

**Dyslexia
and other
Specific Learning Difficulties**

**A guide for tutors
2009-2010**

Contents

Dyslexia Services 3

Our services 3

Recognising students with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties..... 4

Difficulties specific to Higher Education..... 5

Reasonable Adjustments 5

Examination policy and procedures for students with specific learning difficulties ... 5

Examination recommendations..... 6

Guidelines for marking the work of students with dyslexia/dyspraxia..... 6

Useful strategies for helping SpLD students..... 6

Dyslexia-friendly handouts 6

Use of coloured overlays in reading 7

Assistive Technology Service (ATS) 7

Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA)..... 7

Further information 7

Dyslexia Services contact details..... 8

Dyslexia Services

Dyslexia Services (formerly the Learning Differences Centre) is the dyslexia support service for the University of Southampton and is part of Student Services (Education Support). It can provide a range of services for students and Schools. Dyslexia Services tutors all have specialist qualifications in dyslexia. Dyslexia Services also supports students with other specific learning difficulties (SpLD) such as dyspraxia. The team comprises:

Janet Skinner (Head of Dyslexia Services).

Trish van der Byl (Dyslexia Services Secretary).

Gail Alexander, Jane Lapraik, Fanny Middleton, Allene Tuck, Jane Warren (Tutor assessors).

Sue McKenna, Susan Rutter, Dianne Sherwood (Tutors)

Andrew Dykes (Assistive Technology Officer)

Dyslexia Services is based on Highfield campus at 45 University Road. Full contact details can be found at the back of this booklet. Dyslexia support is also provided at:

- Winchester School of Art
- St. Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth
- North Hants Hospital, Basingstoke

All dyslexic students or students with other specific learning difficulties must register with Dyslexia Services in order for appropriate support to be arranged for them.

Our services

Services for students

- Screening assessments
- Full assessments (Highfield and WSA only)
- Tests for coloured reading overlays
- Individual academic study skills tutorials
- Group tutorials
- Advice about the Disabled Students' Allowance
- Assistive Technology Service (based in Hartley Library)
- Liaison with other support services
- Students may self-refer to Dyslexia Services or academic staff may recommend referral.

Services for staff

- Advice about individual students
- Dyslexia awareness training
- Recommendations for special examination arrangements for students with SpLD
- Advice to academic Schools about support for individual students with specific learning difficulties
- Advice to clinical and other placement providers on reasonable adjustments

Recognising students with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties

Every dyslexic or dyspraxic person has a unique cognitive profile. This makes identification by tutors more difficult because there is no quick checklist which can be applied. Many of the problems experienced by students with SpLD will therefore not be immediately apparent to tutors. Indicators may include:

- oral participation stronger than written assignments
- good overall grades for coursework but much lower grades for examinations
- weak structuring and organisation of ideas in essays
- poor handwriting although the content is good
- problems organising study or equipment
- difficulties with note-taking and summarising from lectures or books

Dyslexic students may demonstrate a cluster of these characteristics:

- poor concentration span – easily distracted
- weak short-term/working memory
- slow processing of oral and/or written information
- weak inference skills
- weak expressive language – difficulties finding words or misuse of words
- hesitant reading skills and weak spelling

Dyspraxic students may demonstrate any or all of the following difficulties:

- co-ordination problems
- confusion between left and right
- remembering written or oral instructions
- time keeping
- organising study efficiently
- retrieval of information and keeping place in books
- handwriting – slow and difficult to read
- handling equipment in laboratories

Dyslexia and dyspraxia are on a continuum of difficulties and there may well be overlap between the two. All students with SpLD are different; some may be seriously affected by their difficulties and others less so. Many students at HE level have learnt excellent 'coping strategies' to help overcome their difficulties and may use technology extensively.

It is important to recognise that many students with SpLD have strengths which can compensate for their weaknesses. Many such students are:

- Creative
- Holistic thinkers - often good at seeing 'the whole picture'
- Artistic and imaginative

Difficulties specific to Higher Education

Dyslexia and dyspraxia can be all-invasive, affecting every aspect of student life. The most invasive aspect of dyslexia is a lack of automaticity in processing either spoken or written language. This can affect the dyslexic student's ability to carry out aspects of research reading and writing, and results in the student having to spend more time on study than the non-dyslexic student, perhaps as much as four times longer.

General difficulties with academic work may include:

- Remembering facts and new terminology
- Organising work – files, notes, essays etc
- Organising time effectively
- Carrying out multiple tasks simultaneously (e.g. listening to a lecturer and taking down information **at the same time as** synthesising and summarising the information into written note format)

However, the most frequent difficulties are perhaps found in written assignments and essay-based exams. Unexpected, poor quality written work is a common reason for a student to be referred to Dyslexia Services. Weak spelling and sentence structure, lack of 'flow' and poor sequencing of ideas can be characteristic of dyslexic writers.

Reasonable Adjustments

All HE institutions (HEIs) are obliged to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students, including students with specific learning difficulties, and not to treat a disabled person 'less favourably' because of his/her disability without 'justification.'

The University's latest guidelines on reasonable adjustments can be found here: www.southampton.ac.uk/quality/docs/Guidance_on_Making_Reasonable_Adjustments.doc

Examination policy and procedures for students with specific learning difficulties

Students registering with Dyslexia Services will either need to provide full, recent evidence of specific learning difficulties or be assessed by Dyslexia Services. An individual report is sent to named contacts in Schools making appropriate recommendations. In addition, special examination recommendations are placed on Banner and the School's examination officer alerted by email.

