



Dyslexia in Further and Higher Education

The transition to Further or Higher education can be a momentous occasion for any incoming student. This document aims to provide an awareness of strategies and supports that students with dyslexia can utilise as they embark upon the next steps of their educational journey. It is advisable that all students with dyslexia make contact with their Student Support Service early in the academic year to ensure all provisions are planned for and accessed promptly. The below document will refer to the Disability Office as a point of contact however each further education college, institute, or university will have a dedicated person that oversees student support. This may be a Support Service such as Disability, Access, a Tutor or indeed a nominated teaching and learning department.

Registration

If you have an identification of dyslexia, you are entitled to register with the disability office for reasonable accommodations and supports during your studies.

'Registering' simply means making yourself known to the Disability Service. By providing the required the documentation (i.e. dyslexia assessment report), completing a needs assessment and agreeing upon Reasonable Accommodations you are registering your needs with the Disability Service. It is important to note the cut off deadlines for the college for registering with the Disability Service.

Evidence of Disability

A student is required to supply evidence of their disability (ies) to complete registration with the Disability Office and become eligible for the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD). Such evidence requires an Educational or Clinical

Psychologist Assessment Report identifying dyslexia. The FSD fund unfortunately is not administered to individual students! It is a collective financial support that is allocated to the college on behalf of students, should their Reasonable Accommodations require additional educational support (e.g. the purchase of a piece of Assistive Technology). If you do not meet the criteria of the FSD fund, it does not mean you are ineligible for 'soft supports' e.g. learning support services, library accommodations etc.

Needs Assessments

A Needs Assessment is a structured conversation which details a student's strengths and potential area(s) of need as they embark on their chosen course of study. A Needs Assessment is a collaborative process done with input from the student and a Disability Officer/Access Officer/Relevant Department staff. It may be completed in person or online. It is advisable that a student be honest and open about their needs in order to plan adequately for success. Colleges and Universities are obliged to promote, encourage and assist with the implementation of Universal Design for Learning Principles in the first instance. While the principles of UDL can make the classroom more accessible for all, for some students additional reasonable accommodations or adjustments will be needed. These are discussed and agreed upon during the Needs Assessment Process.

Reasonable Accommodation in Education

Reasonable Accommodations are adjustments or modifications that can positively transform a student's learning experience and promote active participation in college life. Students with additional learning needs may often face unique challenges in accessing equitable education. Reasonable accommodations can aid in levelling the academic playing field. Reasonable accommodations can be large and costly or small and inexpensive. Reasonable accommodations are agreed upon in collaboration with the student and a dedicated staff member.

An appropriate accommodation is an arrangement that is both reasonable and feasible for the student, the academic team and the support service to provide.

Reasonable accommodations are agreed upon during a student's Needs Assessment.

There are many examples of Reasonable Accommodations, including but not limited to:

- Extra time in examinations
- Smaller examination centre (if applicable to the college campus size)
- Provision of a Reader for exams (person or technology)
- Scribe in Examinations (person or technology)
- Learning materials provided in advance via Learning Management System (e.g. Moodle or Blackboard)
- Assistive Technology (software or hardware)
- Printing Credits
- A preferred assigned seat in a lecturer hall / classroom
- Spelling and Grammar Waiver
- Regular breaks during sessions to aid concentration
- Essential versus recommended reading list highlighting where alternate formats are available
- A request not to read aloud during a class
- Advance notice of required participation in class (e.g. emailed discussion topics in advance which offers an opportunity to prepare)

Assistive Technology

“For most people, technology makes things **easier**. For persons with disabilities, technology makes things **possible**...”- Mary Pat Radabaugh, Director of IBM National Support Center for Persons with Disabilities. Pg.2 IBM Training Manual 1991

Assistive Technologies can be grouped by:

- Note-taking
- Writing
- Reading
- Organisational
- Planning

Note-taking

Taking notes live during a class is a complex task which requires processing, memory, and ability to identify what is important and what can be left out. When combined with dyslexic literacy challenges such as poor spelling, note taking can be very stressful for some.

Note taking technology generally includes in built audio recording. This reduces the stress of writing notes in real time. Typed notes can also be linked with time-stamped audio recordings so you can listen back to the audio and then finalise the minutes ensuring that all key information is noted. It also enables individuals to engage better during the meeting and the discussion, rather than solely focussing on the note-taking.

Examples of note-taking technology are:

- LiveScribe Pen
- Sonocent Glean
- Sonocent Audio Notetaker
- Dictaphone or digital/audio recording on a mobile phone

Writing

Live processing, retention and understanding of what is important to take down in a lecture can be quite stressful.

All note-taking technologies will have audio recording built-in to them. This assists with time-stamping the important information and being able to experience the lecture instead of worrying about what to take down.

For some, voice dictation tools (or typing with your voice) is a useful method of quickly getting ideas down in a document. Because you are speaking rather than typing or writing, your written expression is not slowed down by spelling difficulties. This could be used for a brainstorming exercise to get your initial ideas down which you can edit later, or in time you could dictate a full assignment using this technology. Some level of editing will always be needed. While voice dictation

software is much more accurate now than ever before, it is not perfect. In addition, people often express themselves differently when speaking as opposed to writing and so this may also lead to some editing. Nonetheless, voice dictation can speed up production of written documents.

Examples of this type of technology include:

- Google Dictate (free)
- Microsoft Office Dictate (free)
- macOS Dictate (free)
- Nuance Dragon Dictate (paid)

Other tools are available to help with writing, and especially grammar and spelling.

These are especially useful for proofing written work. Examples include:

- Grammarly (free)
- Ginger
- Language Tool (Chrome app)
- Hemingway app

Reading

Converting text to speech can speed up access to text you need to read. Most adults with dyslexia can read but it can be tiring and speed of reading and comprehension can be affected. Text to speech can speed up access to the written word. Text can even be converted to audio files which you can listen to on the move.

Text to speech can also help with proofing your own written work, as sometimes it is easier to hear errors which might be missed when proof reading a document.

Examples of this type of technology include:

- ClaroRead
- Texthelp Read&Write
- Google Lens (Android Only)
- Speak feature (MS Word, Outlook, Powerpoint)

- iOS (in built)
- Adobe PDF (in built)
- Reading Pens

Organisation

Being organised is a key skill in education. Organising your study area, diary and having a system of reminders for assignment due dates can help with this.

Online calendars and reminder apps can be a useful way to keep on top of your daily, weekly and monthly tasks and help to reduce stress.

Examples of these include

- Google Calendar,
- Google Keep,
- Outlook Calendar,
- Microsoft ToDo.

Planning

Some people find visual methods of learning and planning beneficial. Concept maps or mind maps can be a useful way to visualise processes, create summaries or overviews, or to plan a report or project. They enable ideas to be linked visually using maps, images and colours. They can be done using pen, colour and paper, and some find them more effective when done by hand. Online versions are also available;

Examples include

- Inspiration
- Coggle
- Popplet
- MindView