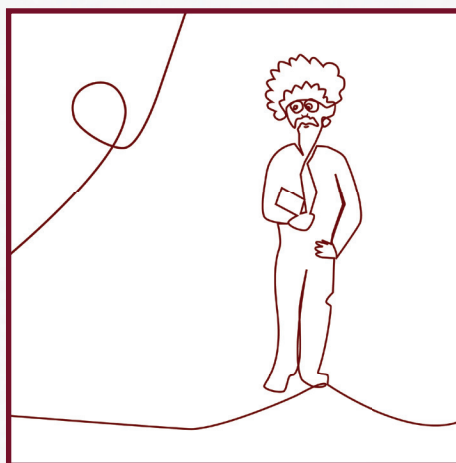
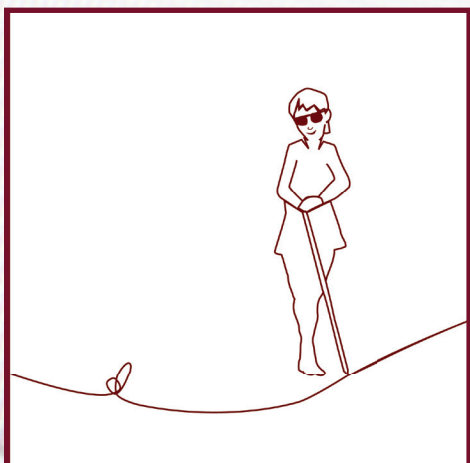
You

You are a teacher responsible for Introduction to Chemistry, a course which involves theoretical lectures and lab classes where students perform exercises and minor chemical experiments themselves. This is one of the leading subjects in the first year of Environmental Protection. Your task is to adapt the requirements of this course in such a way as to enable Jan to pass the final exam. Jan is hard-working, dilligent and talented. Adequate adaptations guarantee his success, which is in your hands.

For the first time you meet Jan at your lecture:

Text: Małgorzata Perdeus

Introduction to the e-learning game “Jan” for academic teachers



Illustrations by Lech Kolasinski

A sample of illustrations from the e-learning course for academic teachers

These enlightening articles include such topics as: etiquette in the presence of persons using assistive dogs, basic information on Deaf culture as well as difficult situations related to coming into contact with persons experiencing mental-health difficulties. Each module is summarised with a quiz checking one's knowledge and making it possible to self-evaluate.

The material is arranged in a clear manner, using a pattern repeated in case of each described disability, thanks to which it is easy to capture differences and similarities as regards the needs of students with educational difficulties as well as to find information on an ad hoc basis, for those who having completed the course might like to come back to it one day looking for a solution to a specific problem. Finally, an educational game serves as a summary and opportunity to check the acquired knowledge. It is based on academic experiences of four students and the main characters - Jan, Julia, Piotr and Barbara - have indeed existed, received educational support from their universities thanks to which they

could complete their studies successfully. The course participant's task is to "lead" each of them through one of the university courses. Once the student has completed the course, the teacher playing the game has successfully completed the DARE-Learning training programme.

The DARE-Learning training course was developed with financial support from the "Lifelong Learning" Programme based on materials worked out by the DARE 2 project which the Jagiellonian University carried out in 2009 – 2011. The workshop, the agenda of which was developed back then, has been delivered on many occasions by the partner institutions of that project. Those experiences indicated that teachers of students with disabilities expect to be able to use additional materials which supplement and systematise their knowledge in an easy-to-access form. The e-learning course meets that requirement both for the trainees attending the group programme and those university staff who for various reasons will not have attended it.

The Pierre and Marie Curie University of Paris: collaboration with business for more employment

Dr Fabienne Corre-Menguy, Disability Support Service at the Pierre and Marie Curie University of Paris

In 2007, a law was passed in France which imposed new obligations on universities towards all their students and it concerns supporting them in finding employment. As regards students with disabilities, such a requirement was already contained in an act of law passed in 2005. For the Pierre and Marie Curie University of Paris (UPMC), both these bills are a priority meaning pursuing highest possible employability of our graduates. I would like to focus on how we go about attaining that priority as regards students with disabilities. Each of our graduates has had some experience of contact with an employer

thanks to obligatory apprenticeships which students must go through. This practice helps a lot in their later adaptation to the needs of the labour market because the students are aware of compensations they require to do their jobs well. Here at the Service we try to influence the students during their apprenticeships in such a way so as to make them as independent as possible. In practical terms this means close cooperation with companies thanks to which it is possible to learn what they require of our graduates and make them aware of the specific needs of persons with disabilities entering the labour market.

The presentation of the e-learning course "Space of Inclusion", 28 February 2013, the Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service. Left-right: Gerard Lefranc, director of the disability unit at Thales, Dr Fabienne Corre-Menguy, head of the UPMC Disability Support Service, and Maria Gawron-Zaborska, interpreter of French



Photography by Anna Wojnar

Then we work individually with students to improve their skills and adjust them to the requirements entrepreneurs will make. They are frequently companies we cooperate with and so this work with the students makes a lot of sense. This does not mean, however, that we do not experience any problems with companies. One of the major challenges is the fact that managers want to employ disabled university graduates but such who in their view will not generate problems, that is persons with mild and moderate disabilities. We try to convince them that those with severe disabilities can also work well and efficiently. Some companies like Thales Group already have units dealing with disability and then it is easier to convince a company that persons with severe disability levels can be the company's valuable capital. It is so because in businesses which have such disability units the awareness of managers is typically higher.

French companies, just like in Poland, pay penalties if they fail to employ at least 6% of disabled persons. Yet companies may assign such funds for the creation of a policy which will lead to more employment or other activities serving that goal. This can be collaboration with a university and adjustment of apprenticeships to the requirements made by the company. It will then sign an agreement with Agefiph¹, the Ministry of Labour and its own trade unions. The contract specifies the nature of the activities to be performed and funds to be used to that end. Our university has decided to select five enterprises which have for a long time had their own policies as regards employing persons with disabilities. These are the aforementioned Thales Group, BNP Paribas Bank, Électricité de France (EDF), Shneider Electric, and Total. These companies transfer funds to the university to be used for supporting the students, in particular improving their competences which are later useful on the labour market.

In collaboration with the enterprises we try to hold meetings with students on their premises as the goal is to make them familiar with the practical side of company operations. The students highly value such meetings. The funds can also be used to employ staff to help us deliver on what was laid down in the contract with the companies, which translates into other benefits for the students who thanks to that receive efficient support sooner. And finally, these funds can be used to purchase expensive specialist equipment for the students which otherwise would have been difficult, if not impossible.

Such agreements allow us also to collaborate with enterprises more generally and create various projects focusing on disability and employment. These may be international initiatives like the one implemented with Thales Group and the Jagiellonian University in the area

¹ Agefiph – the French equivalent of the (Polish) State Fund for the Rehabilitations of Persons with Disabilities.



