

# Dyslexia



## What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a discrepancy between written and verbal language abilities. It might result in slow and inaccurate reading, untidy handwriting or bizarre and inconsistent spelling in an otherwise intelligent person. Hence, dyslexics may be slower at completing their academic assignments than their non-dyslexic peers. The frustration of having basic language skills inferior to excellent analytical and critical abilities may lead to a depressed self-image. The pattern of difficulties experienced by a person with dyslexia may vary widely, as with other specific learning difficulties (SpLDs).

Common features of dyslexia:

- It is more common in males.
- It tends to run in families.
- A childhood history of clumsiness and minor speech impediments (e.g. lisps and spoonerisms, like 'par cark').
- Late development of crawling, walking, speaking and reading.
- Difficulty learning the alphabet, days of the week, months of the year and multiplication tables.
- Not strongly left or right handed.
- Difficulty telling left from right.
- Reversal, mirror imaging, and mis-ordered letters and words.
- Losing one's place on the page while reading.
- Difficulty following instructions.

## What alternative examination arrangements are available?

Examinations are held at the end of the first year (prelims) and usually at the end of your course (finals) centrally within the University at the Examination Schools. Any examination adjustments required should be made known as soon as possible after matriculation and not later than at the time of entering for examinations.

Alternative examination provision for dyslexic students may include:

- Extra time and/or the use of a word processor for students whose specific learning difficulty (SpLDs) makes handwriting difficult.

The University's policy has changed with regards to the amount of extra time that student's with SpLDs are entitled to. Most students will now be automatically entitled to 25% extra time (15 minutes per hour), although it may still be appropriate for those who need to use a word processor to have 10 minutes extra time per hour. These students will have to submit their diagnostic report for specialist review if they want to be considered for additional extra time.

- In some cases it may be appropriate to provide examination scripts in a specific font type/size and on coloured paper.
- The typical problems that may be found in the work of a student with dyslexia can also be summarised in a note to the examiner which is then attached to all examination papers (the text of which is reproduced below on page 7-8).
- Specialist SpLD study skills tuition may also be able to help in the run up to exams by providing you with opportunities for developing revision and memory-recall strategies and exam writing techniques.

Please contact the [Disability Advisory Service](#) if you have any questions about this. More details are available from the [Proctors' Office 'Essential Information for Students'](#) guide.

## **How to I apply for examination adjustments?**

The deadline for applying for examination adjustments is the Friday of 4th Week of the term before the examination in the case where there is an existing diagnosis of dyslexia. However, requests may also be considered nearer to the date of your examinations if the diagnosis has only been recently made.

The Disability Advisory Service can only advise students on applications for examination arrangements, which are organised via your college.

1. Contact the [Disability Advisory Service](#) and/or your [college disability contact](#) to discuss your needs.
2. Provide evidence of why you need the adjustments so that the college disability contact can forward an application to the Proctors' Office.

Evidence would include an up-to-date diagnostic assessment report which meets the Proctors' criteria (more details below) and a summary sheet that has been produced by one of the Oxford University network of [approved educational psychologists](#).

The Disability Advisory Service will arrange for a summary sheet to be produced, unless one of the University-approved psychologist's assessed you originally, in which case they will already have produced a summary sheet alongside the dyslexia report.

3. The Proctors make the final decision on whether to allow the adjustments requested and will notify your college and the Examination Schools, also copying the information to the Chairman of Examiners. If permission is given for ongoing examination adjustments for the remainder of your course, this will be recorded in the Oxford Student System (OSS) which you can log on to and view.

### **Does my diagnostic assessment report meet the Proctors' criteria?**

The Proctors require that you have a diagnostic report from an educational psychologist or specialist teacher with a valid practicing certificate. The assessment must have used adult tests and been carried out after your sixteenth birthday, and within 3 (for undergraduates) or 6 (for postgraduates) years of the start date of your course at Oxford.

### **How can I get assessed if I don't already have a diagnosis or my report does not meet the Proctors' criteria?**

The SpLD Fund is set up to meet the costs of a diagnostic assessment with one of the University-approved educational psychologists, which is in the region of £400 pounds. To be eligible for this funding you must:

- Be a currently matriculated member of the University (either undergraduate or postgraduate); or
- Be a prospective student (undergraduate or graduate) who has an offer of a place to study at the University. In this case, as long as you are assessed by a psychologist on the approved list (more details are available from the Disability Advisory Service website in the 'useful documents' section: [www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das/contacts](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das/contacts)), you can apply to the fund and will be reimbursed when you matriculate and start your course at Oxford.

- Submit an SpLD Fund form (available to download from the 'useful documents' section on the Disability Advisory Service website: [www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das/contacts](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das/contacts)).
- Ask a tutor to email the Disability Advisory Service confirming that they have seen your work and endorse an assessment.

### **What other support is available?**

UK students with dyslexia are eligible to apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) which can be used to fund disability-related study support such as SpLD study skills tuition, specialist equipment (digital recording devices, printers, scanners, and computers) and assistive software (voice-recognition/dictation, text-to-speech, mind mapping, etc).

