



**ACCESSABILITY CENTRE**

**SUPPORTING**

**STUDENTS WITH**

**DISABILITIES**

**A LECTURER'S GUIDE**





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## **CLASSROOM SUPPORT FOR BLIND STUDENTS**

All blind students should be able to enjoy the same rights, freedom, responsibility and quality of academic life as those who are fully sighted at our University. In order to be able to offer them a full and rich tertiary experience while preparing them for the world of work the following tips may help academic routine in and around the classroom experience.

Sensitivity will be required in lecture presentation, lecture documentation support and assessment as information being taught is perceived, stored and retrieved in ways other than those of fully sighted students. Resource material may have to be modified, substituted or omitted. It is estimated that blind students can assimilate 80% of the teaching experience in the classroom if:

- provided with the correct material
- in the correct form
- at the correct time

Text-based material such as prescribed books, incidental readings, class notes, assignment and examination writing will require one or more of the following:

- assistive technology such as synthesized voice adaptation
- compact recording device
- peer note taker
- scribe
- peer reader
- audio taping
- Braille
- separate venue
- extra time allocation

### **1 COURSE CHOICE AND REGISTRATION**

- Most courses on offer should be accessible to blind or visually impaired students other than those practical courses that involve inherent visual skills as the student may not be able to meet requirements and would lose valuable marks
- As alternative strategies for teaching and learning are required by the blind student, the student **MUST** register at the AccessAbility Centre (DU) with all supporting medical documentation. The Reasonable Accommodations Committee will recommend certain concessions, the Examinations Office will be alerted to the alternative accommodations and both the student and lecturer will be informed by letter

## **2 PHYSICAL ACCESS TO THE VENUE**

- The student should be able to access the various venues with ease
- Ensure that all access points are open before and after the lecture
- Avoid leaving door and drawers ajar or chairs and stools standing out from tables or desks
- The student may make use of a service animal. As the guide dog is a working animal it should not be petted, fed titbits or fussed over
- If needed the student will take your arm

## **3 EXTRA TIME NEEDED**

- The student will need extra time due to slower information processing speed. This aspect does not need to be formally assessed through standardised psychometric measures
- Extra time is based on each individual student's normal working method and may be between 25% and 100% depending on the script content
- The student needs to register with the AccessAbility Centre at the start of the course in order to be granted an extra time accommodation

## **4 PRESCRIBED READING MATERIAL**

- A range of standardised formats for modified papers in accessible format should be offered
- Make use of the format most appropriate for the individual student. This may be on laptop, tablet, audio or braille etc
- Copies of the syllabus and reading assignments should be ready 6 weeks prior to classes beginning so that documents can be transcribed timeously into alternative formats

## **5 NOTE-TAKING**

- Implement strategies for obtaining notes presented in class by means of electronic copy, braille, scribe or peer note-taking
- The student should receive the material at the same time as the sighted peer group
- The student may also make use of a compact electronic device known as Note-taker.

## **6 TEACHING AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TIPS**

- All due dates for assignments, examination dates, course requirements etc should be clearly defined. Any changes should be given well before time
- Permit lectures to be taped
- Teaching should include the use of concrete teaching methods and if possible, stress the relationship among things in the environment

