If you can reserve your main questions for the Q&A and those are questions that we will keep an eye on and present to Patrick at the end.

Still a few more people coming in. Just to make sure that I have got my notes around, so I don't forget the things I need to say.

First of all, you should have received a dual invite. The normal button to join us and one from our new captions service we are using -- I'm not sure whether they call themselves Caption.Ed or captioned. But it's a novel solution that a couple of UK universities and tech companies have joined together to produced, so you might be interested in seeing what they can do. I'll put their transcript up right at the end of the session today so that you can see it.

So our presentation today is by Patrick McGrath from TextHelp and he is talking about enabling student choice and voice, especially in the technology field. I have already captioned it so I found it fascinating and much related to next week's presentation which is actually going to be from the other side of the border in Ireland, from the AHEAD team who also talk about UDL and student voice.
The other people on the screen are Jo who will be playing the video today. Jo, as you know is the NADP administrator, and Jonathan who is fielding questions and he's vice-chair of the board of directors in charge of professional development. So if we four stitch our screens off and Jo will play the video.

Thank you, Jo.

>> Good afternoon everyone and once again a huge welcome to all of you joining us today for this presentation as part of the NADP virtual conference 2020. It is my privilege and pleasure to be here, I hope you are all safe and well and over the last few weeks enjoyed a productive virtual conference with NADP.

Today I will be focusing on choice and voice. We will be looking at choice and voice through the sense of technology. So the approaches of choice and voice of how we can take those and utilise those to our best advantage within all the environments that we work with to benefit both our colleagues and also, of course, our students.

So we'll be looking through a few slides today, we'll be looking at a few practical examples of technology and where they fit and hopefully be giving you a few core recommendations as to how we can start
to focus on enabling more choice and voice with the students that we serve and also to ensure that they can achieve their very best high having that choice and voice.

I'm going to go through a number of slides today and we'll have a look first in terms of who I am. I'm Patrick McGrath, I'm education technology strategist here at a company called TextHelp, a company you may have heard of. Any time after today you can reach out and get me at edtech@texthelp.com or follow me on Twitter @TH_PatrickM. That emoji is me prior to lockdown, which is why it looks a little different from the version you saw earlier on the video. The hairline and waistline has changed. Nevertheless, hopefully that stays within your mind.

My job in TextHelp is to ensure there is a key focus on teaching and learning first and technology second. TextHelp of course is a technology company, you will be aware of us. In terms of my job and what I do and the purpose of today is to put teaching and learning first. Technology is there to underpin quality teaching and learning for both our colleagues, our educators and also for our students. But it's very important as we go through today that we always put that at the fore.
There's another thing that's very important and very close to our hearts in TextHelp and of course me in my role, is to ensure that when we look at that, that actually the technology that's underpinning teaching and learning can provide genuine and true accessibility for all of our students. So we want to look at teaching and learning first, we want to ensure that is underpinned by good technology and that that is driven by an assurance that that technology provides equity of access and supports all of our diverse range of students we all serve on a daily basis.

In terms of TextHelp, this is not a sales pitch as you can tell from my role, but to put it in perspective where we come from, we promote accessible teaching and learning. We have Read&Write which is used by millions of students across the globe, whether that's through UDL or through a full campus license. That's what we are well-known for, the support of access to literacy and language and in support of that. We focus also on digital maths, how do we provide accessibility there and within simply writing tasks and how do we make websites more accessible. Not just tick the boxes but deliver true and meaningful accessible technology on top of a typical current website.
Let's focus on the job at hand today in our session. That, of course, is around choice and voice. I thought I'd share with you the outcomes of a few questions we asked a body of students in the academic year 2018-2019. So we set about targeting around 1600 students across tertiary education, so that stretched about 40 per cent or so from further education and the balance from higher education.

We wanted to get their feel for technology and their view on technology and what was important to them. I should stress that whilst these pupils were picked fully at random by the institutions, there was a really clear representation of students that we would traditionally support within TextHelp in terms of those students with a requirement for individual needs or supports through technology.

So it's a good wide-reaching sample. Let me share with you the first question. The first question was this: what technology helps you most. So in your studies, what technology helps you most. A very surprising result from this one. We only asked them five questions in this small survey. The number one that came back was this, actually digital resources. I'll start to explain some of the rationale behind this as we
go through the presentation today. But 92 per cent of the students that responded said that digital resources were the thing that benefited them most. To give you an idea of some of the other questions we asked, we asked is it digital resources, is it a better VLE, is it more use in the classroom, is it simply access to devices or is it better assistive technology tools, 92 per cent said digital resources.

