



# Disability Statement and Special Educational Needs Guidelines

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## Disability Statement

- 1 Spurgeon's College is committed to its existing statements regarding equality of opportunity which can be found in the student handbook.
- 2 As part of this commitment we recognise that students with disabilities are an integral part of the academic community. The college adheres to the Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice on Students with Disabilities and in particular it agrees with the precept that "assessment and exam policies, practices and procedures should provide disabled students with the same opportunity as their peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes". At the same time, the rigour and comparability of the assessment should be protected so that one academic standard is applied to all students.
- 3 Wherever possible, students who have a disability or long-term medical condition should undertake the same assessments as others on their course. Where the nature of the disability or long-term medical condition makes it impossible for a certain form of assessment to be used, any alternative form of assessment must be of the same standard and present a comparable level of challenge.
- 4 We are committed to making course facilities accessible to students with disabilities or learning difficulties. This commitment means that we will take all reasonable steps to meet both the general need for access as well as the specific needs of individuals.
- 5 We welcome applications from students with disabilities or learning difficulties. Students with disabilities and learning difficulties are selected on the same academic criteria as other candidates.
- 6 It is the college's responsibility to ensure appropriate confidentiality. Students must be aware, however, that in order for alternative arrangements to be implemented, relevant staff will have to be informed of the disability or long-term medical condition. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the college is aware of their disability so that any variation in assessment conditions can be considered within deadlines which are established for this purpose. Any request must be supported by acceptable medical evidence.
- 7 Applicants and students are strongly encouraged to disclose any disabilities, medical conditions (including asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and allergies) or learning difficulties which may have an effect on their ability to study in any way, their performance, and/or their attendance, or that it would be wise for staff to know about, on their application forms.
- 8 The college has a designated disability officer with responsibility for advising students and liaising with the academic staff. The disability officer is a member of the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Group.
- 9 The practical outworking of this statement is developed in the college's Special Educational Needs Guidelines.

# Special Educational Needs Guidelines

## Introduction

These guidelines are intended to give expression to the Disability Statement and to ensure that standard and equitable practices are followed in the college.

A diagnosed disability may be experienced differently by students in so far as it affects their completion of academic assessments. The list of alternative arrangements below may be employed in varying combinations according to individual need.

Some disabilities present particular and predictable problems in assessment settings. Attention is drawn to these conditions and specific arrangements are described.

## General guidelines

If a student is unable, through disability or learning difficulty, to be assessed by the normal arrangements specified in the assessment regulations, exceptionally, the Director of Studies in consultation with the Disability Officer may vary the methods as appropriate, and as defined by the guidelines set out in this document, bearing in mind the need to assess the student on equal terms with other students. Whenever possible, the normal arrangements should be used, provided that the purpose of the assessment makes this appropriate. All arrangements referred to in these guidelines should be applied in respect of any assessed course work as appropriate.

The Director of Studies will maintain a register recording details of any such alternative arrangements. All agreed alternative assessment arrangements will be monitored and reviewed annually.

Whenever this is considered to be useful, the college can make lecture notes available to students in advance, either photocopied in a specific way or in digital format.

Depending on the number of students with diagnosed learning difficulties the Disability Officer may convene a Learning Support Group at regular intervals. The purpose of the Learning Support Group is to provide students with the opportunity for peer support and in addition to explore with them how the college can continue to provide appropriate levels of support.

The college provides training and staff development opportunities for all tutors on how best to support students with disabilities and learning difficulties. The college provides tutors with general guidelines on appropriate teaching strategies and good practice in assessing and marking the work of students with disabilities of learning difficulties.

## **Alternative arrangements (general)**

### **Submission deadlines**

All students with a formal assessment of dyslexia will be allowed additional time for the submission of assignments. The standard extra time allowed is two weeks for unit assessments and four weeks for undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations. Additional time can be applied for through the College's Special Cases Committee, which is responsible for ensuring that the College follows all the recommendations contained within a formal assessment and its own guidelines.

### **Additional time allowance (exams)**

Extra time may be allowed for all written exams at all levels. The standard extra time allowance for dyslexic students is 25%. In the case of severe disability or learning difficulty, it may be necessary to allow up to double the scheduled examination time.

