



# Services for dyslexic students

Bedford College Additional Support services offer support to all students who have, or believe that they may have, a Specific Learning Difficulty such as dyslexia or dyspraxia. This support ranges from conducting initial screenings to providing specialist support for students.

If you have already been diagnosed as having a Specific Learning Difficulty or would like to arrange a screening, please contact Mel De La Motte on 01234 291905.

## What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a difficulty with using and remembering written language. This results in difficulties with reading, writing, spelling, memory and study in general. Dyslexia is not related to intelligence, and is an officially recognised disability.

## How can I tell if I am dyslexic?

Symptoms of dyslexia can include serious difficulties with:

- reading (speed and understanding)
- short-term memory (remembering and applying information)
- writing skills
- spelling
- handwriting
- concentration
- being organised
- working under pressure.

## What do I do next?

If you think you may have a Specific Learning Difficulty, phone Mel De La Motte on 01234 291905 or drop in to Student Services Reception. They will refer you to Additional support. Additional Support can:

- provide dyslexia screening for concerned students
- arrange for a full diagnosis, if required
- provide specialist support
- make special arrangements for exams
- liaise with academic departments regarding recommended support
- Loan you equipment and resources.

# Specialist support

## Introduction

If you have been diagnosed as having a Specific Learning Difficulty then you can register with Additional Support for assistance. There are several types of support that Bedford College can help to arrange.

## Types of support

- Exam concessions
- Library concessions
- One-to-one study support
- Group and drop-in support
- IT support

## Exams

Dyslexia can result in problems in reading and expressing ideas and the stressful nature of exams can make the situation even worse. The most common forms of exam support are as follows:

- Additional time – typically 15 minutes extra per hour.
- A reader.
- The use of a computer – if you have difficulty with handwriting then it may be easier to type your answer. This also has the advantage of enabling you to re-order your ideas by cutting and pasting text.
- Amanuensis – this is a person who writes down your answers as you dictate them. This service may be available where handwriting causes extreme difficulties.

## One-to-one support

This support normally consists of one hour a week during term-time. Sessions can cover a wide range of areas, including specialist advice on coping with different aspects of dyslexia to more general study skills support.

## Group and drop-in support

For students seeking additional support or waiting for a tutor to be allocated there are two further services:

Group sessions are designed to introduce you to new ideas and coping strategies, and provide you with the opportunity to meet up with other dyslexic students in order to share experiences.

During drop-in sessions tutors will be available during certain hours of the week for you to drop by with questions about any topic.

## **IT support**

The Assistive Technologies Room and Study Centre in the Library have computers with specialist software that can be used by students who are dyslexic. Once you have obtained your Disabled Students Allowance you may be able to obtain similar packages for your home computer.

## **Special examination arrangements**

Special examination arrangements are available for students who, for reasons of health, disability (whether permanent or temporary) or dyslexia, are unable to sit their examinations under normal conditions or would be severely disadvantaged by doing so.

### **What arrangements are available?**

Arrangements depend upon individual needs, but have included extra writing time, the use of a reader, the use of coloured overlays, rest breaks, the use of a scribe, and the use of a word-processor. Arrangements are also available for students who have severe emotional or mental distress.

### **How do I organise special arrangements?**

First of all you should discuss the situation with your subject tutor and ask for a referral to the Dyslexia Specialist at Additional Support before your exams begin. Additional Support will assess your needs and make appropriate recommendations. If you have severe exam anxiety or emotional problems then you should instead contact the Counselling Service.

A dyslexia specialist will make a recommendation to the examinations board on your behalf and you will be notified of any agreed examination arrangements. If you have special examination arrangements you may take your examination in alternative accommodation. The exam will be at the same date and time as the other students on your course. If you receive additional time and this leads to an exam clash then you must notify the examinations office as soon as you receive your timetable.

# The Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)

## What is the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)?

DSA is a grant that pays for students to receive specialist help and equipment. In the case of students with Specific Learning Difficulties, such as dyslexia, this may mean additional support at undergraduate level study or above. The DSA can also be used to purchase additional materials that improve your ability to study. Typical equipment includes:

- a personal computer for specialist software to help improve reading, writing, typing, planning and organisation
- a recording device for lectures
- specialist glasses / colour filters for reading
- stationery e.g. coloured paper
- help towards photocopying costs.

Further information and a copy of the [DSA1 application form](#) can be obtained from the [Department for Education & Skills website](#).

## How do I obtain DSA?

In order to apply for DSA you need to be officially diagnosed as dyslexic by a recognised professional (such as a chartered psychologist or dyslexia specialist). If the report confirms that you are dyslexic then you can apply to your Local Authority (LA) for a DSA. If your application is accepted you are required to attend a 'needs assessment', where a trained assessor will decide what sort of support your Local Authority will pay for.