We'll come to why that is really important as we go through the presentation today. The next question was: what thing do you want when it comes to technology? This surprised us as well. 84 per cent of students said choice. So for 84 per cent of all students across our sample, they said they wanted more choice in the technology that they used to access their courses. Again, to share with you some of the other options they had, they had the option of choosing richer resources, choice of technology, better knowledge in staff, do you need the staff to improve to help you in your learning, do you need better technology on class, or do you need access to more assistive technology. 84 per cent said we simply want to choose the technology that we use, not have it directly dictated to us.

The last question I'm going to share with you
today, and you can have access to this full survey after the session today by contacting our friends at NADP or myself directly, the last question was this: out of 10 how would you rate your lecturer/teacher's understanding of technology. So do your teachers or lecturers understand how you use technology and do they understand how to use it to the best of their ability to benefit you. That's really what we are driving at. How do you rate your lecturer/teacher's understanding of technology. Surprising for some, maybe not for others, 3.2 was the average in that. So from 1 to 10, 3.2 is how students perceive educators in terms of their understanding of how technology can help with individual learning.

The flip side of that was how do they rate themselves, they rated themselves as 8.9 in terms of their use of technology. So they believe they understand technology considerably better than the teaching staff. So all these questions have considerable sway on how we look at choice and voice. Some of the things we can start to draw out from this, we know that there is digital capital within our students. What I mean by that, that there is digital knowledge of tools of devices within our student population. Clearly, they
are using it in their every day lives. Clearly, they have understood and built coping strategies and mechanisms to use the rich variety of tools that mobile devices or tablets or desktops can help them support the individual way they learn and of course their individual needs. So there's digital capital there. We need to recognise that.

This is important as we move through to giving students choice and voice because we have to recognise that the capital and the knowledge is actually there. But on the flip side of that we have to recognise a second thing and I hope you all know and share this from your work with your students, that there is a complex relationship with technology, particularly assistive technology, when it comes to students.

So yes we have students that can grasp the technology quickly and easily understand how to apply it to support them. But equally we will have a diverse range of students who may struggle with independent ways to use technology, who will struggle with individual strategies as to how that technology that has been presented to them as actually been able to support them or it can be used perhaps for other needs of.

We have to recognise there's capital there, but we also need to understand that we need to be able to
understand that complex relationship they have. Students having that able to use technology and applying that to their individual approaches to learning is perhaps another thing. That's why it's important that we move on and we consider the two things at hand that framed this original presentation.

The first one is, of course, choice. Students already highlight this. Why choice is important in this case is we understand that by giving students a wide variety of choice in what they use to frame their learning in terms of technology and how they use it are two very different things. Because we find students choose to use particular pieces of assistive technology or perhaps just technology in general, and may not be for the particular reason that they have been issued to them. So a student who perhaps has visual impairment may find that a general piece of technology is useful to them outside of what they have been assessed on and provided with. By providing them with a wider range of tools and more choice, we can enable them to build, envelope and create their own coping strategies with the widest range of technology tools.

Remember, the purpose of today is to focus on choice and voice as it relates to technology. It's a much
wider session to think about student choice and voice in terms of how and what and why they have motivation for learning. We'll stick with technology for today. So choice is very important.

Secondly, of course, voice. That student voice to be able to contribute. To be able to articulate what it is they need and how they need to use it and how that can develop and envelope their pursuit of learning. Really, really important that we offer these two things.

If we think about those things together and how they might manifest themselves within our own environments, they work hand in hand. There is no use having one without the other in terms of moving forward, particularly when it comes to technology.

What that looks like is simply this. When we start to provide students with choice in what they need to equip them for learning, the tools that they need to utilise to enhance their learning experience and give them equity of access, that choice gives power to voice. It's a very clear circular motion because as they have more and more choice, they feel empowered, they feel more strategic in their approach to learning and that encourages them to put forward their voice in terms of what they need in that. In my experience has
contributed very directly to their voice input directly to
lecturers and to teachers in terms of their overall
approach to learning, their motivation to learning and
the subject areas that they want to focus on.

So choice gives power to voice.