Photography by P. Kitmaker

Dr Fabienne Corre-Menguy

of improving the disability awareness of managers². They need such knowledge very much, which is why such initiatives are important and help us influence those who then can make the positive decision to employ a person with disability and include him/her among their staff members. Enterprises value such contract because they know they can learn something from us, and we learn from them, too. Such agreements with companies do not mean that the Ministry of Higher Education and Research uses exclusively corporate financial resources through universities and avoids responsibility for supporting students with disabilities. That only means that universities have at their disposal another source for funding the specific needs of some students, which are naturally more costly, and activities aimed to ensure employment for disabled university graduates in the future. And so the long-term goal is ambitious, especially when we speak of persons with considerable disability or for instance mental-health difficulties. These are two very difficult groups and their presence on the labour market is still very rare. This is changing slowly unfortunately, but is going in the right direction thanks to, for example, such cooperation as that of our university with enterprises, social campaigns as well as changes in attitudes and thinking routines resulting from such actions.

Sadly, the current crisis is not helpful to activities aimed at increasing the employment levels of disabled university graduates and is a major obstacle in finding employment by young persons with disabilities. This is

² See the e-learning training course “Space of Inclusion” open to all at www.SpaceOfInclusion.eu.

a very hard time for all our graduates entering the labour market, maybe less so only for those who complete university study in the fields of mathematics, physics and chemistry. As regards disabled graduates, there is one more obstacle in employing them as currently large companies subcontract this task out to recruiters. These are firms specialising in HR which select employees for other companies but have a rather poor awareness and knowledge of disability, and so they are not committed to the idea of employing them. Another phenomenon is the fact that not all our students tell us about their professional plans and want to search for development and employment opportunities independently, treating it as a chance for themselves, and we see it as a result of our work aimed at improving their social skills.

Regardless of the difficulties described above, which are conditioned by objective factors like the crisis or lack of awareness and mental barriers, employability of persons with various disabilities is very important to us and to all intents and purposes the process seems to be starting to go in a positive direction. We expect that our efforts together with the funds earmarked for that purpose by the French State and private enterprises will let us make significant progress towards reaching that objective in the coming years. We also hope that this will be of help not just to the graduates currently completing their studies at the Pierre and Marie Curie University of Paris, but also those who graduated earlier but are still jobless. We are also aware that regardless of our efforts the French Ministry of Labour undertakes a number of initiatives for more employment. It seems to us that their sheer

number and diversity will result in more public interest shown in that problem, which would in turn translate into a better knowledge of managers, and consequently more employment of persons with disabilities on the open labour market.

We also try to do things promoting this type of thinking and organise annual conferences to discuss issues related to the employment of persons with various disabilities. I am glad that this year our conference was linked to the Equality Awareness Day organised as part of the DARE-Learning project, thanks to which it became an international event and it was possible to exchange experiences concerning the employment of persons with disabilities in France and Poland as well as to compare the two systems of support. We are glad that so many questions concerning the subject were asked and such a keen interest was shown in our

Employability of persons with various disabilities is very important to us and to all intents and purposes the process seems to go in a positive direction.

Polish-French disability awareness course for company managers. More and more people and enterprises are interested in the issue and there are various reasons for it, yet the phenomenon itself is highly positive.

Quite apart from the discussions and exchange of experiences, the Equality Awareness Day held on

28 January 2013 featured various presentations on the daily lives of persons with disabilities at university and in the workplace. The attendees could learn more while students, their teachers and prospective employers were able to meet from both large companies like Thales Group and smaller ones. Thanks to the DARE-Learning project our annual conference and disability awareness campaign were enriched and attracted higher numbers of visitors than usual.

Dr Fabienne Corre-Menguy – received the doctoral title in biology-physiology and molecular biology in 1995 (at the Pierre and Marie Curie University of Paris). She has been a lecturer and researcher at the Pierre and Marie Curie University of Paris since 1997. She is currently head of the UPMC Disability Support Service, a member of expert groups in charge of supporting persons with disabilities working for the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research and Ministry of Education, as well as an inter-ministry consortium in charge of disability issues.

The Charles University of Prague: English is key to professional success

Marie Dolezalova, Centre for Foreign Language Teaching for deaf and hard of hearing students at the Charles University of Prague

Six years ago, I was approached by a deaf student and I had no clue whatsoever what to do with her. I began to search for information on teaching English to persons with hearing difficulties and so I found the Centre for Foreign Language Teaching for deaf and hard of hearing students at the Charles University of Prague. Still, I considered it a problem that despite my language teaching qualifications I was not competent in teaching deaf persons and that required additional training. Teaching them a language is completely different and depends largely on whether they have sustained a hearing loss or been deaf from birth, whether they had deaf parents and whether they use sign language or not. All these aspects require understanding and additional knowledge as well as experience, if one wants to do it right. I took me half a year to gather that experience and then the classes I delivered were watched by teachers from

the Gallaudet University of Washington¹ who shared with me a number of valuable comments and gave me tips on what I should continue unchanged and what to modify. Later I went to Gallaudet University myself where for three weeks I was mastering the new area of knowledge by watching English class delivery for deaf and hard of hearing students. I also went to Bristol in the United Kingdom to do the same.

All these experiences have been of high value for me personally and our Centre. Teaching that group of students develops the teacher as he/she must verify many of the principles and habits practised so far and

¹ The Gallaudet University of Washington is known for its educational programmes and research concerning Deaf language and culture. The term “Deaf” refers to persons whose first language is sign language or for whom it is preferred for communication purposes.

Equality Awareness Day in Prague, 6 May 2013



Photography by Dagmara Nowak-Adamczyk



Photography by Małgorzata Perdeus

Equality Awareness Day in Prague, 6 May 2013

be very flexible. One has been using some method for a long time and then suddenly must face the fact that something does not work and should be changed. For example, deaf persons rely heavily on the structure of sign language which is completely different from the grammar of English, which leads to a lot of confusion when one tries to teach it, with the students often using various grammatical structures incorrectly and confusing words. And so the more one understands the structure of sign language and the cultural aspects related to it, the better results one can attain in foreign language learning. Another vital thing is motivation, as the students most frequently do not see the point of learning foreign languages and one must know how to encourage them. That is why at our Centre we use technological novelties, the interactive board, many and not just one textbook, we also are using iPods at the moment. It is a good motivator to show the students that a knowledge of English could give them opportunities which are unavailable otherwise. A wealth of information and all kinds of knowhow exists in English simply and if, for example, chemistry is a subject of someone's interest, he/she must be able to read relevant materials in English. I think that convincing them to learn a language in such a way can be rather effective.