- Be aware that new or basic concepts absorbed through incidental learning may be significantly limited for the blind student. These may be far better understood when using models, tactile representations or objects that can be manipulated that will support the new concept being taught through verbal explanation. In other words, one or more methods may have to be used to explain a concept or impart knowledge
- Graphs and other diagrammes can be read by outlining them with liquid glue
- Video clips or other multimedia class presentations should offer closed description captions. Otherwise the blind student will have to view privately with a visual interpreter
- When teaching, state objectives, review previous lecture quickly and summarise now and then
- Pose questions to ascertain and ensure understanding competency
- Use descriptive words when giving directions like 'left' or 'right' rather than 'here' or 'this' or 'over there'
- Keep instructions brief and succinct. Repeat exactly without paraphrasing
- Verbalise when writing on board or OHP, when demonstrating something or when on-verbal information is being provided
- Verbalise when a stranger or a visitor enters the lecture room or if the room or student groups have been rearranged in any way
- Always address the blind student by name so that he/she knows when being spoken to
- If possible, identify the students by name when responding to questions or raised hands as this allows the blind student the opportunity to learn to identify the different classmates by voice
- Feel free to use words such as 'look' and 'see' as the student will perceive through the detail that follows
- Encourage the blind student to sit near the front so that you can ascertain comprehension. A corner seat is often appreciated
- If possible provide opportunities for the blind student to complete little jobs or help a peer
- Communicate your high expectation to the student that will demonstrate your belief in the student and that you are committed to his/her success
- If any activities form part of a lecture, ensure that the blind student will be able to perform them competently and meaningfully
- Make use of cooperative learning strategies to involve the blind student in group activities
- Many blind students like to be independent, so be patient. Only provide specific help when asked for it. Minimal assistance may help to build confidence and independence
- Treat the students equally especially when it concerns discipline and special privileges

- Offer the blind student course, faculty or campus opportunities for various extra-curricular activities if applicable as well as leadership and personal development opportunities
- Ask the student for ideas and suggestions

## **7 ASSIGNMENTS**

- If you have a student using braille, note that it could take twice as long as the sighted student to complete an assignment
- An assignment can be modified as long as the competency or skill required by the assignment can be fully demonstrated
- If assignment documents are delayed due to text conversion process please be flexible with deadlines.
- However the student remains responsible for working to schedule and handing in on time
- Stress assignment organisation and ideas rather than layout and mechanics of the report
- Written work should be proofread before handing in

## **8 PRACTICALS**

- Practical sessions or laboratory work will pose problems and one possible solution may be group work
- Another measure would to replace the lab/prac work with theory
- Practical reports, field work reports and field trips (if undertaken) can be done as audio commentary

## **9 CLASS TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS**

- The blind student's class test and examination experiences should match the manner in which the student manages his academic process in the classroom
- Tests can be done orally or with a scribe who reads the questions and writes/types the answers
- In some cases the questions may be pre-recorded if the student wants to use technology to type the answers
- No accommodations will be allowed other than those granted by the Reasonable Accommodations Committee at the AccessAbility Centre.

## **CLASSROOM SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH LOW VISION DIFFICULTIES**

All students with visual difficulties should be able to enjoy the same rights, freedom, responsibility and quality of academic life as those who are fully sighted at our University. In order to be able to offer them a full and rich tertiary experience while preparing them for the world of work the following tips may help academic routine in and around the classroom experience.

You do not have to alter the way you teach as there are many teaching strategies you can use to ensure effective and productive learning environments and experiences for all students, including those with disabilities. Resource material may have to be modified. Text-based material such as prescribed books, incidental readings, class notes, assignment and examination writing will require one or more of the following:

- assistive technology (JAWS)
- peer note taker
- enlarged font size
- scribe
- magnification
- peer reader
- audio taping
- separate venue
- extra time allocation

However currently the students are making use of enlarged font when reading and have been granted extra time to complete projects and tests.

### **1 COURSE CHOICE AND REGISTRATION**

- Most courses on offer should be accessible to the visually impaired student
- As alternative strategies for teaching and learning are required by the student, the student **MUST** register at the Disability Unit with all supporting medical documentation. The Reasonable Accommodations Committee will recommend certain concessions, the Examinations Office will be alerted to the alternative accommodations and both the student lecturer will be informed by letter
- Bear in mind that partially –sighted students may be overlooked in class as they often try to blend in without asking for help or using special assistance

### **2 PHYSICAL ACCESS TO THE VENUE**

- As for the blind student, the student with visual difficulties should be able to access the various venues with ease
- Ensure that all access points are open before and after the lecture