As we think about those two things, how does that
look, if we combine choice and voice, what are some of
the essential ingredients within that? If a pupil,
a student, has the choice to make those sorts of
decisions in terms of what helps them with learning, has
the voice to express how exactly they want to contribute
or direct their own learning, perhaps set their own goals,
then the two things add up. They add up in these two
different ways. Number one, what a student can start
to see from choice and voice is a sense of integrity.
Integrity in terms of how they are undertaking their
learning. Integrity in terms of being able to
acknowledge that there is a diverse range of students
around them and that they themselves approach
learning in a very different way. They will recognise the
integrity of that.

But also as they start to embrace choice and voice,
the second thing that becomes really apparent to
students is the efficacy of what they are doing. The
ability to make that choice of the technology that they would use to help them with learning starts to lend itself to efficacy in what they are learning and the difficulties that they may well face, the challenges that they may well face and the coping strategies that they built as a result of those choices that they have made.

Of course, that leads into a further circle of them being able to develop those choices, hone those choices into something that can be more meaningful and useful to them going forward.

If you take those two things, integrity and efficacy, what does that start to turn into as we go forward? So we start with choice and voice, we start to deliver choice, we start to enable voice, students start to see the integrity of that approach and the efficacy and benefits in that approach. What we're really doing by providing choice and voice, whether it's in learning or whether it's in technology, is this. We are starting to provide the core elements of student agency. Because by delivering that choice and voice, we are also enabling things like activation of prior knowledge, giving them increased engagement with the subject matter at hand because we are making it more accessible, we are hopefully motivating them in that process, through voice,
we are hopefully giving them a better purpose. We are clearly giving them a very clear ownership of everything that they do. That all comes back round to self-efficacy that you can see directly on the slides in front of you.

These are really, really important areas and they are a symptom or consequence of embracing choice and voice. Perhaps that is only through technology which is where we started today. But that, of course, has huge and wider implications to exactly how students want to learn and the terms that they want to learn on, not just how they are supported by technology per se.

Student agency is really key. Actually the OECD report education 2030 makes it very clear that equity of access and accessibility is critical for learning going forward in their vision. But actually the number one thing that they put above all simply because it applies to all students is this concept of student agency. The only path forward to student agency is to start to ensure that all students have that choice and voice. Again, today is simply about choice and voice with the technology tools that they can use to give them the widest range of accessibility and address their individual needs in a way that supports and helps them.

But agency is very clearly front and centre with
many discussions and plans that are taking place right now.

Of course, in the last few months we have also seen inevitably the huge rise in online learning and choice and voice has perhaps never been more important when it comes to whether we're attending lectures in class or online. To a degree accessibility hasn't been front and centre in the remote learning, thankfully it's beginning to increase. But what we have learned is that by giving students the widest choice of technology tools, the widest access to platforms and giving them also a range of very specific tools that we know through our own experience as practitioners can help them is that it has enabled them to start to choose and find and explore what can help make learning more equitable in a fully digitally embraced age.

Of course we know that going forwards things are subject to change. Some of you will be going back to full-time classes, others will have a longer period of remote learning. It's important, therefore, that we build our students to be independent with their use of technology and give them the widest range of tools that they possibly can. Let's look at if we consider that choice and voice is important to students, it's important
to build agency, it's important to equip them with coping strategies that they need in terms of the wide variety of technology, what are the key steps that we can start to take? Some of these you will have taken already and some of these are absolutely worth some consideration going forward.

There's three core areas that we need to consider. The first one is flexibility in terms of the digital resources our students have asked for, the way in way we present those and the way in which students can interpret and utilise those. We need to equip students with the tools, the technology tools that they can use to embrace their learning with ease. No point giving them flexible resources if we don't give them the tools. Of course some of our tasks need to change there. We need to look at those in terms of the scope we have today.

The most important thing from my perspective is this. Embracing universal design for learning. I know many of the members of NADP will be fully versed in universal design for learning, NADP are great advocates of change for universal design for learning but there may be some of you on this presentation who may not be familiar with it. I'll put it in its simplest form
because universal design for learning deserves hours of explaining.

But if you think about universal design for learning for me I want to break it down in its basics and its basics for me is it is a framework and it was developed by cast.org, the link is on your screen and you can access that later today. The universal design for learning provides a really clear yet simple framework to show us how we can start to adapt our approach to teaching and to learning and to technology and all of the points in between that can ensure that we deliver our teaching and learners learn in the widest variety of ways possible. Why do we do that? We do that because we want to at all costs remove any barriers to learning by our students or for our students.