Additional time allowances offered to the same student may vary from assessment to assessment according to the nature and content of an examination and/or the changing condition of the student, level of fatigue etc.

### **Use of information and communication technology (ICT)**

A flexible approach should be adopted to enable students with disabilities or learning difficulties to utilise the introduction of new technologies and their mastery of them in completing examinations, provided that this does not, in the judgement of the Director of Studies, give a disabled candidate an advantage over other candidates.

## **Alternative arrangements (specific)**

### **For dyslexia**

Students seeking alternative assessment arrangements on the grounds of dyslexia shall provide the Director of Studies and the disability officer with a diagnostic assessment and recommendation completed by an assessment centre. The assessment should not be more than three years old. This professional assessment should be a full assessment using tests appropriate to dyslexia in adults; the report should give appropriate discussion of the tests, results, conclusions and the impact of the dyslexia on the language skills of the student and the effect of dyslexia on the student's performance in education.

The report of this assessment should be submitted at the start of the course. In any case it should be presented at least 20 working days before the first assessment for which an alternative arrangement is sought. Except in accordance with the Examination Appeal Procedure, educational assessments attempted prior to the diagnosis of dyslexia will not be subject to review.

Students who have submitted a valid diagnostic assessment will be marked as such on the class lists. When marking coursework or other assignments submitted by such candidates, tutors will mark the work for content rather than accuracy of language; they will be lenient with regard to style, spelling, and general presentation. See Appendix A for guidelines.

Any offer of alternative assessment arrangements by the college shall not exceed recommendations made in the diagnostic assessment mentioned above. The offer may consist of one or more of the following options:

1. Additional time in examinations shall be allowed as appropriate to the individual circumstances. Usually this will be up to an additional 15 minutes for each hour of the exam.
2. The use of a word processor may be allowed in examinations provided that the Director of Studies is satisfied with security and invigilation arrangements as well as the student's competence in using the equipment.
3. Candidates in an examination setting can be provided with extra answer sheets to use for rough work so that any notes made can be seen simultaneously with the attempted answers. In that case the rough working shall be crossed through once and the extra answer sheets handed in at the end of the exam.
4. Exceptionally, and by prior written agreement, a written examination may be replaced in whole or in part by an oral examination or the oral examination may be regarded as supplementary to a written paper. Such an oral examination should be recorded so as to be available for the consideration of the External Examiner.
5. Exceptionally, examination questions may be read by a person or recorded on audio-tape at the request of the candidate, provided that the questions are appropriate to such a medium.
6. Exceptionally, examination answers may be recorded on audio-tape by a candidate.
7. If appropriate an extended lending period may be available for particular texts and other resources from the college library.
- 8.

In all cases of diagnosed dyslexia the Director of Studies and the Disability Officer will monitor assessment arrangements and ensure that the implementation of these regulations do not advantage or disadvantage any dyslexic student.

### **For hearing impaired students**

Wherever possible, teaching staff setting examination papers for a candidate who is prelingually deaf should, through the Director of Studies

, make arrangements for the paper to be scrutinised by a specialist teacher of the deaf who may identify language or phrasing of questions which may prove problematic and where necessary, recommend the modification of the 'carrier language' used, without changing the meaning of a question.

An additional time allowance may be made available to a prelingually deaf candidate to provide an opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings over the phrasing or vocabulary of the questions.

An interpreter for the deaf may be used to facilitate understanding of any

assessment question or task.

An additional time allowance, to be determined in individual cases on the basis of specialist advice, shall be made.

Those responsible for assessing the work of hearing impaired students are asked, wherever it is possible and appropriate to mark the work for content rather than accuracy of language, because of the language development issues implicit in the points raised above.

### **For visually impaired students**

Examination papers should be provided in a medium appropriate to the candidate's visual impairment, including:

1. Braille provided that a print copy is available at the examination for checking purposes.
2. Audio-tape provided that questions are brief and appropriate to such a medium
3. Large Print

Candidates may be allowed to type answers to examination questions but if this arrangement is made, someone must be available to read the typed answers back to the candidate. Examination answers may be recorded on audio-tape by a candidate.

An additional time allowance, to be determined in individual cases on the basis of specialist advice, may be made.