Unfortunately, not all the gaps in the education of deaf persons can be bridged at university and I guess colleagues from many other universities share my view. People with hearing disabilities have often a limited knowledge about the world acquired at previous education levels which is exactly where much should change, if a student is to fully use the offer of his/her university, the mission of which is to educate rather than bridge gaps in the educational system at lower levels.

Another thing I have learnt thanks to work at our Centre is that such lessons and experiences should possibly be communicated down to schools in a different manner than it is done now. Maybe organising conferences and announcing that something does not work in the system of education at lower levels is not enough and what we need is simply a new system of practical cooperation between universities and schools, which is what we are contemplating now. This could result in higher numbers of deaf students pursuing university study as there are very few of them, and as far as I know Charles University is no exception in that regard compared with other European universities.

That is why the participation in the DARE-Learning project has been so important for our university: it was a fitting platform of communicating the problem and launching proper collaboration with teachers from lower levels of education. I am glad that so many educational materials developed by the project have been published on the www.DARELearning.eu portal and are available in so many languages now. There are also quite a lot of texts on educating persons with hearing disabilities. Many deaf students took part in the Equality Awareness Day held at Charles University last May. They were visible among the large number of attendees during that event co-organised by the student community, which also show that the notion of unity regardless of one's disability, age, beliefs or origin is dear to our academic community. Everyone had a great time, but they were also educating others as various educational materials were available at the stands, including those developed by the DARE-Learning project.

Marie Dolezalova – is deputy head of the Centre for Foreign Language Teaching at Charles University. She offers advisory services for students with disabilities and teaches English to deaf students. She is a frequent guest at the Gallaudet University of Washington, an inspiration for her ideas on how to work with the students.

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki: social policy matters

Paschalina Kyrgiafani, Social and Health Policy Committee at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

The Social and Health Policy Committee at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki was set up in 1997 in order to support students in social terms. At first this mainly meant meetings, debates and discussions of Committee members, with specific actions coming later. One of the important action, still done today, is blood donation organised three times a year. This initiative is about building solidarity among members of our student community. Year on year, the action motivates more and more people. Currently, however, most of the activities performed by the Committee aim at supporting students with various disabilities. For instance, we offer transport services for those with mobility difficulties, electronic and Braille materials for blind students, and sign language interpreting for deaf ones. Such services were used by very few at first, but this number has grown considerably. It is an interesting phenomenon: if a university does not have such an offer, it does not have any or has very few students with disabilities, and

The Equality Awareness Day has shown that very many university staff members need to become familiar with etiquette when coming into contact with persons with disabilities.

if it opens up to their needs, it suddenly turns out that they can study without much difficulty and so they come to the university. Recently, our university begun to offer also psychological support to the students similar to that available at the Jagiellonian University.

The number of students who experience various kinds of mental-health or adaptation difficulties is growing after all and assistance that can be offered to them is becoming ever scarcer as our country is engulfed by a crisis. All forms of support for such persons have been greatly reduced. There are not even funds for medication and so they must cover full expenses. Support for those with other disabilities has also been reduced. It is now more difficult to have access to hospital or any rehabilitation.

In this context it should be noted that thanks to the DARE-Learning project we were able to perform some activities which may not have been possible otherwise, given the situation in Greece.

Equality Awareness Day in Thessaloniki, 23 May 2013



Photography by Anna Barcik

In particular I would like to mention organising disability awareness building seminars for medical students, a very important task in our view. The Project simply inspired us to do it and provided us with a lot of educational materials free of charge. We thought it was important for young physicians to have some knowledge of disability not just from the medical but also social perspective, of daily lives of persons with various disabilities and appropriate attitude to them when they come to see the doctor. We want to teach them how to behave towards blind persons when blood should be sampled from them, how to explain to blind persons what is going to be done and how, in what ways to communicate with deaf persons or how to apply some medical procedures to wheelchair users. Students of our medical school have shown a great interest in the topic and their first impressions are highly positive. They have concluded that they missed such knowledge very much and that it could be very useful in their work. As the seminars have been received so well, we are going to continue with them in the years to come.

Incidentally, the Equality Awareness Day has shown that not just medical students but very many university staff members need to become familiar with etiquette when coming into contact with persons with disabilities. We are very glad that the presentation, or a show rather, by Katie and Paul who are involved in the campaign called „Disabled Access Friendly”¹ was so popular during the event, and at the same time showed the viewers how inappropriate some forms of behaviour can be. We are also glad that our staff could listen to many other contributions on disability by our presenters and colleagues from the Jagiellonian University. This was a unique opportunity to compare ways of supporting students with disabilities at both schools and exchange experiences in that area as well as to see that the very notion of including such students in the standard education process is alive and still developing. I hope no crisis ever stops that process.

Paschalina Kyrgiafini – is a chemical engineer at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, where she is in charge of transport services for students; she also assists in the blood donation action and operations by the Psychological Support Centre.

¹ A campaign aimed at awareness building focusing on persons with mobility disability through teaching English as a foreign language. More at: www.disabled-accessfriendly.com.

The Equality Awareness Day at the Jagiellonian University

Ireneusz Białek, Marta Bylica, Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service

Organised by four academic centres (Prague, Paris, Thessaloniki and Kraków) as part of DARE-e Learning project, the Equality Awareness Day at the Jagiellonian University was held on 7 June 2013 at the Jagiellonian University Museum Collegium Maius under the heading of “To Touch Culture”. The idea inspiring the event was to bring various social groups closer to each other regardless of such differences as people’s disabilities, age, convictions or origin. The day abounded in interesting exhibitions showcasing various adaptations

for blind persons. One of such was an exhibition of works by the Polish symbolic painter from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries Jacek Malczewski prepared in two dimensions: apart from five original canvasses from the “Water Nymphs” series, their tactile graphic linocut adaptations were shown, executed by Lech Kolasiński, a graduate of the Kraków’s Academy of Fine Arts. In that way blind visitors could experience them directly by touch. The format was accompanied by highly vivid descriptions authored by the art historian Róża Książek-

Press conference, Libraria at the Collegium Maius, the speaker is Professor Krzysztof Stopka, Director of the Jagiellonian University Museum

Michał Rusinek, President of the Wisława Szymborska Foundation presenting an adapted Nobel Prize medal awarded to Wisława Szymborska to Professor Krzysztof Stopka, Director of the Jagiellonian University Museum



Malwina Antoniszczak presenting adaptations for blind persons made by students from the Pedagogical University of Kraków

DARE-Learning Project partners at an exhibition prepared by design students from the Pedagogical University of Kraków

Photography by Jerzy Sawicz



Mockups for blind persons prepared by design students from the Pedagogical University of Kraków



Presentation of replicas and mockups of selected precious exhibits from the collections of the Jagiellonian University Museum



Presentation of a series of paintings by Jacek Malczewski "Water Nymphs" by Róża Książek-Czerwińska, an art historian from the Jagiellonian University Museum

Czerwińska, something of fundamental value to persons with sight disabilities wishing to appreciate painted creative painting. Another massively popular attraction was an adaptation of Wisława Szymborska's medal, executed by Lech Kolasiński for the "To Touch Culture" event as approved by the Nobel Committee in Oslo. The medal's adaptation was designed to be appreciated by touch and both blind and sighted visitors used that tactile opportunity. In Stuba Communis, a legendary university professors' canteen at Collegium Maius, a meeting was held with the daughters of Julian Antonisz (Antoniszczak), a well-known director of experimental animated films, composer, designer and inventor. Sabina and Malwina talked about their

father's creative work with passion, showcasing the most interesting of his preserved inventions. One of them was the scanning "coarsograph", or an image-making device for blind persons. They also presented replicas of exhibits featuring in the "Film about (office) art", such as a reusable slice of lemon or a "bristle stamp" as well as some coarsographics, that is images to be read by touching them with fingers made using the scanning coarsograph.