So think about universal design for learning just for the purposes of today as that simply framework. Much more to it. But in its very simplest terms universal design for learning simply considers these three individual areas, that we should be planning for multiple means of engagement. So that is not engagement in the shiny button and flashing lights sense of engagement as some technology have considered as engagement. That is about building
motivation and about building on prior knowledge, that is about working together with your peers directly on engagement. There's much more to it than that but in its simplest terms multiple ways we can engage students in learning.

Then there's ultimate ways we want to have those content, that teaching represented. So one student may, of course, grab a digital resource online, they may use then a speech to text tool, they may be able to play that back, but perhaps that student would be more comfortable with a file that is directly sent to them that is a audio book, perhaps that student would be more comfortable and find it more accessible where that is enriched for their own individual supports for example it's highly visual, rather than highly textual.

So there are many ways that we want to be able to represent. Technology kind of plugs directly into that representation side for me because representation may well require us to rethink our approach and in fact does our approach to resources. But it also should be empowering to the student to give them the technology tools that can have any resources that they gather easily repurposed in just a few buttons to help support them in the ways that they need supported.
Then, of course, there's expression. So UDL calls for multiple means of expression. Alternative ways for assessment, for articulation, for representation of learning. To give students the widest range of technology tools and access to those, including assistive technology, can help to start deliver that.

So universal design for learning for me is by far and away the number one thing that we can start to pursue that really helps us embrace and encourage and enable choice and voice. When we do that, we start to create a different breed of learners. We start to create those learners that are purposeful, knowledgeable and strategic and goal-directed. So there are many more outcomes from universal design for learning than providing students with the choice of accessing resources and engaging with learning in ways and alternative ways that may suit them better or support their individual needs.

We also have a huge upside to this as well. So UDL for me number one. What is number two? Number two, when we think about choice and voice for me moves on to staff CPD. Staff CPD, of course, think about how we might embrace something like UDL. That's a huge change within an organisational structure
and within culture and requires a commitment of time, it
requires a commitment of CPD and is, of course,
a journey for everyone involved in the process.

But there are things that we can start to do in
terms of CPD that can start to encourage student choice
and voice. We talked earlier on about the recognition
that students have digital capital, they have knowledge,
they have built coping strategies. We need to be able
to listen to our students through their voice and
understand what helps and supports them best and not
simply make a straightforward assessment of what it is
we think they need and a recognition that tools are very
different. So our colleagues, teachers, lecturers that we
work with need to have access to the student voice we
work with. That is empowering for the teachers and the
students. We have to have other things in there as well
in terms of we need to incorporate blended learning
within that approach. Because what students use in
terms of assistive technology or technology in general in
the classroom may well be very different than what they
access at home and on, say, a mobile device.

So we need to approach CPD differently. We need
to enforce this concept of choice and voice within that.
So, there's a whole session again on CPD in here.
Number one UDL starts to enable choice and voice very, very clearly. It's absolutely ingrained in the framework. Number two, a modification of CPD, to ensure that within that we have students as a very central part of the voice within that. And when it comes to technology, to start to express exactly how they use technology to support them.

So number three then -- so UDL, CPD -- the use of devices. Those students have developed coping strategies they have used apps, the inbuilt assistive technology within mobile devices to help them within their daily lives and their learning. It's really important when we talk about choice that we don't talk about choice on a simply desktop, on a laptop, we think how that may be used on any platform. So that choice is not based on a platform, not on a specific device but it gives students the freedom and flexibility to choose the technology tools that may work in any environments that may suit them best, rather than suggesting a straightforward choice.

So last and definitely not least, the point I suppose of the conversation today is what do we think about tech and how can tech start to enable this choice and voice. So we have said UDL through the technology lens, we
can ensure UDL principles are enshrined directly within the technology we use. CPD, technology at the heart of CPD but student voice articulating how they may benefit from technology. Different platforms, the technology has to be used there, but the bottom line for technology is it gives students this, something that is flexible, adaptable and personal. By giving students choice in the technology that they use to support their needs, these three areas become more and more and more apparent and more important. Because students need to be flexible.