### **Monitoring and review of alternative assessment arrangements**

The Director of Studies and the Disability Officer shall carry out an annual review of any alternative assessment arrangements which have been made.

Any grievance or complaint in this matter should be referred in the first instance to the Director of Studies.

This document shall be revised in light of recommendations emerging from this review and of good practice identified by appropriate persons and organisations.

### **The cost of alternative assessment arrangements**

The college may seek to recover the cost of providing alternative assessment arrangements wherever this is made possible through additional funding available to students with disabilities.

The college is not able to meet the costs of necessary professional assessments for individual students.

It is recommended that students with a disability or learning difficulty obtain a copy of 'Bridging the Gap: A guide to the disabled students' allowances (DSAs) in higher education'. This document is revised annually and can be downloaded either as a Word document or pdf file from the Department for Education and Skills website. The necessary forms to apply for Disabled Students' Allowance and guidelines for completing them can also be downloaded.

[http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides/gui\\_guides.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides/gui_guides.shtml)

## Appendix A

### Guidelines of good practice with respect to marking the work of dyslexic students

#### Introduction

For these guidelines, 'work' includes any examination paper, course work, dissertation or other documentation that is presented by a student for assessment and awarding of a mark.

The aims of these guidelines are:

- a) that dyslexic students' work should be marked for ideas and content with minimum interference from dyslexic effects and
- b) to enable markers to make comments on the work of any dyslexic student in such a way that:
  - i) the student will be able to learn from the comments
  - ii) a marker does not waste time making comments that are unlikely to be understood or heeded by the student.

Using these guidelines need take no more time than is used to mark a non-dyslexic student's work.

#### A brief summary of the guidelines

- Read fast, looking for ideas, understanding and knowledge
- Make constructive comments
- Explain your comments straight-forwardly
- Print your comments
- Use good English
- If you have marked only the ideas etc., say so
- Use two pens, neither red, one for ideas, the other for English (if you do not correct the English, only one pen is necessary)
- If you correct the English, explain what is wrong with it and why the correction is better; do not correct everything - check with the student what is helpful
- Be sensitive: many dyslexic students have been badly hurt by lack of understanding in the past.

#### The guidelines in more detail

A rationale for each guideline is in italics. Guidelines 1 - 5 are general ones, 6 and 7 deal with correcting English and 8 deals with drafts of work.

1. If you read a dyslexic student's work fast, it is usually easier to assess the work for the ideas, understanding and knowledge that are present. The fast reading is best done:
  - by ignoring any mistakes of grammar, punctuation or spelling
  - without making corrections to or comments on the grammar, punctuation or spelling.

*Dyslexic people often think in a holistic way, a way that is not linear and that does not lend itself to the linear nature of words; this holistic way of thinking is often non-verbal. The apparent lack of order in the work of a dyslexic student can be the result of a mismatch between the holistic way of thinking and the linear way. By reading fast, the reader can more readily find the holistic thought patterns.*

2. Your comments will be more helpful if they indicate where a student has done well and explain why some work is good rather than if they are adversely critical.

*Dyslexic people often retain a strong memory of the ideas that they want to communicate and cannot see that what they have written does not reflect their ideas. It takes about a day for the memory to die. This retained memory means:*

- *during exams, dyslexic students are very unlikely to see mistakes;*
- *in planning course work, dyslexic students must either hand in poorly corrected work or cut down on reading time in order to allow enough time to elapse between writing and proof-reading so that the latter may be effective.*

*Adverse criticism rarely helps a student solve these memory problems.*

3. Your comments will be most effective if they are explanations of what is required, or what is wrong. They do need to be legible and in properly constructed English.

*Dyslexic people often find it hard to "read between the lines". Your comments and tuition are more likely to bear fruit if you use positive statements (i.e. avoid telling the student what they should not do).*

4. If you are marking only for ideas, understanding and knowledge and ignoring grammar, punctuation and spelling, let the student know that you are doing so.

*For the student to mistake the absence of corrections to language as a sign of improvement can lead to demoralising re-appraisal.*

5. Many dyslexic students can learn more effectively from your comments if you use two different pens, neither red, one for comments about ideas, understanding and knowledge, the other for comments about grammar, punctuation and spelling.