Students of Design at the Pedagogical University of Kraków also presented their adaptations. Guided by Malwina Antoniszczak, they developed a number of interesting objects, which can now be touched, like



The “Touching the Earth” exhibition prepared by the Geological Museum at the Jagiellonian University’s Institute for Geosciences



The “To Touch Culture 2013” concert”: Tomasz Stańko and Dominik Wania



Concert audience before and during the rainstorm in the Collegium Maius courtyard

Photography by Jerzy Sawicz

a Jagiellonian goblet and a coat of arms of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania clearly visible on it. In the scenic university space of the Huta courtyard, JU students of Geology presented various rocks and minerals set in lava and explained the meanders of life enchanted in stone for millions of years.

The Equality Awareness Day at the Jagiellonian University culminated in a late-evening intimate concert in the magnificent courtyard of the university museum by the world-famous Polish jazz trumpeter Tomasz Stańko, whose most recent album “Wisława” includes pieces inspired by Wisława Szymborska’s poetry, accompanied by the Kraków-based pianist Dominik Wania. The perfect

acoustics of the Collegium Maius courtyard together with the unique ambience infused with history and cultural treasures amassed in that place were a fitting backdrop conducive to the contemplation of glorious music by Tomasz Stańko. There was more to it, though, namely extraordinary natural effects as a rainstorm came with the first sounds of the trumpet and the piano. The audience quickly received plastic raincoats and the brief rain in no way disturbed the reception of the music, but the thunders lent some power and unique expression to it. All this made the “To Touch Culture 2013” event truly memorable for all in the audience during that wonderful evening.



Constellation Station

Dagmara Nowak-Adamczyk,
JU Disability Support Service

How to be an efficient student in the face of mental-health difficulties which have appeared or intensified and exert a negative impact on the student's ability to fulfil his/her academic duties? What to do in order to try to limit such difficulties? How to encourage the students to self-disclosure at university so that they can make use of appropriate support offered at the right time?

These were one of the key questions we asked ourselves again in 2009 as a team working for the Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service (JU DSS) when we wanted to develop the system of educational support for Jagiellonian University students with mental-health difficulties. We were aware of how to adapt the process of education to their needs, that is show to organise university courses for them as well as examination conditions in formats adjusted to their particular health situation while respecting the substantive criteria binding on particular university programmes. We had been doing it for a few years cooperating with teachers and lecturers without whom including students with disabilities and those with mental-health difficulties in mainstream university education would be impossible. We were observing a growing number of students seeking support at our Service due to poor mental health. Some needed urgent adaptations of conditions at university, some needed to start or continue specialist psychiatric treatment at healthcare units. Frequently, however, the students came to the Service too late, when our ability to support them in university study was already much limited. We wanted to change that and ensure that as many students with mental-health difficulties as possible could continue at university and, what is more, be more efficient students. We were certain that despite the visible increase in the number of persons turning to

the Service for support, in the previous two years there were many more students experiencing such difficulties at the Jagiellonian University and their number would be growing in the nearest future¹. That conviction was based on university statistics and epidemiological data regarding mental disorders as well as forecasts of the World Health Organisation showing then and still today that nearly a half of the global population experience difficulties with their mental health², and by 2030 depression would become one of the major challenges on a global scale after HIV/AIDS³.

Constellation Leo

Focusing on persons whose mental-health difficulties impede learning and fulfilling their obligations as

¹ Around a quarter of the students registered at the University as persons with disabilities/health conditions have officially disclosed their mental-health difficulties. This is the largest group of students contacting the Jagiellonian University Disability Support Service for assistance in the educational process.

² World Health Organisation, Gender and women's health. Data available at www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/genderwomen/en/ – on 18 November 2012.

³ www.plosmedicine.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pmed.0030442 – on 18 November 2012

students, in the 2010/2011 academic year we launched the programme called “Constellation Leo”. It offered a group of students, for instance, a series of individual sessions with a psychologist adjusted to the needs stemming from their health condition and situation at university. We created an Internet platform accessible to all users, where we offered a package of educational materials concerning mental health in the academic context, including our publication, the book “Moja wędrówka” (My Journey) showcasing reflections by university students and teachers on mental disorders and studying. Once “Constellation Leo” stopped being funded by the European Union (the Human Capital Operational Programme) sessions with a psychologist aimed at supporting the students in learning and studying were included in the offer of our Service as a programme called “Leo”. As part of “Constellation Leo” we also took action at university in order to promote good mental health and underline the all-important role the academic community has in the process of students’ recovery. Almost in parallel we started groundwork that eventually led to a disability awareness building workshop for academic teachers, the basis for the blended learning training courses we are developing in the DARE-Learning project.

Such activities resulted in the growing number of students seeking support at university because of the mental-health difficulties they experienced. Among them, there were more and more persons with diagnosed mental disorders and those whose poor mental well-being had a negative impact on their studying and who had not looked for specialist support earlier. In the last academic year we were receiving intensified signals from the university suggesting there was a need for psychological support for its students and staff in the form of a conversation with a competent professional.

Given the situation, the Jagiellonian University Vice-Rector for Education Professor Andrzej Mania decided to give the go-ahead to another mental-

health prophylaxis initiative called “Constellation Station”.

What is Constellation Station?

It is a programme targeting the entire JU academic community, developed thanks to cooperation of four university units: the “Bratniak” Foundation, the Jagiellonian University Rector’s officer for safety of undergraduate and doctoral students, the Jagiellonian University Students’ Union, and the JU DSS. The objective of the initiative planned for the period of 18 February – 27 June 2013 was to guarantee conversation opportunities (for university students and staff) focused on improving the quality of their daily lives in the academic community and, if necessary, pointing out further steps to be taken. Held in the office of the JU DSS and the “Bratniak” dormitory, the conversations were led by high quality specialists in mental health: psychiatrists from the Chair of Psychotherapy of the Jagiellonian University’s Medical College and psychologists from the Psychotherapy Centre of the University Hospital in Kraków. In difficult situations requiring specialist psychiatric support, including hospitalisation, persons on “Station” duty were able to refer the students to appointed hospital psychiatrists thanks to the cooperation with the Clinical Ward of Psychiatry Clinics for Adults, Children and Adolescents at the University Hospital in Kraków.