We said earlier that one student's particular assistive technology tool that they may well have been given or provided access to within your institution may well on the surface suit their needs but we don't always understand all of the minor changes and features that are there within a particular technology tool. So providing them with the widest range of technology tools allows them to be flexible, adaptable and most important to be personal. Choice is critical within that.

Let's stop and think for a moment or two about assistive technology. Assistive technology, I have to be honest, is not a phrase that I use overly. I don't slight away from the phrase it's very important to our industry
and our students, of course, number one. But I want for the purpose of today to explain why that may be the case from my perspective. We need to look at how we define assistive technology. We don't put assistive technology in a very specific box that helps only some students. Because if we are to think about inclusion, this is really, really important and we'll go through this. One of my favourite definitions of assistive technology is the original definition that was detailed back on a paper in 2007. We still hold it to today.

It's this, what is assistive technology, it's any technology that broadens the range of learning experiences offered to students. There is no mention of individual needs or specific learning needs or anything within that. I think that's a fabulous way to think about assistive technology. It's just any -- underline any technology that broadens the range of learning experience offered to students. Give students choice and voice in what they need and use from a technology standpoint and this exactly defines it. Any technology that broadens the range of learning experiences offered to students.

Let's think about assistive technology slightly differently. Let's think about assistive technology
without labels. Why? Because what we find in an all inclusive environment is that we do not have segregation within there as you see on screen, we do not provide or need to provide very specific tools to that segregated area. If we provide choice to all of those students, all of those students in exactly the same way, then they learn from one another and build much deeper coping strategies and strategies to use technology.

So providing no labels on technology in general enables students to make a greater choice and enables them to make a greater choice that empowers, enables supports and helps them. Take for example text to speech which is built into our very own Read&Write. Text to speech is a fabulous tool for students with dyslexia, ADHD, those students that need that extra help when it comes to reading material, perhaps just reducing cognitive load. That tool is useful for students who perhaps don't have dyslexia and could help them in exam provision and technology.

When we give them access to the tool, what happens is we have less stigma with regard to those tools and we have more choice. That leads directly to voice as we have said before and most importantly it leads directly to students having better outcomes.
because they have that wider range of options.

Continuing in that Read&Write theme and I talked about it very loosely they start, many of you may be familiar with the Read&Write product. But one of the things we have done within Read&Write is try to take first of all design it around UDL principles that we talked about earlier, ensure that the tools that we built in provide students with choice in multiple different ways to access, consume and learn from any content online, on PDF or in Google Docs or Word. So we give them a menu of tools and the widest range of tools we can offer can support the widest range of students. We can have text to speech, enable them to flip it into an audible file. Voice notes are very powerful there as well. So for students with a wide variety of needs or combination of needs, tools like Read&Write, multiple ways to reach their learning are fundamentally important. We extend that into things like maths as well. If I take EquatIO, EquatIO is really useful at creating maths content. But it's even better when it's used with a standardised screen reader because all of a sudden we have accessible maths but we need to be able to be providing students with a full catalogue of technology in order for them to benefit from that.
So they'll need screen reader, EquatIO, they'll need access to these tools. This can help students with visual impairment, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, verbal impediments as well. So there are many, many ways by providing the widest variety of tools can help these students out. So really important when you look at technology that you consider have they been considered around UDL, because what does UDL give? UDL gives choice and that's what's fundamentally important as we go through the presentation.

If you think about small changes, think back to CPD. If we take a typical lecture we could, of course, by one button press as part of our CPD and as part of increasing our understanding of technology with our colleagues, add one button to our browser, this little button here called Screencastify. What does that enable a teacher or lecturer to do? One button records everything he or she shares and says on their screen. Think about that for remote learning and the ramifications for choice and accessibility, one button press and everything has been recorded. We have now given students another way to access the content. That is all we have asked our colleagues to do. This is very important that we start to provide this range of choice to
our students.

Take a colleague presenting a piece of content that traditionally they may have shared out as a PowerPoint file or static through a VLE. If they press that button, now all they have to do in Google Slides or Apple Keynote they can start the captions when they start to talk and without doing one more thing throughout that presentation they have closed captions. Some students who don't even require the closed captions will read and consume the content better because they have the option to do so. The students with individual needs benefit hugely from having that there, but many may not need access but many of them will read them depending on their individual circumstances.

