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Win for YUSU on access for disabled students

Disabled Students' Officer Thomas Ron has announced new measures to improve access to support for students

By [Neil Johnston](#), News Editor (2012/13)

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YUSU Disabled Students' Officer Thomas Ron.

YUSU Disabled Students' Officer Thomas Ron has announced new measures to improve access to support which will lead to a 'level playing field' for students.

The University agreed to four key aims in a meeting with Ron and YUSU President Kallum Taylor last week.

Since being elected, Ron had aimed to examine and improve the system by which dyslexic, dyspraxic, and dyscalculic students got their benefits. He described the current system as "prohibitively expensive, inefficient, and hard for any student to understand."

While there was already funding available for students from low income backgrounds to help with the cost of the screenings, the University will now aim to help students from middle-income backgrounds that would have to pay for the assessment out of their own pocket or stretch their loans.

Currently, the cost of assessment is £400, but the University will now be seeking to reduce this cost by ten to 15 per cent. According to Ron, "We can get the same quality of assessment for a lesser price and Student Support Services will be actively seeking to do this, meaning that the overall quantity of payment will be lower."

The University will also be trying to cut the waiting list for dyslexic students to be assessed and importantly ensuring that all students get their benefits and support before the January exams.

A payment plan is also to be introduced where students will pay the cost over the course of the academic year, rather than in one lump sum. Ron says this will allow students to pay the costs along with their loans, rather than being short of money in their first term.

Finally, the University will be aiming to improve the information on the website for all new students to make the process less confusing in terms of the costs and what benefits are actually recommended.

On the overall changes Ron commented: "These changes will be very important in creating an efficient, progressive and cost-effective system that will not penalise students. This issue affected both my predecessors and I am keen to make this change that will help disabled students get the benefits they deserve and not be forced to forgo the benefits they need. We are told that these improvements will be in place by the beginning of the forthcoming academic year."

He added: "This was a very important plank of my manifesto which affected many disabled students. Being asked to cough up £400 is tough for anyone, whether they are from low or middle-income backgrounds. I believe these changes will make it easier for everyone to get the diagnostic assessment and will ensure that no student goes without the level playing field they deserve."

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