*Red is widely associated with danger and prohibitions. The psychological and physiological reactions resulting from these associations can make it hard for a dyslexic student to learn from corrections made in red.*

### **Correcting English when discussion with the student is possible and when time is available**

6 You need to check the student's level of understanding of the technicalities of language; sometimes there is conscious knowledge but an inability to use it; sometimes there is no conscious, basic knowledge. It is useful to discuss the level of correction that the student will be able to use and what reference books the student may have or may find useful.

Dyslexic people do not learn language skills subliminally, e.g. almost no dyslexic person can learn to spell correctly by copious reading. Often progress is made with a language skill when someone explains the skill in a way that makes sense to the dyslexic person. Without such explanations, comments and corrections about grammar, punctuation and spelling are worse than useless: they will add to the demoralisation of the student; they provide the student with no information that he/she can use to improve future work; and they are a waste of the tutor's time.

### **Correcting English when discussion with the student is not possible or when time is limited**

7. Correcting the English without discussion with the student is probably a waste of your time. A reasonable procedure would be to take no more than five types of error that occur repeatedly, and to show, with clear, simple examples, what is wrong and what would be correct.

The rationale for this guideline is the same as in paragraph 6 above.

### **Drafts**

8. If you have time, ask to see a draft of course work, etc., comment on it using the appropriate guidelines above and let the student use your comments to learn how to present material. The aim is not to do the work for him/her but to show him/her how to communicate effectively on paper.

Presentation, or layout, is different from grammar, punctuation and spelling in that it changes from one piece of work to another and it is often re-thought. The principles of presentation are not used from automatic memory in the same way that grammar etc. should be. Therefore it is much easier for a dyslexic person to learn and to use the techniques of good presentation than it is to correct years of misuse of grammar etc.

## Appendix B

### Guidelines of good practice: teaching strategies for students with dyslexia

The following good practice guidelines have been adapted from those compiled by the Sheffield University Teaching and Learning support unit for academic staff to adapt to their own teaching situations. Many of the ideas outlined below will be of benefit to all students as well as dyslexic students. Students whose first language is not English may benefit particularly. Although all the suggestions given below are good practice, it is also worth talking to individual students to find out which particular steps they would find most helpful.

#### Lectures

In a lecture situation, a student must read, write, listen and summarise simultaneously, and at speed. Although all students may experience difficulties at first, these may be pronounced in the case of dyslexic student.

Dyslexic students may read and write more slowly than other students and therefore find it difficult to keep up with the lecture and to take notes effectively. Some dyslexic students may have to think about each word rather than writing fluently, making note-taking difficult. Handwritten overheads may be particularly difficult to read and to copy.

- Provide an overview when introducing a new topic so students know what to expect - highlight the main argument and the key points.
- Provide a summary at the end of the lecture/topic.
- Encourage students to tape the lecture.
- Make any handouts available some days in advance. Providing handouts this way decreases the amount of writing a student has to do during the lecture.
- Explain the purpose of what is being required.
- Use multiple ways of presenting information: PowerPoint, videos, slides, practical demonstrations, as well as talking through text.
- Introduce new topics and concepts obviously - clarify new language.
- Give examples to illustrate a point.
- Have regular pauses to allow students to catch up.
- Ask for feedback from dyslexic students.

All these strategies will be of great benefit to other students, particularly those for whom English is a second language.

#### Written material

- Keep writing style clear and concise.
- Use printed text rather than handwritten notes.
- Keep the layout clear and simple.
- Avoid patterned backgrounds.
- A clear font such as Arial or *Comic Sans* is easier to read than a serif font such as Times Roman; 12 point text or above should be used.
- Don't use too many font styles.
- Try not to use dense blocks of text - use paragraphs, headings and subheadings, bullet points, numbered lists etc.
- Highlight text by using bold font, rather than underline or italics.

- Printing on colour paper may be easier for some dyslexic students to read. The colour will depend on the individual student, so some students will use a coloured acetate overlay to achieve the same effect. Black print on cream paper is used for SSG publications as a combination that suits most students.
- Avoid red and green ink as these colours are particularly difficult to read (this will also benefit those students who are red-green colour-blind).
- Use alternative ways of presenting information as well as text - flow charts, diagrams, graphs etc.

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