But what do we do by taking these simply steps? We give them choice and choice is the most important thing we can do to build more robust students by providing them technology to support them. As we go through the final slides I want to leave a couple of things with you. The first one is this, please please don't think about technology when we consider it for our students as the daily special. Think about this as a menu. We don't want to have one tool that can support an individual need that we have identified.
That's not enough. We need to give students choice. We don't even want to give students a la carte menu in this case and shouldn't pursue giving them a limited range of options where it's difficult for them to find the one that fits them. What we really need to pursue when we think about choice and voice with technology is a full buffet. Access to the widest range of tools. That's understanding as our students as we said at the outset have a understanding of technology and we need to understand that and give them guidance but we need to provide them with the widest range of tools to do that. Focus in on those specials, the individual tools we know support students over and above everything else. But still give them access to the widest range. We don't know how they individually learn or their approaches or strategies to learn. By giving them these tools we give them the strategies that they need to learn on an equitable and equal access.

As we go through our summary, choice and voice where we started today and again we were focused directly on choice and voice through technology, that gives us the capability to increase work, the amount of work, the quality of work, increase focus, increase interest, make our students more tenacious as they go,
be more supported. We add challenge because they have self-directed choice and voice within that. We increase their goals and most importantly for me within this, we increase their coping strategy capability. We give them the tools they need to succeed. That's ultimately, for me, what choice and voice is about and that's how it has evidenced itself through all the interaction I have had, everywhere from primary, secondary and tertiary and to the world of work when it comes to technology tools. When we do that we start to remove the model of segregation of access to technology. Yes, we address the specific needs but by providing the widest range they learn from colleagues and peers. They learn to use mainstream tools as well as which is what they will have access to in the world of work. Providing that tool kit, based on the fundamental essentials like Read&Write and EquatIO and screen reader, those core tools are very important, but it's equally as important to give them access and create true inclusion when we do that.

Everybody, every stakeholder needs to be involved, from teachers, to IT to our students, everybody needs a voice if we are to pursue this and give students of the right technology tools to used. A lot of what we have
said here today is underpinned and underlined by universal design for learning. It's crucially important. If there's one take away from today, look closer at universal design for learning if you are not already doing so and again I know many of you will be. But think about when it comes to technology ensuring that those technology tools are designed with universal design for learning in mind and not designed for single use. They are designed to give students the flexibility. That's the single most important thing we can do.

Finally in terms of general advice moving forward, when I do talks like this we try and instigate change and promote choice and voice and UDL and the importance of those things, access for me is the big thing for me. I'm a big fan of acronyms and access is a very important one. I'll leave you with this. As we consider student choice and voice, think about these six areas.

When we do so we provide accessibility for all, true inclusion, we give students the choice, we start to provide of the widest possible accessibility, we have no restrictions, we don't place restrictions we give accessibility to all. We do that by providing comprehensive technology, a comprehensive range of technology choices. We provide better CPD. Our
colleagues need to understand that the choices students make are there to help support them and not get in the way of learning and that students' voice is critical to the CPD curve.

From that, what do we achieve? We achieve empowerment for our students. We achieve a strategic nature in our students because they carefully pick the tools that uniquely suit and help to support them. Last and definitely not least, we start to work toward true student agency, where our students are genuinely regardless of their individual need have access to the tools that they need to promote agency, to take ownership, to build strategies and to increase their independence moving forward.

With that in mind I want to thank you very much for your time today. I really do appreciate it. I'd also like to thank NADP for having me here today and as a guest on this virtual conference 2020. I do hope to be back. In the meantime I am sure there will be follow-ups with some of these resources directly with your friends at NADP. But from me you can reach out and get me at edtech@texthelp.com and at @TH_PatrickM.

So that very clearly rounds up today. I think we
are now going to go into a Q&A session and I'm looking forward to any questions that you may have. Thank you again. I wish you all the best for the rest of the summer and please do stay safe and of course in the last few months do stay sane and promote your own health and wellbeing within the nature of everything that we are all experiencing together.

Thank you.

>>> Thank you very much Patrick. That was great. Thank you very much. And very clear. I'm sure there are plenty of questions. There are quite a few buzzing around in my mind. Obviously on how we manage student choice comes to mind and how that translates to some sort of strategy for within the institutions we work in or agencies we work in and also external assessors brought on a question on this, how that translates to providing choice within DSA guidelines for example.