The “Station” meetings took place when the professionals were on duty, initially three times a week, and since March, as decided by university authorities, four days a week and longer hours due to the keen interest shown by the students. The participation was individualised, free of charge and anonymous for



Constellation Leo

all⁴. It was enough to complete an electronic registration questionnaire on the programme website or register by phone submitting the required data (first name and surname or a nickname, contact data and status: student/staff member⁵), make an appointment and then present any document confirming one's status of a student or staff member of our University to the person on duty.

What were the results?

170 persons, including 156 students and 14 employees registered to participate in "Constellation Station".

127 persons, 115 students from almost all the faculties, 80% of them in first- and second-degree studies⁶, and 12 staff members took part in meetings with professionals on duty. A large majority of support seekers were women, 76% of female students and 83% of female employees. For more than a half of the students (57%) a session with the person on duty at the "Station" was their first-ever contact with a mental-

health specialist. *Many students and staff members who registered at the "Station" had been thinking about their difficulties and symptoms but without being sure whether they already needed psychiatric/ psychological assistance,* says Edyta Dembińska, MD, PhD, one of the two psychiatrists on duty, adding: *Many persons had*

⁴ More on the rules regulating the participation in the initiative available at: www.KonstelacjaLwa.pl.

⁵ Doctoral students could select their status registering as either students or staff members.

⁶ Including 43% first-degree students and 36% second-degree students.

been experiencing problems for years but did not have the courage to seek support, did not know where to look for it or had bad experiences with mental-health outpatient clinics. There was not a single person registering just out of curiosity what they can learn from a psychiatrist/psychologist, although some expected a prescription from the consultant as to how to get rid of the difficulties. Many persons underlined the short-term positive effect of the conversation about their problems as it alleviated their fears concerning the difficulties as well as possible further contact with a psychiatrist/psychologist. It was often the first opportunity for them to verbalise their difficulties, to talk about them openly with someone competent to advise what to do next. The students participating in the programme most frequently took part because of their symptoms of mental-health disorders, difficulties in their

personal lives, future-related fears, including future employment, or difficulties in fulfilling their obligations as students. Generally speaking, the "Station" participants took part because of their own business, most of them asked direct questions and talked directly about themselves and their difficulties. There were some questions concerning the scope of competence of the psychologist, psychiatrist, or psychotherapist, reflects Katarzyna Klasa, a psychologist

The "Station" meetings encouraged many persons to talk about their difficulties in non-stigmatising conditions, which show how hard it is for persons with mental-health difficulties to make initial contact with a healthcare unit.

on duty at the "Station". In a vast majority of cases, 80% of the students participating in the initiative, the persons on duty suggested further contact with a specialist outside the university, most commonly as an incentive to take psychotherapy. A half of that group are people who have had no prior contact with a mental-health specialist. Edyta Dembińska, MD, PhD underlines that the "Station" meetings encouraged many persons to talk about their difficulties in non-stigmatising conditions, which shows how hard it is for persons with mental-health difficulties to make initial contact with a healthcare unit. In her view some persons were very

positive about receiving information on possible further options like suggestions concerning psychotherapy, while others had to be motivated to register for treatment. Each student hearing the suggestion to get in touch with a specialist (within the National Healthcare System) received a leaflet with addresses and contacts to relevant healthcare units, including the University Hospital in Kraków. Thanks to the “Station” it was possible to build trust of the university students and staff members, alleviate their fear of stigmatisation because of their mental-health difficulties as well as minimise stereotypes related to the role of a psychiatrist and psychologist and mental-health treatment. *The number of people who registered and need further treatment is proof that we were successful in combating fear of and resistance to contacting a specialist, that the taboo was demystified, so to speak*, underlines Katarzyna Cyranka, a psychologist at the “Station”. Students whose health-related difficulties had a negative impact on fulfilling their academic duties or could have it in the nearest future were advised to contact consultants in charge of student affairs at the JU DSS, where appropriate adaptations of the university study process can be arranged. During

the sessions, the professionals on duty undertook some psychoeducational activities, in particular as regards specific mental disorders and the possibilities and principles of treatment by psychotherapy. They provided advice, for instance, on stress management and interpersonal conflict resolution, emotions were ventilated.

The delivery of the “Constellation Station” initiative has shown a new role of the university – not just as an institution that offers educational opportunities but also a source of promoting mental well-being in the academic community. According to the psychiatrist Jerzy A. Sobański, MD, PhD of most importance for attaining the long-term goals of the programme is providing support for those who have not yet had psychiatric treatment, be it advice or psycho- or pharmacotherapy. *That is why encouraging them to make initial (or first successful) contact with a psychiatrist or psychologist may be of key importance for the students, both in a narrower (cooperation with the university) and broader scope, that is for improving their health and consequently their life opportunities.*

Dagmara Nowak-Adamczyk – the author’s profile on page 8.

An innovative project by the JU Institute of Romance Studies and the JU DSS

**Małgorzata Perdeus, Dagmara Nowak-Adamczyk, JU DSS,
Dr Ewa Palka, JU Department of Spanish Studies**

One of the most precious values which may contribute to successful education of students with disabilities is cooperation of all the parties involved in the process. Each of them has a different scope of responsibility along with different operational capabilities. Attaining a common goal, which is university education of disabled students at an appropriate level, identical to that for their fellow students, is more likely thanks to common solutions worked out by all the partners.

The most important partners are academic teachers who are responsible for the level of university courses and who can define the scope of adaptations that will make it possible for a disabled student to fully participate in the process of education without removing its key elements. Equally important role is played by the students who know their abilities and limitations and should participate in making decisions on adaptations as well as understand and accept their consequences. The Disability Support Service (DSS) as a unit providing consultations concerning the selection of available strategies and capable of providing the necessary technical base is the third key actor.

There is also another actor, always present, although not necessarily active in the process in a clear way – it is other students. They become fellow students and friends of a disabled person, they provide help in small everyday matters, they accept or reject formal changes in the course of studies connected with the disability of their colleague. They also may offer a kind of peer tutoring, as it happened in the case of cooperation between the JU DSS and the JU Institute of Romance Studies, which is described in the article.

From the perspective of the JU DSS

The cooperation that took place in the academic year 2012/2013 was launched to solve difficulties connected with starting university studies by a blind first-year student of Spanish Studies. Quite soon it turned out that there are two key problems that need urgent solution:

lack of educational materials in Spanish in the electronic format (still worse, lack of the JU DSS assistants who know Spanish and who could prepare such materials) and lack of experience of the Institute staff in giving classes in a way that would take into account educational difficulties of a person with sight disability.