- Avoid leaving door and drawers ajar or chairs and stools standing out from tables or desks
- The student may need preferential seating where the lighting is good and the lecturer is not too far away
- Suggest quietly that the student be seated near the front of the class in order to hear well and easily see what is being presented
- If possible, provide the student with a thorough orientation of the lecture room pointing out the exits, low hanging equipment, raised floor sections, where the lecturer usually stands

### **3 EXTRA TIME NEEDED**

- The student will need extra time due to slower information processing speed. This aspect does not need to be formally assessed through standardised psychometric measures but may have been recommended by the medical specialist
- The student needs to register with the Disability Unit at the start of the course in order to be granted an extra time accommodation

### **4 PRESCRIBED READING MATERIAL**

- A range of standardised formats for modified papers in accessible format should be offered the most common of which will be enlarged text
- Make use of the format most appropriate for the individual student. This may be on laptop, tablet, audio etc
- Copies of the syllabus and reading assignments should be ready 6 weeks prior to classes beginning so that documents can be transcribed timeously into alternative formats. However we realise that this is not always practical as timetables and courses may only be decided upon just before commencement of lectures

### **5 NOTE-TAKING**

- Implement strategies for obtaining notes presented in class by means of electronic copy, enlarged copy, scribe or peer note-taking
- The student should receive the material at the same time as the fully sighted peer group
- The student may also make use of a compact electronic recording device

### **6 TEACHING AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TIPS**

- All due dates for assignments, examination dates, course requirements etc should be clearly defined. Any changes should be given well before time
- Permit lectures to be taped
- If graphic or visual material is being shown, verbally describe the materials in use
- When teaching, state objectives, review previous lecture quickly and summarise now and then
- Pose questions to ascertain and ensure understanding competency

- Use descriptive words when giving directions like 'left' or 'right' rather than 'here' or 'this' or 'over there'
- Keep instructions brief and succinct. Repeat exactly without paraphrasing
- Verbalise when a stranger or a visitor enters the lecture room or if the room or student groups have been rearranged in any way
- Always address the student with visual difficulties by name so that he/she knows when being spoken to
- If possible, identify the students by name when responding to questions or raised hands as this allows the student the opportunity to learn to identify the different classmates by voice as they are not easily distinguishable
- If possible provide opportunities for the student to complete little jobs or to help a peer
- Communicate your high expectation to the student that will demonstrate your belief in the student and that you are committed to his/her success
- If any activities form part of a lecture, ensure that the blind student will be able to perform them competently and meaningfully
- Make use of cooperative learning strategies to involve the visually disabled student in group activities
- Treat the students equally especially when it concerns discipline and special privileges
- Offer the visually disabled student course, faculty or campus opportunities for various extra-curricular activities if applicable as well as leadership and personal development opportunities
- Ask the student for ideas and suggestions

## 7 **ASSIGNMENTS**

- Knowledge should be assessed as for the fully sighted. Oral assessment should be the same as for the fully sighted without any making any major modifications
- However written assessments will be modified
- An assignment can be modified as long as the competency or skill required by the assignment can be fully demonstrated
- If assignment documents are delayed due to text conversion process please be flexible with deadlines.
- However the student remains responsible for working to schedule and handing in on time
- Stress assignment organisation and ideas rather than layout and mechanics of the report
- Written work should be proofread before handing in

## **8 PRACTICALS**

- Practical sessions or laboratory work could pose problems and one possible solution may be group work
- Another solution may be to make use of a visual interpreter
- Another measure would be to replace the lab/prac work with theory thus individualising the study programme
- Practical reports, field work reports and field trips (if undertaken) can be done as audio commentary

## **9 CLASS TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS**

- The visually impaired student's class test and examination experiences should match the manner in which the student manages his academic process in the classroom
- Test and examination scripts may be enlarged text, audio or synthesized voice adaptations
- No accommodations will be allowed other than those granted by the
- Reasonable Accommodations Committee at the AccessAbility (DU) Centre.