Without any further ado, there's a few questions that have come in. The first one from Beth Baxter: how do we give student choice and voice as advisors/assessors within a rigidly funded environment that actively shuts down recommendations that don't fit the standard package?
The easy questions first, I like that. I do -- obviously the role of advisors and assessors is an essential and critical one to students undertaking third level study. Advisors and assessors are best placed based on their knowledge to understand the unique needs of the student, explore that and also be in touch with the technology solutions that are there.

I totally agree with Beth on the rigid nature of DSA within that. For me there's a long path to change that and actually the concept of choice and voice in the way the system is in place currently doesn't facilitate that as I think Beth was referring to.

For me, the onus starts to go on in two ways. The first way is on the institution themselves because if you look at things like -- and maybe we'll come to this later -- if you look at things like embracing concepts of UDL, UDL calls for that choice and voice in very general terms and indeed very specific terms and I think it behoves the institution itself to offer a wider choice and voice in general terms across the student body not just to those students who they may well perceive to benefit from it.

So that's one side. The other side is educators themselves. One thing that has held back that choice
and voice and again I'm talking about technology and not necessarily about learner-led learning is that ret since of how work may be completed and interpreted or what tools or devices may be used. So there has to be some freedom granted within that and a little bit more of a release from an educators perspective. So I think in short it's hard to change where we are with DSA but it's a critical piece of understanding of student needs and giving them the right tools that can truly support them. But we know they can benefit from giving them a wider range of choice and that comes back to the institutions and how they are teaching live.

>> Lynn, did you have a response to that answer?

>> I wanted to add a bit to this actually and the fact that this links in so well with next week's webinar which is delivered by our link colleagues from AHEAD in Ireland and one of the questions to think about they pose at the end is: is our DSA system actually holding us back to actually achieve full universal design for learning. I'll throw that one out there because I think -- they posed it at the end of their webinar, but I think it's something to think about all the way through, is how can we work within our DSA system but still
achieve universal design. It's a complex one, I think.

>> Lynn --

>> The other thing --

>> One of the things is in the tools that may be already included within DSA and obviously without sounding commercially our Read&Write tool is in there. The interesting thing about a tool that is designed with universal design for learning at its centre by its very nature means that even if it is recommended -- so Read&Write may be recommended for text to speech -- but there are 20 other buttons to be pressed within Read&Write that can help with dictation and prediction and can help in many different ways. I suppose in the interim period if we start to focus on tools that have that at its core that at least starts to work around the guidelines we have there. If we look at the tools themselves they may be for a specific need but students will find their way through them and find strategies within the other options that they may be weren't assessed on or maybe weren't targeted at them but they have access to those by default.

>> At the beginning of the presentation you mentioned 84 per cent of students wanted to have more choice and it would be great to have a link to that full
survey. Is it possible you can share that.

>> Yes I'll get it out to you after today.

>> One of the questions that came in on the back of that was do students really understand all that is available to them. Do they have that full capital knowledge that you suggested?

>> Well, so there used to be a phrase a number of years ago that was used a lot on when we started talking about education technology, rather than technology in general and that was our students are digital natives, they just get technology and that is not a phrase I would ever use. But I do like to talk about digital capital. Students are familiar with tools and how they are used outside of teaching and learning.

The challenge with that is that -- I think this is where you were going with this Jonathan -- don't necessarily understand how those tools that they use could be applied to teaching and learning. And that's part of the wider education challenge, sorry for the overuse of that word, but informing them how. There's another question in that survey I didn't put on the presentation. This was answered very heavily in one favour. We said what is the digital tool that helped you most when revising. So we were looking at exam
preparation rather than day-to-day learning. We gave them a number of options, bear in mind this was a year and a half ago, the number one was Snapchat was the most used digital resource. These are things as educators we wouldn't necessarily think about that this would be of fundamental use to them.

So I think we have to build on that capital but at the same time recognise that we have to translate all of that knowledge they have into how they can use it to their advantage for learning. So I think we have a long way to go there. I don't think they fully understand the choices that they can make. A better response to that question we asked the students was instead of the word choice, it may have been flexibility that they were thinking in their minds to use things as and when, but we really need to be focusing in on choice.

>> Thank you.

>> Can I jump in, Jonathan? I did some research back when I was doing my masters which was text based and I analysed a lot of first year students who had rated themselves quite highly on their ability to use tech but when we actually then went into testing on just general stuff that we use, Word, Excel plus other basic programmes, their knowledge was actually really
quite low. So we found they were overrating themselves.

