

Further Education

Students with dyslexia attending further education courses may experience difficulties in a number of areas including reading, writing and spelling, but with support they can learn strategies and alternative learning methods to overcome most of these and other related difficulties in areas such as memory and organisational skills. Many institutions have responded well to the needs of their students and offer support in a number of ways. Prospective students should ask what the institution's policy on dyslexia is.

Every student with dyslexia is different and should be treated as an individual and helped to develop the strategies that are most appropriate to their personal needs. Because some students with dyslexia prior to entering further education have already developed some compensatory strategies, their literacy skills can appear superficially adequate. A closer investigation, however, will often reveal underlying difficulties that can seriously affect learning at the higher education level.

Manifestations at Third Level

When **reading**, the student in further education with dyslexia:

- often needs to read something over and over in order to make sense of it and to understand what it means;
- usually reads slowly and finds reading very time consuming. It may also be difficult to remember what has been read;
- finds his/her reading is inaccurate. Might add or omit some words;
- may lose his/her place while reading and have to restart several times;
- may find it is very hard to focus on the page. The text may look distorted and demand concentration and effort. This is tiring;
- may find reading difficult because of unfamiliar or new vocabulary which is hard to remember;
- may mis-read familiar words or phrases.

When **writing**, the student in further education with dyslexia may:

- find spelling is a problem, especially small words;
- spell words in the way they sound, rather than the way they look;
- confuse words or omit them;
- write slowly making many drafts;
- write very quickly in order to record thoughts before they are forgotten;
- have difficulty making sense of what was written when reading it back;
- have difficulties in structuring and organising ideas in writing;
- find it very hard to express him/herself in writing.

In addition, the student in further education with dyslexia may also have difficulty in:

- remembering information for exams such as names, dates, quotations, theories, processes and instructions;
- oral skills – finding words, mispronunciation, listening, structuring – saying things in the right order;
- multi-tasking – combining two or more activities, for example listening and writing

Some Key Challenges for Adult Learners with Dyslexia

Difficulties in reading accuracy and speed

Problems noting inference in text

Inaccurate and inconsistent spelling

Problems in planning, structuring, editing and proof-reading written text

Slow and illegible handwriting

Difficulties with Mathematics (e.g. language, perception, sequencing, organisation & calculation rate)

Difficulty memorising material

Problems with sequential instructions

Slow and inaccurate note-taking skills

Inefficient study skills

Problems transferring learning

Poor planning and organisational skills

Time management difficulties

Trouble with timed, written examinations

Emotional state – stress and anxiety

Low self-esteem and feelings of incompetence

Low frustration tolerance

Deterioration of skills under pressure

Undeveloped self-regulated learning skills

Strengths may include:

Good comprehension skills

Good problem-solving skills

Good visual or visual-spatial skills

Good social skills

Well-developed oral/language skills

Critical thinking skills

Ability to process information holistically

Creativity

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING STAFF IN FURTHER EDUCATION

There are many ways that staff in further education institutions can support their students with dyslexia. These include general awareness amongst all staff and the provision of appropriate support and flexibility in lectures, assignments and examinations.

1. General Awareness

- Always refer students with suspected dyslexia to access officers, counsellors and/or educational psychologists.
- Support policies encouraging and facilitating access for students with dyslexia to further education.
- Co-operate with any existing or future support systems for students with dyslexia.
- Liaise with staff counsellors or access officers regarding learning styles and specific needs of students with dyslexia.
- Be empathetic. Don't assume that late or incomplete work is necessarily due to a lack of ability or a lack of motivation.
- Always consider students' oral and practical work when judging ability. Rarely does the written work of a student with dyslexia reflect his or her true ability.
- Provide opportunities for frequent student participation, question periods, debates and discussions.
- Remember that students with dyslexia will probably be slower and more inaccurate in reading and in copying down information from a board or overhead projector screen or in writing dictated information.
- Encourage study groups and any system of peer learning support.
- Provide individual time for students with dyslexia. It will help you to understand how they learn. These students are often quite aware of their preferred learning style which you may be able to accommodate with only a slight modification to your present teaching style. Ask yourself, "What do I do as a teacher that makes it easy for such students to learn?"
- Encourage students to use Information and Communications technology (ICT) to improve the quality of their work and to help them to access information and to do research. Software is now available to assist with reading and writing
- Remember that many students with dyslexia have experienced a lot of failure in their school career and, as a result, may have very low self-esteem and be lacking in self-confidence. They always require your moral support and understanding.

1. Lectures

- Provide a structured course outline or syllabus in advance.
- Begin lectures and discussions with brief reviews and overviews of topics to be covered. End with summaries and conclusions.

- Use a board or overhead projector to outline lecture material. Print clearly all main points, key concepts, names, dates, foreign words and subject terminology on the board or on overhead transparencies. Read aloud anything that you write.
- Make the links obvious to ensure learning transfer. Don't assume students will make associations with previously learned knowledge.
- Use audio-visual materials and hands-on demonstrations whenever possible.
- Make lecture notes and overheads available for students to photocopy.
- Produce and use support materials whenever possible, e.g. lecture outlines, printed or typed handouts of key points, diagrams or summaries.
- Invite students to tape record lectures and co-operate by speaking to the microphone. Use a remote microphone when possible.

1. Assignments

- Give assignments in writing as well as orally and be available for further clarification.
- Provide model essays and projects for students to examine.
- Give reading lists in advance and prior to course entry. Prioritise readings. Select essential readings. Consider getting essential readings taped for students use.
- Accept and encourage alternative forms of presenting work, e.g. on computer disk, on audio or videotape or orally.
- When correcting work, differentiate between content and transcription skills. Don't penalise a student who just needs a good copy editor.
- Allow time extensions when appropriate.
- Teach research skills.

1. Examinations

- Provide study guides for texts, study questions, past papers and review sessions.
- Teach study skills and exam techniques.
- Co-operate with and support alternative methods of recording examination questions.
- Modify or adapt examination formats, e.g. multiple choice, closure, short answer or true/false questions. Try practical or oral examinations. Provide extra time or untimed or take-home examinations.
- Provide examination questions on audiotape or the use of a reader.

- Provide an amanuensis or a tape recorder to record answers.
- Allow the use of spelling dictionaries (text or handheld machines).
- Provide opportunities for students to seek clarification of questions during examinations.
- After examinations, arrange supplementary interviews for students to clarify answers.

Appropriate learning support for students at further education includes the following:

Direct teaching of literacy strategies

Training of note taking and listening skills

Development of essay writing skills

Exploration of thinking and learning style

Acquisition of study skills and revision techniques

Development of organisational and time management skills

Training in examination strategies

Provision of accommodations in examinations when required

Availability of both personal and career guidance

Use of information and communication technology

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