

**DIVISIONAL/CE BOARDS  
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**University arrangements for candidates with Specific Learning Difficulties: a communication from the Education Committee**

**(a) Summary**

This communication provides a brief outline of the changes to the University's arrangements for candidates for University examinations with Specific Learning Difficulties. These follow approval by Education Committee and Planning and Resource Allocation Committee of recommendations from a Working Group on Specific Learning Difficulties established by the two committees and chaired by Dr John Nightingale which included the Junior Proctor and internal and external experts. The agreed changes are intended to streamline the current procedures and to reflect the current state of thinking about support for students with Specific Learning Difficulties, and in particular Dyslexic and Dyspraxic candidates in undergraduate examinations. Some of the changes (as below) will be implemented immediately while others will be phased in over a period of time. The arrangements will continue to be administered largely by the Disability Advisory Service and by the Proctors' Office. This communication indicates those changes which will be introduced with effect from 1 October 2011, and provides colleges in particular with a note of the points at which current practice will be amended.

The full report of the working group is available at:

<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/central/aad/policy/page/resources>

**(b) The main changes with immediate practical implications for students agreed by Education Committee and PRAC are as follows:**

- 1 In line with current HE practice, diagnostic assessment reports will be accepted if they have been completed after the age of 16 years and 0 months.
- 2 Diagnostic assessments undertaken by specialist teachers with a valid practising certificate and following agreed University criteria will be accepted in addition to those undertaken by an educational psychologist.
- 3 Diagnostic assessment reports for undergraduates should normally be no more than **three** years old and for graduate students no more than **five** years old at the date of entry to the University.
- 4 New diagnostic assessments (where required) may be undertaken by either a specialist teacher or an educational psychologist according to the University's revised criteria for SpLD assessments to be available on the DAS website (<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das/>).
- 5 In line with current practice at most universities, a standard allowance of 25% additional time in written examinations (see (d) 3 in relation to coursework) will be made for students with the relevant recommendation in their diagnostic assessment report. This will rationalise the range of additional times previously allowed.
- 6 Students continuing directly from undergraduate to postgraduate study will not normally require a new assessment but will have their reports checked by the DAS to assess whether they are suitable for the new course and whether any further assessment is necessary.

**(c) Practical changes in the current arrangements**

- 1 The Proctors' and Assessor's Memorandum has been amended to reflect the agreed changes set out above.
- 2 Students with an existing diagnostic assessment report should give a copy of the report to their college office for referral to the Disability Advisory Service. The service will review the report to confirm that it meets the University's criteria and send a summary of the assessor's recommendations to the student's college.
- 3 Students who do not have a report should be referred in the first instance to the Disability Advisory Service. Following initial screening, arrangements for a diagnostic assessment, report and summary will be made by the Disability Advisory Service.
- 4 Colleges should continue to apply to the Proctors' Office - using the revised form - and attaching the summary of the assessor's recommendations.

**(d) Other agreed changes or decisions for information and note**

- 1 Students should always be strongly encouraged to access all sources of support available to them and in particular the Disabled Students Allowance.
- 2 Students will not be asked to contribute to the costs of diagnostic assessments.
- 3 Both undergraduate and graduate students will **NOT** normally be allowed extra time for coursework (including theses and dissertations) on the grounds of a specific learning difficulty unless additional extenuating circumstances apply. This will maintain the existing practice.
- 4 Approval has been given for the recruitment of a SpLD advisor within the Disability Advisory Service to provide coordinated support for students and providing training and liaison with colleges, faculties and departments. Among the duties of this post would be to support and to enhance the effectiveness of the processes surrounding early disclosure, diagnosis and implementation of support.
- 5 In order to consider requests for permission to word process in an examination, the results of a test of typing speed should normally be included in the relevant recommendation of the diagnostic assessment report.
- 6 As resources permit, the University should sponsor a research project in Oxford with the particular aim of assessing the impact of specific learning difficulties on students in Oxford.

**Further information on the new arrangements can be obtained from the Disability Advisory Service (Telephone: 01865 280459 / [disability@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:disability@admin.ox.ac.uk)) .**