So I wondered if that might have come into play with this score that you showed for when they rated themselves.

>> Yes, absolutely, Lynn. I think there's further evidence of that and I can only point to secondary level examples rather than third level. In obviously the last few months we have had all students learning from home, so in secondary a lot of that learning moved from in-class instruction to things like Google Classroom so their equivalent of an LMS or VLE. So many students struggled, teachers were overwhelmed with technical questions, how do I add an attachment, how do I upload this miss. So we know there is a disconnect between what they think is their understanding of technology to what we need them to know.

But at the same token we know they are independent and exploring what they have at their disposal and trying to figure out how it helps. We have seen lots of language students using text to speech where they don't perceive it as assistive technology but they use it to prepare for oral examinations. They have found their way to do that. But if we don't give them
the choice, they're never going to do that. So it's a little bit chicken and egg.

>> We have a question from Claire Wright -- I think we're running out of time, I think we've gone for quite a few more minutes and we have tons of questions coming in -- but Claire is asking: just wondering how students might be able to more easily decide what suits them best, DSA recommendations aside, is there any kind of comparative information about all these kinds of resources -- I think it's quite a long question -- or functionality or various tech might be very useful. Lots of software seems to be doing quite similar things, so I find it quite bewildering. I think with all this the devil is in the differences in detail of functionality. I think they call this sort of thing conversion evolution. It's a good question.

>> It's very true and the one thing we have to consider in that is that in the commercial world we live in everybody will have their agenda for their software being better than another. I'll obviously say Read&Write. But there's nothing central that drives itself as impartial when we're in wider sessions for students, it's that the plus of a lot of these companies and solutions out there is that they will give a lot of free
trials and so we have a good trial list we can give students to use independently. There shouldn't be much of a learning curve initially with the tools themselves. But to say one is better than other, there's nothing comparative in that way apart from feature sets.

I would refer you back to the first question which is if there are tools that are built with universal design for learning in mind, and make that the first thing to think about, then we know there's an element of research has gone into the tools and there will be a range of opportunities for a very wide range of students rather than steering them down the line of something very specific.

So no is the answer and that's of course something we would love to see. I think students need access to that going forward.

>> Brilliant. Thank you, Patrick. I think we are running out of time. I think literally we have a minute or so to go. Thank you very much, that's very inspiring really and it's about breaking some of the boundaries really or restrictions isn't it and not thinking about DSA regulations or how we currently live in, and being creative, I guess.

But utilising the student voice or really I made
a note is just make sure we have a listening ear and who is that ear and how do we then translate that into a strategy for practice.

>> Absolutely.

>> Anything else to add?

>> I just want to draw to a close really and the fact that I just wanted to mention that we have two videos for you on the website this week, both of which are about sensory impairment, the Thomas Pocklington Trust have produced guidance to help you support blind and visually impaired students. And Martin, from the National Deaf Children's Society, has produced guidance as well. This is a summary of the guidance, but we also have the full documents on our COVID-19 resource hub.

Bookings are open for next week's webinar, which is Dara Ryder and Lorraine Gallagher from AHEAD Ireland, exploring and strengthening the role of disability officers in a changing landscape. Having just finished doing the captioning for that, I'm looking forward to being able to sit down and listen to it properly. It's very interesting.

We would also like to highlight that our new report was released last week, the one being of disability
professionals in the further and higher education workplace. Quite a shocking read in places. Would love your feedback on it and your experiences too and you can find that in the resources section of our website under NADP publications.

I sent out a couple of messages this week. One for the journal. Our journal article submission is middle of September. We are looking for more articles for that and Paddy Turner is the editor this time. On week 10 we have a presentation and then we are following it by a networking event and the networking event is all about us. It's what have we done during COVID-19 to help keep us sane. Paddy has already sent me a picture of a bottle of wine for his contribution. I have had a few from members, some craft work and some lovely pictures of exercise routes and things like. If you are going to week 10 of the conference, submit something to show what you have been doing, that would be great and we'll have a bit of a networking event and chat about that.

Once again, Patrick, thank you so much, that was very interesting and stimulated a lot of conversation and I'm sure I'll get quite a bit of feedback comments which I'll pass on to you and if you could let us have that link
that would be great.

  >> No problem. I'll get that all underway.

  >> Thank you all very much and goodbye and we'll see you next week.