Due to these problems we contacted the Institute. Firstly, training was organized for teachers interested in raising their awareness on disability; it was based on materials prepared during the previous edition of the DARE program. It included rules of allocating adaptations to the disabled students and the scope of tasks delivered by the JU DSS in that regard. We tried to be in constant touch with people who declared such



The academic model of educational support

a need. At the same time we asked the staff of the Institute to help us find students who could devote their time and start cooperation with the DSS; they were supposed to scan materials in Spanish to the electronic format that would facilitate individual learning. We were wondering how to motivate students to get involved in this activity and how to train them possibly fast, yet in a comprehensive way, so that they do their job fully professionally. Our talks inspired us to create a course (a module of education) in the form of an “option” for students of the JU Department of Spanish Studies, teaching specialization, entitled “Support for disabled persons in the process of language education”.

The aim of the course was to learn skills connected with conducting classes with participation of disabled pupils/ students as well as adapting teaching materials to individual needs arising from the specificity of disability. Nine students of the first and second years of supplementary master’s studies at the JU Institute of Romance Studies signed up for the course. They were from different fields of study, the majority of them were students of teaching specialization. A possibility of supporting their disabled fellow student called Kamila and an opportunity to gain competences of a teacher of people with sight disability proved to be a sufficient incentive for them so they decided to devote their time and energy. The course took 40 hours, 14 of which were practical individual classes with the disabled student.

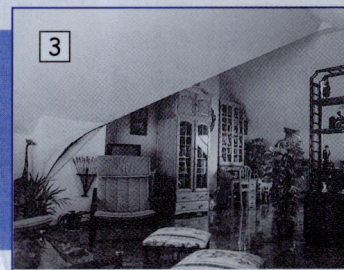
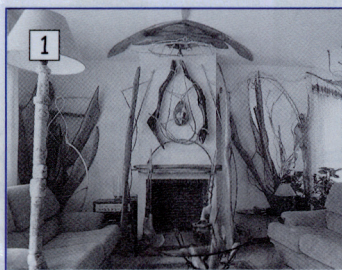
By way of preparation and introduction, a workshop on disability was organized. Students learnt, among others, rules of using a non-oppressive language while talking about disability, models and ways of defining disability and the legal context including the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. Another module of the classes focused on difficulties in access to education which are experienced by the disabled with physical, hearing or mental health disability. A part of the workshop was focused on sight disability. Students could get familiar with the computer equipment and methods of using them as well as methods of adapting printed materials and graphic materials to the electronic format available for people with sight disability.

During the second term each of the students in turn supported Kamila during individual meetings. Once a month the whole group met with the staff of the JU DSS and the Institute; they discussed progress of their work and possible problems that they may face. Students shared reflections on their work and ideas connected with adaptation of texts and graphic works. In order to receive credits they were supposed to be active during classes, participate in meetings and workshops and adapt fragments of textbooks for teaching Spanish. The materials were the basis for peer tutoring; previously they had been assessed by the JU DSS specialist on materials’ adaptation, small corrections were introduced and then they were given to the disabled student.

An exercise from the Spanish textbook „Escucha y aprende”, SGEL , Madrid 2006, p. 26 and a version of the exercise adapted to the text format.

1 Antes de escuchar

Fíjate bien en la decoración de estas habitaciones. ¿Cuál es la que más se parece a tu estilo?



1. Antes de escuchar

Fíjate bien en la decoración de estas habitaciones. ¿Cuál es la que más se parece a tu estilo?

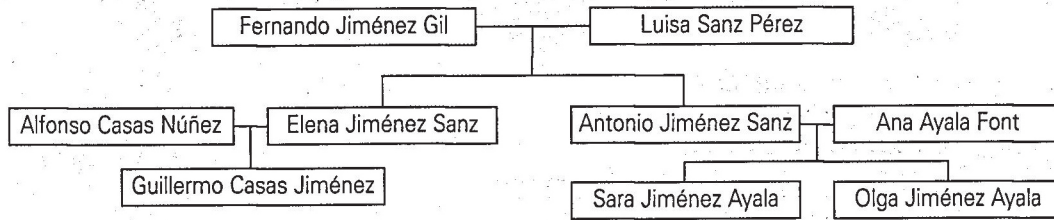
Photo 1. The living room. There are many pretty things here but most of them are of practical application. The room looks slightly messy.

Photo 2. The living room. A large fireplace, a painting hanging above it. It is surrounded by decorations and lamps arranged symmetrically. It is a neat arrangement.

Photo 3. The living room. Furniture and decorations are sparse. It is all neatly arranged.

9. El árbol genealógico.

Completa con las palabras en el género adecuado.



0. Fernando es el*marido*..... de Luisa.

1. Luisa es la de Elena y Antonio.

2. Sara es la de Olga.

3. Antonio es el de Elena.

4. Fernando es el de Guillermo, Sara y Olga, y Luisa es la

5. Elena es la de Sara y Olga, y Alfonso es el

6. Guillermo es el de Sara y Olga.

7. Ana es la de Antonio.

abuelo/a	hermano/a
padre / madre	tío/a
hijo/a	primo/a
	marido / mujer

Ejercicio 9. El árbol genealógico.

Complete the description of the Jiménezes on the basis of their family tree using the words provided. Remember to agree the gender appropriately.

- abuelo/a
- padre/madre
- hijo/a
- hermano/a
- tío/a
- primo/a
- marido / mujer

The family tree:

Starting with the eldest ones 1.a. Fernando Jiménez Gil and 1.b. Luisa Sanz Pérez

Their children (second generation) 2.1. Elena Jiménez Sanz and 2.2. Antonio Jiménez Sanz

husband 2.1. Elena Jiménez Sanz means Alfonso Casas Núñez

their child: 2.1.a Guillermo Casas Jiménez

wife 2.2. Antonio Jiménez Sanz means Ana Ayala Font

their children: 2.2.a. Sara Jiménez Ayala and 2.2.b. Olga Jiménez Ayala

For example 0. Fernando es el ... de Luisa.

Fernando es el marido de Luisa.

Fill in the gaps

1. Luisa es la ... de Elena y Antonio.
2. Sara es la ... de Olga.
3. Antonio es el ... de Elena.
4. Fernando es el ... de Guillermo, Sara y Olga, y Luisa es la
5. Elena es la ... de Sara y Olga, y Alfonso es el
6. Guillermo es el ... de Sara y Olga.
7. Ana es la ... de Antonio.

An exercise from a Spanish textbook „En Uso” A1, Edelsa, Grupo Didascalía S.A, Madrid 2006, p. 7 and a version of the exercise adapted to the text format.