Please note that if you were assessed when you were still at school then your report may still be valid. Please contact Mel De La Motte at Student Services on 01234 291905 to check if this is the case.

The process of official diagnosis as dyslexic and obtaining a needs assessment can take some time, so it is advisable to take the following steps:

### **1. Make an appointment with the Dyslexia Specialist in Additional Support**

A trained member of staff will carry out an initial screening for dyslexia. If this indicates that you may be dyslexic then we will make an appointment for you to have a full assessment.

### **2. Full diagnostic assessment**

In order to qualify for Government grants and support you need to establish your Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD). To do this you need a full assessment. This will be carried out by the dyslexia specialist and takes up to three hours to complete.

### **3. Once you have received your psychological assessment**

Once you receive your psychological assessment make an appointment to come back and see the Dyslexia specialist. If you have been confirmed as dyslexic then we will help you to complete a [DSA1 application form](#) to send to your LEA. If they approve your application we can then help to arrange a needs assessment in order to establish what support is appropriate.

**4. Once you have received your needs assessment**

Once the needs assessment is completed we can help to arrange the recommended support. This could include ordering specialist equipment or arranging weekly tuition with specially trained tutors.

## Further Resources

### Reading List

The Bedford College library holds a number of books on dyslexia. These cover a range of topics including diagnosis, strategies for coping, research and general advice. The Dyslexia Service also holds a number of books that can be loaned to academic staff – please call Helen Duncan on 01234 291751 for further details.

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### UK Websites

#### [The Dyslexia Institute](http://www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk)

[www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk](http://www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk)

A national charity dedicated to the assessment and teaching of people with dyslexia and for the training of specialist teachers. Their site includes information on all aspects of dyslexia which will be useful for staff, students and parents.

#### [The British Dyslexia Association \(BDA\)](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

[www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

A national charity that claims "The BDA is the voice of dyslexic people. We offer advice, information and help to families, professionals and dyslexic individuals. We are working to raise awareness and understanding of dyslexia, and to effect change."

#### [The Adult Dyslexia Association](http://www.futurenet.co.uk/charity/ado/index.html)

[www.futurenet.co.uk/charity/ado/index.html](http://www.futurenet.co.uk/charity/ado/index.html)

The Adult Dyslexia Association offers a range of services to dyslexic adults.

#### [Dyslexia Online Forum \(JISCMail\)](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/?url=http://www.dyslexia.org.uk)

A well used discussion forum that was originally set up by the academic community. The board now has hundreds of users including many dyslexics. No matter how difficult the question there is a good chance that someone here will know the answer.

#### [Listening Books](http://www.listening-books.org.uk)

[www.listening-books.org.uk](http://www.listening-books.org.uk)

Listening Books is a UK charity offering a subsidised audio books library. They stock several thousand fiction titles and are currently working towards increasing their non-fiction and education collection. Membership costs £50 per annum.

#### [I Am Dyslexic](http://www.iamdyslexic.com)

[www.iamdyslexic.com](http://www.iamdyslexic.com)

A fantastic site by Barnaby Blackburn, a UK secondary school student. The site contains lots of advice on studying and has an active message board for sharing experiences.

### [The World Dyslexia Network Foundation](#)

[www.wdnf.info](http://www.wdnf.info)

"The aim of the World Dyslexia Network Foundation is to provide information, international contacts and links by putting organisations, researchers, practitioners and all those seeing information in touch with each other, helping them to share their knowledge and experience for the benefit of dyslexic people everywhere."

### [Spellzone](#)

[www.spellzone.com](http://www.spellzone.com)

An extensive subscription site dedicated to improving the spelling of teenagers and adults. There are 37 units containing 450 pages of teaching, practice exercises and progress checks in English spelling. The annual subscription is £20.

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## **American websites**

### [Dyslexia – The Gift](#)

[www.dyslexia.com](http://www.dyslexia.com)

This site is tied to the work of Ron Davis who is himself a severe dyslexic. The Davis Dyslexia Correction Programme is taught in over 20 countries around the world.

### [World Of Dyslexia](#)

[www.dslyexia-parent.com](http://www.dslyexia-parent.com)

A vast resource of information and teaching materials for parents and students. The site includes a regular newsletter containing the latest research and ideas for helping those with dyslexia.

## Careers advice

The following pages provide information on issues that may affect students with a Specific Learning Difficulty such as dyslexia.

### Disclosing dyslexia to Employers – when and how

Disclosure is the process of informing a potential employer that you have dyslexia, a health difficulty or other disability. Many people choose not to disclose because of fear or bad experiences in the past. It is often difficult to know whether to tell an employer and also to know when and how information should be given. The decision is a personal one but the following points may help you in this.

#### Should you disclose or not?

- You may not want to disclose having dyslexia as you may be concerned of being rejected automatically or facing discrimination.
- You may feel that having dyslexia does not actually affect your ability to do the job that you have applied for.