## **OVERVIEW**

All students with chronic medical conditions should be able to enjoy the same rights, freedom, responsibility and quality of academic life as every other student at our University. In order to be able to offer them a full and rich tertiary experience while preparing them for the world of work. Interacting with students with an ongoing medical condition should be characterised by respect for their rights to dignity, confidentiality and equity. How well academic staff members are able to assist these students depends very much on the relationship they are able to establish with the student.

Students with chronic health conditions choose to pursue academic life and do it with medical support. Many of these conditions are not apparent but may be disabling due to intense and continual pain. Symptoms can be unpredictable and fluctuating. There is a long list of chronic illnesses that affect academic life, some of which are:

asthma, arthritis, diabetes, cardio-pulmonary disease, cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, chronic migraine, HIV/AIDS, immune deficiency syndrome, seizure disorder, narcolepsy.

## **PRESENTING SYMPTOMS**

- limited energy
- difficulty walking, standing or sitting for a long period of time
- pain or medication that can cause dizziness or confusion
- inability to pay attention
- difficulty in completing assignments
- difficulty staying focused during tests and examinations
- difficulty doing library research

## **CLASSROOM SUPPORT**

You do not have to alter the way you teach as there are many teaching strategies you can use to ensure effective and productive learning environments and experiences for all students, including those with disabilities. Here are some tips:

- being able to record lectures will assist those students whose attentional processing is affected by their disability, as well as those who, because of the effects of medication and/or short-term memory loss, may tend to misinterpret or misquote
- making reading lists and handouts available early in the course will assist students who may be frequently absent to continue with their learning, even though they may be unable to attend classes.
- flexible delivery of teaching material via electronic media is particularly helpful for students who are unavoidably absent from class, or who cannot participate in classes for extended periods of time.

- if a student self-reveals a diagnosis, ask the student what supports he or she may need. Determine what is reasonable and state why any unreasonable requests cannot be accommodated. Encourage the student to communicate a change in their needs if anticipated during the semester. Meet the student privately.
- consider requests for extensions on assignments and reasons provided with each request
- communicate deadlines and exam dates clearly in the class and in the syllabus. Avoid sudden changes in dates for exams. Give reasonable notice for quizzes and tests not announced at the beginning of the semester.
- discuss inappropriate behavior or unacceptable academic performance as you would with any other student. Present the facts and expectations of the class. Maintain a calm delivery and eye contact. Allow the student the opportunity to respond. Keep the communication professional. Do not attempt to counsel the student.
- provide both verbal and written instructions with reminders of impending due dates for assignments and exams
- students returning to education after a significant absence may initially be very unsure of what level to pitch their work at, or may set unrealistically high standards for themselves. You may need to help students focus on more realistic and achievable standards and goals. If you have negotiated any adaptation to teaching or assessment with the student, it is good practice for both the student and staff member to have a written record of that decision
- it would be helpful to provide students with a basic outline of the teaching module's structure. This can help students with limited energy or sensory impairments know when to focus on certain aspects of the subject and mean they are better prepared for lectures and seminars. Considered good practice, the provision of a course structure is encouraged wherever possible
- if a student approaches you for therapeutic help, refer the student to the appropriate resources on the campus for assistance; this may be through Health or Counselling Services, or another office. You can also seek advice and ideas from colleagues and supervisors
- fatigue and stamina loss can affect attention and concentration and extra time may be needed to complete assignments as well as tests and examinations
- some students may be late for class, slow in moving from one locale to another due to the above-mentioned factors, so one needs to be patient
- some students find it difficult to sit on a particular chair in a venue. They may prefer to stand at a podium
- frequent rest breaks may be necessary
- if bed rest or hospitalisation is required, the work should be made up but with a time extension

**If dealing with a crisis situation please seek emergency help immediately.**

## **CLASSROOM SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH HEARING DISABILITIES**

All students with hearing difficulties should be able to enjoy the same rights, freedom, responsibility and quality of academic life as those who have sound hearing at our University. Hearing impairment adversely affects the student's educational, and/or social performance and can be so severe that even with amplification the student is unable to process linguistic information through hearing.

