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# DDA update - Tactile Graphics for Blind Students

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*Let the National Centre for Tactile Diagrams (NCTD) help you to provide full access to educational materials for blind students*

If you have blind or visually impaired students at your institution studying Maths, Stats & OR you will know how much information presented in graphical form they may miss out on – in textbooks and lecturers’ overheads and lecture notes; logarithmic diagrams, graphs, and charts of all kinds: bar, column, pie, flow... the list is almost endless since Maths, Stats and OR are all subjects which include a large amount of graphics.

The NCTD is a non-profit organisation, sited by HEFCE at the University of Hertfordshire in 1999 and is headed by Dr Sarah Morley Wilkins and Dave Gunn, both highly regarded in the field. The NCTD designs and produces tactile diagrams, maps and pictures and provides a variety of training and consultancy services to improve university expertise in supporting blind and visually impaired students. With other funding the NCTD also supports blind individuals, businesses and organisations with tactile graphics and related services.

Tactile graphics are a translation of visual graphical information into a ‘feelable’ format, which blind people explore with their fingers. Most images need considerable re-design to be effective in tactile form, and the NCTD has a skilled team of staff who specialise in this process.

We design new materials on request, but may have existing materials in our archive which may suit your requirements – thus saving time and money. The production of these materials can be paid for from the student’s Disabled Students Allowance.

To help HEIs and LTSN centres understand how tactile graphics can be used effectively in the learning and teaching process, we have just compiled and sent out a “Tactile Graphics Handbook Pack” to every university disability office in England and Northern Ireland and every LTSN centre.

This Handbook Pack includes sample tactile diagrams, guidelines for students on how to use these diagrams, guidelines for HE staff on how to select images and how to support the student, and a selection of case studies.

It also explains why graphics can not always be produced in a tactile format and gives the criteria for how to select diagrams for tactile diagram production. For example, some images are just too complex to be shown appropriately in a tactile form, and are better described in words by subject experts.

If you need further assistance, the NCTD can help you choose which graphics to produce in tactile version and can undertake the production. We also run courses and presentations for HE staff - please contact us for details.

**More DDA updates on page 20...**

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Who to ask for:

- For info on courses, presentations and consultancy: Diana Maniati, HE Liaison Officer
- For info on tactile graphic provision: Dave Gunn, Technical Manager
- Director: Dr Sarah Morley Wilkins