#### Reasons for disclosure

- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 covers employment. If you have declared your disability, the employer cannot dismiss your application on this basis if "reasonable adjustment" can be made in the work place. However, if you do not declare your disability, an employer may have grounds for dismissal.
- The majority of employers are committed to Equal Opportunities and have specific policies to address this. Many companies display the Employment Service 'two ticks' symbol which commits the employer to offering a guaranteed interview providing the disabled candidate has met the minimum criteria for the vacancy. You could also see the company member list from the Employers Forum of Disability ([www.efd.org.uk](http://www.efd.org.uk)). The forum is the employers' organisation focused on the issue of disability in the workplace.
- You may be eligible for Access to Work funding if you have disclosed that you have dyslexia.
- If you have disclosed that you have dyslexia and you are invited to an assessment centre, you allow the employer to give you additional time to take the tests. It is important that you get in touch with employer before attending any assessment centre so that you can discuss your requirements with them.

#### How to disclose – marketing yourself effectively

It is important to think about all the skills that you can offer an employer. Living with your dyslexia has in fact have given you transferable skills that an employer is looking for e.g. having dyslexia and achieving a good academic

profile can be given as an example of how you identified a good problem solving approach for particular units not to mention sheer determination!

### **Examples of strengths and weaknesses of having dyslexia**

A dyslexic person can have many strengths alongside their difficulties.

Strengths can include:

- good at ideas and innovative thinking.
- good problem solver and lateral thinker
- creative in the way they make links and connections
- excellent visual and spatial awareness
- good with practical tasks and creative in many ways
- strong in the areas of art, music, design, architecture and engineering
- good communicators.

Difficulties can include:

- erratic spelling
- misreading leading to comprehension difficulties
- poor handwriting inaccurate number work
- difficulties with sequences e.g. date order
- ability to solve problems but inability to show process
- poor organisation or time management
- Inaccurate number work.

(Source: British Dyslexia Association 2004)

It is important is to think about how you have developed strategies and alternative learning methods to overcome the difficulties. Remember to make applications on the basis of the career opportunity they offer and if you meet the person specification. If so, you can then start to think about the support arrangements that you may need to help you in the job.

There are several appropriate times you may choose to disclose to a potential employer.

#### **Covering letter**

You may wish to mention dyslexia in the letter accompanying your CV. It should be done in a positive manner and could highlight any achievements e.g. successful past employment.

#### **Application form**

Do not just put you have dyslexia – you need to give a very simple explanation how it will not restrict your ability to work drawing on your achievements in the past. Remember not everyone knows what dyslexia is about. It may be that you use dyslexia as an example to a question where the employer has asked about a particular situation where you have demonstrated certain skills e.g. problem solving or where you have faced challenges and overcome them.

#### **Interview**

Be relaxed and always present yourself in a positive manner. If you have disclosed dyslexia, the interviewer may be unsure and want clarification.

Acknowledge this and clarify things in a very positive light highlighting your strengths and skills. The employee is looking for reassurance that you can do the job.

**Do**

- Be positive about skills and abilities and don't allow room for doubts.
- Provide factual information that is related to your ability to do the job and highlight having dyslexia in a positive light. Think about what you have learnt and how you have developed from having dyslexia. Perhaps discuss this with a careers adviser or your dyslexia tutor.
- Give positive examples of how you have met challenges in the past.

**Don't**

- Don't let dyslexia become the focus of the interview.
- Don't assume that an employer will view you in a negative way.

## Legislation – Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Disability legislation protects people with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Part 2 of the DDA focuses on employment and states that a person with a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia, should not be unfairly disadvantaged in terms of recruitment, conditions of employment, promotion and dismissal. This includes filling in application forms, interviews, proficiency tests, transfer or training opportunities, benefits, dismissal or redundancy. The DDA requires employers to make "reasonable adjustments" to reduce or remove any substantial disadvantage caused to a dyslexic person (employee or job applicant) by any of the employment arrangements in force.

Examples of adjustments relevant to dyslexia include:

- not being asked to write letters or notes if this is not a crucial aspect of the job
- allocating some duties to another person
- providing or arranging appropriate training
- modifying instructions or reference manuals
- modifying procedures for testing or assessment
- modifying equipment (for example allowing the use of pastel coloured paper rather than white)
- Recognising that a dyslexic may become inefficient under stress.

(Source: AGCAS Disability Development Network: working with students and graduates with dyslexia, August 2003)

At some point in their lives, people with dyslexia are faced with the question "Do I have a disability?". Having dyslexia will affect people in different ways. Whilst some people have little or no trouble from dyslexia, there are others whose lives are impacted in a more serious way. If you believe that you may have faced discrimination, you should be able to seek advice from the Disability Rights Commission (<http://www.drc.org.uk>).