Hearing impairment covers a whole spectrum and can present with varying abilities in communication. They range from:

- A Mild deafness where the student communicates orally but hears speech at a reduced level may use a hearing aid but it can distort and amplify which is often unhelpful.
- B Partial/moderate deafness where the student communicates orally may also use an aid but may still need to lip read
- C Severe deafness where the student has some residual hearing and intelligible speech to
- D Profound deafness where the student communicates non-orally and there is very little residual hearing and intelligible speech. Sign language would be the mode of communication.

Students may rely on interpreting services, lip-reading, amplification and/or computer transcriptions. Some may have been born deaf while others may have experienced or are currently experiencing gradual hearing loss.

In order to be able to offer them a full and rich tertiary experience while preparing them for the world of work, the following tips may help academic routine in and around the classroom experience.

### **TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

The student needs to have sufficient residual hearing to be able to use one of the following:

#### Radio-microphone system (Domino Pro)

The student wears the wireless broadband receiver and the lecturer wears the small transmitter. This system is ideal for lectures, seminars and tutorials as it cuts out background noise so only the lecturer's voice is heard. Bear in mind that remarks from class members will have to be repeated.

#### Induction Loops

Certain teaching venues have been fitted with the induction loop that runs around the perimeter of the room. The lecturer uses the microphone and the student picks up the conversation and other sounds via the hearing aid.

### Digital recorders

For the student who does not have substantial hearing loss, a digital recording device is useful as a way of recording lectures and storing as sound files. The lectures can be replayed and heard by means of a neck loop and hearing aid or lightweight earphones.

## **NON-TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

### Note-taker

As it is very difficult for a student with a hearing impairment to listen to a lecture while taking notes, a volunteer note-taker may be the answer, preferably studying in the same field.

### Lip-speaker

For those students who do not use sign language, a lip speaker may be the answer. A lip speaker would be used when a student finds it difficult to lip read the lecturer or tutor.

Should this service be necessary, here is how it works:

- The lip speaker repeats the speaker's words without voice clearly shaping the words, the flow, rhythm and phrasing of natural speech and repeats the stress placed on syllables etc.
- The lip speaker uses natural gestures, facial expression and finger spelling if requested to add to the understanding

### Sign interpreter

Should this be necessary, here is further information:

- Used by students who prefer to communicate by means of the South African sign language medium
- The interpreter translates what the speaker is saying into sign
- And will provide a voice over if the student signs back
- It works best if the interpreter has some understanding of the subject matter
- The student needs a clear view of the lecturer and the sign language interpreter

## **TEACHING AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TIPS**

The following practices will be appreciated greatly by the student:

- Face the class and engage with eye contact
- Use lots of visuals
- Repeat other students' comments as they will be missed
- Repeat any question that is asked
- Keeps hands clear of the mouth when speaking
- If something is misunderstood, rather than repeat it or speak louder, try to rephrase it
- When there is a group discussion, limit the students to talking one at a time
- Be patient with the student's response as there may be a slight delay

- When instructing on new tasks, the information can be broken down into small steps
- Instructional material should be available in text form

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **PRACTICALS, TUTORIALS AND GROUP WORK**

These can be difficult for students with hearing impairments. Many people can get involved in group discussions and the students forget to talk one at a time. This can be very confusing for the student. A note-taker in a tutorial session could prove most useful

### **ASSESSMENTS**

Depending on the type of assessment undertaken, a reasonable accommodation or modification may be necessary. Extra time may be required

## **CLASSROOM SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH MOBILITY IMPAIRMENT**

All students with mobility difficulties should be able to enjoy the same rights, freedom, responsibility and quality of academic life as those who are fully mobile at our University.

Mobility can be impacted by a range of neuromuscular and orthopaedic impairments amongst many which include cerebral palsy, arthritis, spinal cord injury (quadriplegia, paraplegia, hemiplegia), multiple sclerosis, ataxia, brittle bone disease, stroke, amputation, fibromyalgia and back disorders that include degenerative disc disorder, herniated discs and scoliosis.