The University also makes provision for non-UK students who do not qualify for DSA.

For more information please contact the Disability Advisory Service (details at the end of this guide), or visit our website:

[www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das).

### **What are good study skills for dyslexic students?**

There are many suggestions of ways to make it easier for dyslexic students to study. As well as the general pointers given here, we have included the names of a few useful books at the end of this section.

- **Keep relaxed:** you'll find it a lot harder to work if you're flustered and will probably make more mistakes if you're tired or stressed. This is especially something to remember when you're approaching exams – make sure you don't get very tired, and in exams try to take out a couple of minutes every now and then to relax.
- **Take breaks:** many dyslexics have problems with their attention span – work for half an hour (or less, if you can't concentrate for that long) and then take a five minute break.
- **Improve your concentration** by settling down in a quiet room to work. Music, TV, or people chatting will probably distract you. Make sure you have your books, paper, pens, etc, and keep your working environment neat.
- **Many students with dyslexia have problems with organisation.** Try to file your notes immediately and keep a diary in which you can write down your appointments and work deadlines. It might help to make

mind-maps or lists with colour and pictures of what you need to do in a week/day or what you need to do for a specific piece of work.

- Try to use a computer to write with if you can. Many word-processing programmes have spell-checking functions built in.
- Become familiar with the form your exams will take so you know how long to allow yourself for each question (bearing in mind the possibility of extra time being awarded). This should help reduce the stress and avoid confusion during the exam. You should also try to go to any exam preparation groups offered by the College.

If you are interested in finding out more about possible ways of improving your study skills, the Disability Advisory Service can recommend a SpLD study skills tutor and advise you on how to apply for funding for the support.

The following books also contain suggestions on study strategies for dyslexic students:

- 'The Gift Of Dyslexia' by Ronald Davis
- 'Mind Mapping' by Tony Buzan
- 'Use Your Head' by Tony Buzan
- 'Dyslexia And Higher Education' by Dorothy Gilroy
- 'That's The Way I Think' by David Grant

### **Useful Contacts**

- The British Dyslexia Association: [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)
- The Dyslexia Research Trust: [www.dyslexic.org.uk](http://www.dyslexic.org.uk)
- Oxfordshire Dyslexia Association: [www.oxdys.org.uk](http://www.oxdys.org.uk)
- DyslexiaAction (formerly the Dyslexia Institute): [www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk)

The information in this factsheet is also available on disk, audio, large print or coloured paper on request.

**Disability Advisory Service**

E-mail: [disability@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:disability@admin.ox.ac.uk)

Website: [www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das)

Telephone: +44 (0)1865 280 459

Fax: +44 (0)1865 289 850

## **This information is to be attached to all scripts of candidate number.....**

### **Candidates with Specific Learning Difficulties**

This candidate has been diagnosed with a Specific Learning Difficulty ('SpLD' e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, working memory deficit and attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder (AD(H)D)).

**Please mark the script or submitted work as it stands, but indicate to yourself in your notes that the candidate has a SpLD and record any factors you consider to have a particular bearing on his or her performance. The Board will later consider what account to take of the candidate's condition when adjudicating his or her classification.**

'Specific Learning Difficulties' is an umbrella term given to a range of conditions which affect a person's ability to learn. These are commonly characterised by impaired concentration and problems with information processing and recall, and may also cause difficulties with reading, writing and spelling.

Candidates with these conditions may be awarded extra time in examinations to allow them to read the examination paper slowly, consider their responses to the questions, plan out their work, and read it over at the end.

Amongst Oxford students the most common of these disorders is dyslexia, the symptoms of which include:

- omission, repetition, transposition or substitution of words or punctuation
- particular difficulty in interpreting the question
- simplified vocabulary and language structure (to avoid making errors)
- spelling and grammatical errors
- errors in sentence structure, word ordering and organisation
- poor or immature handwriting
- poor short-term memory
- particular difficulties generalising, or acquiring and applying rules

Students with dyslexia often think in non-verbal, non-linear patterns, with the result that their work may appear disjointed. It is recommended that examiners first read the work through quickly in order to obtain an initial sense of the candidate's overall argument and understanding of the question.

Examiners should discount errors in spelling, grammar and sentence structure as these are considered to derive from the candidate's disability (though this does not apply in examinations where to do so would compromise the academic standards of the assessment, or where fitness to practise regulations apply). This is the case regardless of whether candidates have opted to take their examinations with extra time.

Examiners should not make extra allowance for remaining deficiencies in planning, content and logical argument, as this would constitute double compensation (even if extra time has not been taken).

### **Coursework and other assessed work**

You will not necessarily be given extra time to complete your assignments. If you are having real difficulties with keeping up with the workload because of your disability then you should discuss this with your individual tutors and with the Disability Advisory Service. There may be other adjustments that can be made to help, and an extension of the course may be recommended.