From the perspective of an academic teacher

Dr Ewa Palka, research associate at the Department of Spanish Studies, the JU Institute of Romance Studies

Until recently, we have not faced directly any challenges connected with disability at the Department of Spanish Studies, we were barely aware that there is a unit called the DSS at the University. Theoretically we were familiar with the idea of an access for the disabled to the university education, yet we did not know much about that. We were shaken out of our blissful ignorance at the beginning of the academic year 2012/2013 when a totally blind student enrolled on one of our courses. Then it turned out that a challenge connected with disability pertains to us and affects us directly.

So we started a closer cooperation with the JU DSS as we wanted to learn about all the details connected with strategies and methods relevant to our situation. Soon it became clear that we should prepare teaching materials for the student; materials that would be readable to her, that is scanned to the electronic format DOC (the Word program from the MS Office). Yet materials for foreign language teaching are specific because they should be precise, a given language must be taught correctly from the start. Scanning materials as a process may generate errors, e.g. in Spanish graphic accents disappeared. So a fluent speaker of the language had to check the text. Another difficulty which was apparent from the start was a feature of many textbooks which are full of graphical elements; they are not only decorative elements but very often a starting point for a discussion or an exercise. Such graphical elements require processing and description which means that a person who knows the language needs to be involved in the process.

Among the JU DSS assistants who have prepared materials so far there was nobody who would know Spanish better than at a basic level. There was an idea that perhaps we should involve PhD students from the Institute but at one point we realized that we may take a step further; it was a very significant moment. We stopped seeing the situation as a problem and began to treat it as an opportunity: our students could acquire new skills and at the same time immediately use them in practice, offering the disabled student professional educational support. We thought that the skills should be especially attractive to students with teaching specialization. When the idea appeared, we

had to find the way of putting it into practice. Then we made a decision to launch a new academic course called "Support of disabled persons in the process of language education". In our opinion it was the best solution that would bring benefits to all the people involved. Students who took the course could get ECTS credits and information about their participation in the course would be included in their diploma supplement.

On the one hand the course has all traditional features of an academic course, but on the other hand it has many innovative features. First of all it should be mentioned that even though the course is part of the offer of the JU Institute of Romance Studies, it is conducted in close cooperation with the JU DSS and it is a good example of cooperation of the Jagiellonian University units within one project. The course includes theoretical classes, seminars and practical classes. During the course students learn about

characteristics of different kinds of disability and methods of adaptation of teaching materials to the needs of people with specific disabilities, in this case a special emphasis was put on sight disability. Seminars were conducted by specialists from the JU DSS. Next each of the students spent one week working with the blind student in the first term and then another week in the second term. Our participation as the

teaching staff of the Institute was minimal and it was limited to organizing a place where these groups could work freely. On the one hand it gave students a lot of freedom, but on the other hand they took responsibility for the final result and I must admit they carried out their responsibilities perfectly well. Now another innovative aspect of the course should be mentioned, namely, there were no fixed hours of meetings and the flexible approach proved beneficial to all the people involved.

The model of the course made it possible to react quickly to possible unforeseen circumstances that could occur and to introduce immediately any necessary changes. It turned out that certain changes were needed and they were connected with rhythm of work and a system of assessing students. Every three weeks meetings were organized and the staff of the JU DSS and the Institute monitored progress of work. They assessed partial results and planned further activities. The meetings were an opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences connected with the process and an opportunity for a joint reflection about the future direction of the

We stopped seeing the situation as a problem, and began to treat it as an opportunity: our students could acquire new skills and at the same time immediately use them in practice, offering the disabled student professional educational support.

What methods/techniques were used working with the student and were they different from how standard classes are conducted?

- *I did not use any special techniques, the only difference is that Kamila works with her ears while other learners with their eyes. When working with Kamila it is all about adapting the text you are working on. If that adjustment has been made correctly, there is no difference between working with students with and without disabilities.*
- *The basic difference is constant work with the computer rather than the book. Otherwise, the methods are the same: doing exercises, explaining theory, asking the student to repeat, giving the student time to take notes, conversation, asking questions, discussion, jokes.*

(quotations from the course evaluation questionnaires by students - project participants)

process. Their duration differed, depending on the number of problems that had to be discussed.

Students that enrolled on the new course said they were enthusiastic about the classes and discovered a new world about the existence of which they had had no idea so far and then they learnt how to move about in this world. We as the teaching staff of the Institute are glad that we created an opportunity to acquire new skills and to have such an experience. The blind student gained a lot of help in receiving credits, she is also happy that she could succeed to a large extent thanks to this course and thanks to her personal motivation.

Cooperation of the Institute with the JU DSS was very harmonious, without any conflicts and was organized in a democratic way. There was no need to appoint a leader of the project because each of the participants had their specific knowledge and experience which combined with knowledge and experience of others allowed to work out the best possible solutions. During our cooperation no competence disputes arose. I believe the method of making decisions was also very innovative. If a need arose, a solution followed.

We were very pleased to hear opinions of the staff of the JU DSS that the support model fulfils in practice assumptions of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities because it applies the rule of creating equal educational conditions for disabled

persons in an open system; it is also based on co-responsibility of all the participants of the process, including the staff of the Institute, the DSS and the student in question. We are very much willing to share our experience with other institutes of the Jagiellonian University as well as other people interested in it, people outside of the university. This article is a manifestation of our intention to share because we learnt that implementation of an international document is not only possible in practice but it can also become a beautiful experience.

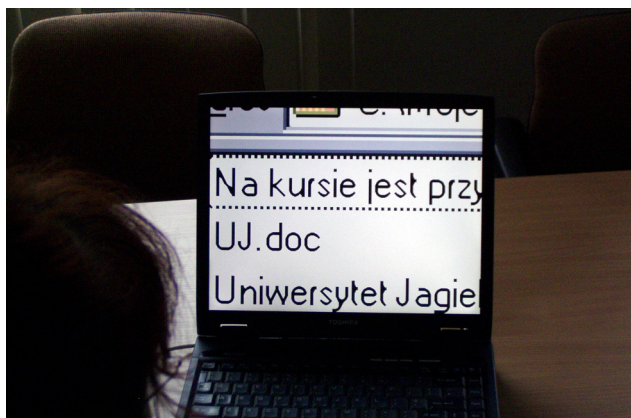
The student's perspective – Kamila Przygoda is interviewed by Dagmara Nowak-Adamczyk

Dagmara Nowak-Adamczyk: Kamila, we are here to talk about your impressions regarding your participation in the course which involved meeting senior fellow students who assisted you in learning Spanish. How would you assess that collaboration, what were the relations between you?

Kamila Przygoda: I would like to stress openness of people whom I met – we met after classes, I received materials that they had adapted and we went through a chunk of the material. I had materials in the electronic format, I used a computer and the people who helped me had their materials either in the printed version or on a laptop or they observed me doing exercises. Their support was valuable to me because I could ask them many questions. It was nice that I did not feel that teaching me is very much different for them from teaching other people, people without any disability.