Students may use wheelchairs, be accompanied by an around-the-clock carer, braces or crutches. Some student may have short term mobility needs while recovering from injury while others live with a permanent condition. In both short and long term cases, they will need reasonable accommodations in order to be able to cope effectively. Therefore they need a full and rich tertiary experience while preparing for the world of work and the following information and tips may help academic routine in and around the classroom experience.

### **Venue access**

- Ensure that the student, if using a wheel chair can access the venue either by ramp or lift
- a disabled parking bay is available as close as possible to the most frequently used venue, if student is using a vehicle

### **Seating arrangements**

- Space may be needed for the wheelchair
- The student may require a special chair
- A lower table or desk may be required
- If possible, the student should not sit in the back row. Move a table or a chair so that he/she is part of the regular class seating arrangement and is included in all discussions

### **Teaching tips**

- If the student also has a speech impediment, allow time to produce the words
- If such a student asks a question, repeat the question to affirm proper understanding
- In the classroom the student will set the pace with speaking and moving
- The student should be given equal opportunities to participate in all additional activities

- When setting library or research assignments, deadlines flexibility should be allowed as access to the material and putting it in text form will take longer if there are also manual disabilities
- If upper body movement is impaired, establish eye contact with the student and ask them to contribute should you feel that they would like to do so

### **Pre-reading and printed notes**

- Course materials should be available in electronic format
- Assistive computer software can convert the text to a format with which the student is most comfortable

### **Taking notes**

- A note taker will be necessary for the student with upper body limitations
- Audio taping should allowed if needed
- Allow the student computer use in class
- Class notes should be available before the lecture

### **Lateness**

- A student may be late for class due to mechanical problems with the wheelchair, problems with the specialised transport or building design barriers
- Bad weather may also cause lateness

### **Laboratory work**

- The lab must be accessible
- All equipment should be reachable
- A lower lab table may be necessary to accommodate the wheelchair
- The student may need practical help form a buddy in some courses

### **Fieldtrips and practical work**

- These should be arranged well ahead of time paying special attention to transportation and accessibility, special seating or frequent rest breaks

### **Examination and class tests**

- Extra time in all class tests and examinations will if needed be granted by the DU

- Alternative reasonable accommodations may be necessary for assessing the student such as a scribe or amanuensis

### **General**

- The wheelchair is part of the student's personal space. No one should push, touch without asking first
- When speaking one-to-one to a student using a wheelchair, bend down so that both of you are at the same level.

## **SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL OR PSYCHIATRIC CONDITIONS**

### **OVERVIEW**

All students with psychiatric or psychological conditions should be able to enjoy the same rights, freedom, responsibility and quality of academic life as every other student at our University. In order to be able to offer them a full and rich tertiary experience while preparing them for the world of work. Interacting with students with a psychiatric or psychological disability should be characterised by respect for their rights to dignity, confidentiality and equity. How well academic staff members are able to assist these students depends very much on the relationship they are able to establish with the student.

Some students will choose to disclose their disability; others will not. There is still a considerable social stigma attached to psychiatric disability as well as numerous persistent myths, so that disclosure and discussion of their disability may be particularly difficult for a student. Psychological disabilities are not well understood and accepted in our society and many students with psychological disabilities have good reason to fear the reactions of others as well as a fear of being stereotyped together with the stigma of being treated differently as well as the misperception of being seen as incompetent.

### **ABSENCE FROM CLASS**

Unlike other disabilities, psychological or psychiatric disabilities seem to be invisible. The disabilities may be transitory having been brought on by recent personal trauma or they may be of longer standing. Some conditions are cyclical in nature yet do not follow regular patterns. It is difficult to predict when symptoms will reoccur and functioning will worsen. However, the majority of disorders can be controlled using a combination of medications and psychotherapy but medication prescribed can have side effects and can result in fatigue and irregular behavior and attentiveness levels.

