

Disability Office

**University Policy on
Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia)**

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. The Legislative Background	3
2.1. Context	3
2.2. Reasonable Adjustment	3
3. What is Dyslexia?	3
4. Recording Lectures	4
5. Assessment and Examination Provision	4
5.1. Marking Coursework and Examination Scripts	4
5.2. Alternative Forms of Assessment	5
6. Procedures	5
7. Contact Details	6
8. Further Information	6

1. Introduction

The University positively welcomes applications from students with disabilities. Dyslexia, a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD), is a registered disability. Therefore, students who have a report by an Educational Psychologist or other appropriately qualified person as evidence of a SpLD are eligible for appropriate support without compromising academic standards.

2. The Legislative Background

2.1. Context

The University is required by law to effectively support disabled students. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (2004 revisions are now law), commonly referred to as SENDA places three obligations on the University:

- a) Not to unreasonably discriminate against disabled students;
- b) To make reasonable adjustments to facilitate their learning (however, not at the expense of academic standards);
- c) To be anticipatory; requiring departments to plan ahead for the needs of future students.

In addition, the Quality Assurance Agency places specific expectations on institutions to provide disabled students with the same opportunities as their peers through its Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards.

2.2. Reasonable Adjustment

SEندا uses the term 'reasonable adjustment' as the measure by which provision for disabled students is set. The term reasonable adjustment is open to interpretation but it may be considered as: "A necessary accommodation or alteration to existing academic programmes, offering individuals the opportunity to demonstrate their ability" (Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education, ADSHE).

3. What is Dyslexia?

One of the aspects of dyslexia that affects literacy is a difficulty in associating sounds with pictures and is linked to relatively inefficient rapid information processing capabilities and short-term-memory. Consequently, dyslexic students experience difficulties in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. See a Document on Good Practice, including Marking Guidelines for further information.

4. Recording Lectures

Many students with dyslexia have difficulty in writing by hand or writing and listening at the same time. As such, recording lectures is considered a reasonable adjustment. Any recording is for private use only. However, in the case of a tutorial or seminar where the information may be shared and of a confidential nature, agreement of all those present is required.

5. Assessment and Examination Provision

- All assessed work submitted by students is eligible for marking with reference to the guidelines.
- The university has a policy of anonymous marking but in order to comply with SENDA students with SpLDs may choose to have their examination booklets and coursework work identified by means of a stamp, sticker or other alternative (See section 6 on procedures).
- There may be occasions when it is not possible for students with SpLDs to identify their work (as above), for example in a foreign language test where the grammar, punctuation and spelling is being assessed. In such cases, this fact must be publicised explicitly prior to recruitment to that module.
- Extensions to deadlines should be considered but successive extensions may not help the student. The procedures for extenuating circumstances as laid out in the departmental handbooks should be followed in each case.
- 25% extra time in examinations and class tests (including practical sessions) is commonly recommended by Needs Assessors and Educational Psychologists for students who have been assessed with SpLDs. However, the Needs Assessor or Educational Psychologist may recommend other accommodations, for example the use of a reader. These recommendations should be adopted at the request of the student and after discussion with the Disability Office.

5.1. Marking Coursework and Examination Scripts.

- It is important for the marker to bear in mind the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a piece of work.
- If knowledge is being assessed, then marks should be awarded for core information and not deducted for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors, in other words copy editing errors. However, if spelling is crucial, for example in a foreign language course, then errors should be penalised.
- Similarly numbers can be written incorrectly especially when copied or when a calculation spans more than one page and this should be taken into consideration.
- If a piece of work is not well presented, it should be marked for content only, unless the layout of the work is being assessed.

5.2. Alternative Forms of Assessment

- Alternative forms of assessment may be necessary but in the case of professional examinations or where accuracy in written language is essential this may not be an option.
- Whilst ensuring that a reasonable adjustment is made, academic standards must not be compromised. It is important that the student is involved in discussions concerned with an alternative assessment format. If it is not possible to make any adjustment, it must be clear on what grounds the decision has been made.
- If a student is assessed as having a SpLD during the course of an academic year and is borderline for a module, re-marking completed course work within that year should be considered, where practicably possible. Students who were found to have dyslexia in subsequent sessions would not have papers re-marked from earlier academic years.

6. Procedures

- If students wish to have their coursework scripts identified as the work of a student with a SpLD, they should contact the Departmental Administrator.
- If students wish to have their examination scripts identified as the work of a student with a SpLD, they should contact the Departmental Examinations Officer.
- If a student is not registered with the Disability Office, but would like to make the marker aware of their SpLD he/she will need to provide the relevant School(s) with documentary evidence of their disability. A copy of this evidence should be sent to the Disability Office so that appropriate provision can be made. The student should also be encouraged to visit the Disability Office in person to ensure that the student's study needs are being met.
- If a student chooses not to have their work identified as that of a student with a SpLD, then no dispensation will be given for poor grammar, punctuation or spelling. In addition, if a student writes on their script that they have a SpLD, this will be disregarded and no dispensations will be allowed.

7. Contact Details

Further advice and information can be found in the Document on Good Practice, including Marking Guidelines.

8. Further Information

British Dyslexia Association: www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Dyslexia Action (formerly The Dyslexia Institute):
<http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk>

The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service (ADDISS): <http://www.addiss.co.uk>

SKILL, National Bureau For Students With Disabilities, (1992). Students with Disabilities in Higher Education – A Guide for all Staff.

Gilroy, D., Miles, T.R., 1995, Dyslexia at College, Routledge

Miles, T.R., 2004, Dyslexia and Stress, Whurr, London.

Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education Documents:
<http://www.adshe.org.uk>

Reasonable Adjustments in Academic Departments :
<http://www.adshe.org.uk/docs/Reasonable%20Adjustments%20in%20Academic%20Departments.doc>

Guidance for Good Practice: Institutional Marking Practices for Dyslexic Students: <http://www.adshe.org.uk/docs/Marking%20Guidelines.doc>