DNA: What do you find of most value as regards your participation in the scheme?

KP: The fact that I could rely on their help, that I could choose the material that I wanted to analyse, that I could count on support of somebody who knew more than me; the fact that I was not left alone, that is without adapted textbooks which are required during classes, I was not left without exercises done, I could meet with people who could adapt the exercises



What was of most value in the project?

- New working experience in an unusual setting
- *The opportunity to assist another person and knowledge acquired on the training course at the JU DSS.*
- *First and foremost the fact that the project served a specific person: there were many practical activities which produced tangible results (rather than dry theory). On top of that, I myself learnt a great deal about disability, was involved in interesting and enriching practice with Kamila. It will certainly be useful, if in the future I meet a disabled person both in terms of education and privately.*

(quotations from the course evaluation questionnaires by students - project participants)

for me and could explain problems connected with a given chunk of the material. The majority of my fellow students told me after classes that if I had any problems, I could call them immediately, let them know and they would help me without hesitation. It was very valuable to me. I think that the people who supported me also had an important experience because they realized that teaching a blind person is not actually a problem, that they do not have to explain certain things to me over and over again. I heard one of them saying: "you know, I teach many people but I have never come across a person who would learn that fast despite difficulties with an access to the materials."

DNA: When it comes to learning Spanish, what do you find most difficult in accessing standard classes?

KP: First of all the fact that there are no adapted materials and during classes photocopied pages often appear all of a sudden and then I would prefer to have an adapted material and to use it as others use their materials. It is a problem, because before I receive them, before I take them to the JU DSS, before they get adapted, my fellow students are further afield with the material and frequently there is no time to go back to what has already been taught.

DNA: Did you notice any positive change in the behaviour, attitude or actions by your teachers towards you and your disability-related needs?

KP: At the beginning it was very difficult to me because I found myself in new surroundings, secondly, I did not have enough materials, thirdly, I had frequently to ask questions: "Excuse me, what word in on the blackboard?" or "where is the accent?". Now the cooperation runs more smoothly, because teachers know the rules of working with me and are aware of my limitations and possibilities connected with blindness. Any questions and requests for explaining the material are treated naturally. I think I should mention one thing: frequently when teachers come across a blind person they do not know what they can expect. Frequently they are not prepared for work with such a person and then it turns out that people have to learn about each other. I need to get used to certain things but teachers also take up such cooperation very soon. I wanted to highlight that cooperation between a student and a teacher is very important and valuable.

Summary

The course "Support for disabled persons in the process of language education" was completed in May 2013. All students-tutors received credits without any difficulties. Kamila, the blind student, is now in the middle of her summer exam session and is passing subsequent exams. We consider the project our joint success. It is the proof that presence of disabled persons in the academic community may be an inspiration for interesting activities and unconventional

What was most difficult in terms of organising and conducting meetings with Kamila?

- *I am used to writing things on paper, presenting them graphically when my student does not understand something. But with Kamila I learnt how to explain things in different ways.*
- *Possibly the effective adaptation of exercises, that is selecting ones which clearly present the problem to be solved by the learner.*
- *I think the preliminary stress resulting from a new and unfamiliar situation. I had never had classes with a blind person.*

(quotations from the course evaluation questionnaires by students - project participants)

projects. The success that provides benefits not only to the disabled but also to all the involved persons depends on cooperation and creativity in looking for solutions. In our case a problem of somebody's sight disability became of secondary importance. What became of paramount importance was ideas how to prepare students to fulfil their tasks, how to react to arising problems and difficulties, what else to do for the student tutoring to be efficient and effective. Kamila ceased to be a person in need and turned into a guide for teachers who in the future will teach Spanish to blind students fully professionally.

An attitude of openness and looking for solutions to the problem made it possible to improve quality of

teachers' work, to create a more attractive offer to students, to promote initiatives which are important for the society through activities going beyond a charity-like concept of help.

The end of the course is at the same time the beginning of a new perspective for the future. In the academic year 2013/2014 there are plans to announce the same option again. We also hope that the cooperation will be a source of ideas for others who "have a problem" at the moment. Our project is a proof that when you "have this problem" you receive a great opportunity and it would be a pity not to take it.

Małgorzata Perdeus – the author's profile on page 8.

Dr Ewa Palka – is a research associate at the Department of Spanish Studies, the JU Institute of Romance Studies, coordinator of practical Spanish language classes at Spanish Studies. Her research interests are: teaching Spanish and translation/interpreting, an area where she uses her vast experience of practicing translator/interpreter. Dr Palka also collaborates with the UNSECO Chair of Translation Studies and Intercultural Communication.

Dagmara Nowak-Adamczyk – the author's profile on page 8

You are kindly invited to use the rich offer available at the educational portal **darelearning.eu!**

It was developed with academic teachers in mind so that they can learn more about modern teaching methods while working with disabled persons. We are convinced that the information found there will be of use also for secondary-school educators. The offer of the portal includes educational suggestions and adaptations, film materials and interesting publications. To receive updated information and keep abreast of new developments just write to us at kontakt@darelearning.eu.

The **DARe-Learning** project is about learning from each other. We become familiar with our own and each other's needs, also those stemming from specific types and degrees of disability. We all learn so as to create and develop better knowledge societies, where no-one is excluded on grounds of his/her disability or for any other reason.

More at www.darelearning.eu





DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICE Jagiellonian University

THE OFFER OF THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICE

targets students who require educational support because of disability or health issues.

We also invite academic teachers and administration personnel who wish to improve their qualifications as regards the accessibility of university programmes vis à vis the needs of persons with disabilities.

THE BENEFITS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND THE DSS ARE:

- **drafting of an educational support strategy**
- **format-adapted courses and examinations**
- **cooperation of the Service's student affairs consultants with academic teachers/lecturers**
- **guidance concerning modern technological solutions**
- **English language classes for blind, partially sighted, deaf and hard of hearing students in a multimedia language workroom**
- **adaptation of teaching materials to electronic or Braille formats for blind persons**
- **agency or mediation in communication with other University units, if necessary**



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

- **The mission of our Service is to enable disabled students of the Jagiellonian University equal access to its educational offer, regardless of the kind and degree of disability.**
- **We strive to ensure that no student is disqualified at the beginning or during their studies because of disabilities or learning difficulties.**
- **We oppose all kinds of open or hidden discrimination.**
- **We support the constitutional right of disabled people to education, work and full participation in social life as we deeply believe this to be justified on both human and economic grounds.**
- **In our activities we are guided by the provisions of the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratified by Poland in September 2012.**
- **We also support all efforts aimed at the enforcement of the provisions of the Convention.**
- **In our way of thinking and actions we are inspired by the ideals of Jagiellonian Poland, tolerant and open for all citizens.**