Most SpLD students receive extra time in examinations, with flagging of scripts. More complex arrangements are only recommended in the case of severe dyslexia/dyspraxia and after consultation with the academic school.

It is the responsibility of the academic school and the Central Examinations Office to organise the special examination arrangements that are required.

Examination recommendations

Usually:

- 25% extra time, in an AER room
- Flagging of scripts

Sometimes:

- Use of a PC, either in a PC AER room or in School
- Papers provided in alternative formats – e.g. enlarged font or coloured paper

Exceptionally:

- A reader or amanuensis
- A viva or other alternative examination format in place of written assessment.

The University's latest examination policy can be found here:

www.southampton.ac.uk/quality/docs/Exams_Policy_for_Disabled_and_Dyslexic_Students.doc

Guidelines for marking the work of students with dyslexia/dyspraxia

Flagging of examination scripts is intended to alert the marker that the script comes from an SpLD student, and that errors in written expression may be due to these students having difficulty expressing themselves well under timed conditions.

Students with SpLD should not be penalised unduly for errors that have nothing to do with the understanding of the subject, so simple errors of spelling/punctuation should be discounted. However, if language skills are being assessed no consideration should be given.

Consideration should only be given when marking dyslexic students' examination scripts. **No consideration is requested for coursework assignments, which should not be flagged.** Students have the opportunity to consult Dyslexia Services about coursework prior to submission.

Dyslexia Services staff often read students' work aloud to them so that they can hear whether they have written what they had intended to write. Guidance is offered about proofreading skills and the kind of grammatical, structural errors individual students are making. Dyslexia Services tutors do **not** annotate or proof-read students' coursework and no comments are made on the content of the work. Students should be strongly encouraged to attend Dyslexia Services for tutorials.

Useful strategies for helping SpLD students

SpLD students can be anxious about study and may require more sympathetic support than other students. They will usually take far longer at each stage of study – taking notes, research reading and writing essays. There are many ways in which a tutor can help. Please refer to Chapter 5 of the Reasonable Adjustments guidelines (link on p. 8) for detailed advice.

Dyslexia-friendly handouts

Dyslexic students often have difficulties with visual perception and easily accessible text is vital. Minor adjustments to the presentation of material have clear benefits for all students. The following websites offer comprehensive guidance:

www.elearning.soton.ac.uk/tutors/accessibility.htm

www.techdis.ac.uk/resources/files/curricula.pdf

Use of coloured overlays in reading

Some people, who may or may not have SpLD, experience varying degrees of visual stress when reading. Text may seem to blur or move on the page and eye pain or headaches may occur. In some cases, selectively filtering the light wavelengths by means of a coloured acetate filter or coloured glasses can alleviate these symptoms, giving increased comfort and sometimes an improved reading rate. Dyslexia Services offers tests for coloured overlays for students who report these symptoms. Use of a coloured overlay may then be recommended for exams.

Assistive Technology Service (ATS)

Email: ad6@soton.ac.uk Telephone: 23030

ATS is now part of Dyslexia Services but remains based in the Hartley Library. Computers with specialised software are available as well as scanning and printing facilities. Andrew Dykes, Assistive Technology Officer, provides help and advice. In addition, students should be encouraged to access the services of the subject-specific librarians.

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

Most dyslexic students do not consider that dyslexia is a disability. Dyslexia Services staff agree that dyslexia is a learning difference; dyslexic people process information in a different way from non-dyslexic people. However, dyslexia and other SpLDs are considered as disabilities under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. SpLD students are therefore eligible to apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance, which can help with the costs of specialised technological equipment and pay for individual dyslexia tuition.

All HEIs have to declare the exact number of students in receipt of DSA and funding is currently awarded to HEIs on the basis of these figures. It is essential therefore that accurate records are kept of DSA recipients. It is important that all eligible students are encouraged to apply, both to make sure they are adequately supported and to ensure that funding for SpLD students continues.

Further information

Websites

The Association of Dyslexia Specialists in HE

<http://adshe.org.uk>

Best resources for achievement and intervention concerning neurodiversity in HE

www.brainhe.com

British Dyslexia Association

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/

Dyslexia Action

www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/

The Dyspraxia Foundation

www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/

Books

Support for Learning Differences in Higher Education, Geraldine Price and Janet Skinner, Trentham 2007

Dyslexia Services can recommend further reading on request.

Dyslexia Services contact details

Opening hours Monday to Friday 8:30 - 4:30 at Highfield campus. Some early morning and late appointments are available. The other campuses have more limited cover.

Highfield campus

Dyslexia Services

45 University Road

Telephone: 023 8059 2759 (internal 22759)

Email: dyslexia@soton.ac.uk

Website: www.soton.ac.uk/edusupport/dyslexia

Winchester School of Art (WSA)

Contact Registry for an appointment

Telephone: 023 8059 6918

Tutor: Allene Tuck (at7@soton.ac.uk)

St Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth

Telephone: 023 9228 6000 x 4637

Tutors: Jane Lapraik (sjl6@soton.ac.uk)

Susan Rutter (ser2@soton.ac.uk)

The Ark, North Hants Hospital, Basingstoke

Telephone: 07876 277507

Tutor: Sue McKenna (sm9@soton.ac.uk)