For disability-specific related reasons, students may sometimes have to miss class, or even leave the room in the middle of a class. Students may have frequent or unexpected absences owing to hospitalisation and/or medication changes. The students will be responsible for the content of any lectures missed, but they will appreciate your helping them to fill in the gaps. This interruption of academic requirements is often unpredictable.

### **TYPES OF DISABILITIES**

The disabilities can interfere with the student's academic and personal life and may include: clinical depression, bipolar disorder, severe anxiety, schizophrenia, eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa, anxiety disorders, neuroses, psychoses and personality disorders, substance abuse and acquired brain injury (ABI).

## **SYMPTOMS**

The learning processes of students with a psychiatric or psychological disability may be affected and the students may have to deal with:

- anxiety, apathy, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, fatigue, irritability, erratic behaviour, panic attacks, attention deficit and fluctuating motivation
- disorganization, difficulties with focusing, concentrating and completing work in a timely fashion
- reading, writing, and numeracy work problems that may require extra effort and more time
- the ability to consistently function effectively and functioning may vary from day to day
- responding to stress that may lead to an increase in symptoms
- evidence of short-term memory loss which will affect both the ability to recall information and attention span
- difficulty following sequences, complicated instructions and directions, and with integrating material from different sources and may be easily 'overwhelmed' by information.
- heightened anxiety levels that may interfere with concentration affecting both classroom learning, class tests and the examination process.

## **CLASSROOM HELP**

You do not have to alter the way you teach as there are many teaching strategies you can use to ensure effective and productive learning environments and experiences for all students, including those with disabilities. Here are some tips:

- being able to record lectures will assist those students whose attentional processing is affected by their disability, as well as those who, because of the effects of medication and/or short-term memory loss, may tend to misinterpret or misquote
- making reading lists and handouts available early in the course will assist students who may be frequently absent to continue with their learning, even though they may be unable to attend classes.
- flexible delivery of teaching material via electronic media is particularly helpful for students who are unavoidably absent from class, or who cannot participate in classes for extended periods of time.

- if a student self-reveals a diagnosis, ask the student what supports he or she may need. Determine what is reasonable and state why any unreasonable requests cannot be accommodated. Encourage the student to communicate a change in their needs if anticipated during the semester. Meet the student privately. Do not attempt to hold a conversation in a public area.
- consider requests for extensions on assignments and reasons provided with each request
- communicate deadlines and exam dates clearly in the class and in the syllabus. Avoid sudden changes in dates for exams. Give reasonable notice for quizzes and tests not announced at the beginning of the semester.
- discuss inappropriate behavior or unacceptable academic performance as you would with any other student. Present the facts and expectations of the class. Maintain a calm delivery and eye contact. Allow the student the opportunity to respond. Keep the communication professional. Do not attempt to counsel the student.
- avoid “rapid fire” questions in class. Allow time for a thoughtful response if the procedure within the class is to randomly call upon any and all students for answers.
- provide both verbal and written instructions with reminders of impending due dates for assignments and exams
- students returning to education after a significant absence may initially be very unsure of what level to pitch their work at, or may set unrealistically high standards for themselves. You may need to help students focus on more realistic and achievable standards and goals. If you have negotiated any adaptation to teaching or assessment with the student, it is good practice for both the student and staff member to have a written record of that decision
- if any disturbing or inappropriate behaviour is evident in the classroom this should be discussed with the student privately, and future behaviour agreed upon
- emotional and behavioural changes associated with some psychiatric and psychological disabilities can make it difficult for students to participate in tutorials or to give presentations. It may be appropriate to organise one-to-one tutoring, or to ask the student to record their presentations on tape
- it would be helpful to provide students with a basic outline of the teaching module's structure. This can help students with limited energy or sensory impairments know when to focus on certain aspects of the subject and mean they are better prepared for lectures and seminars. Considered good practice, the provision of a course structure is encouraged wherever possible

- if a student approaches you for therapeutic help, refer the student to the appropriate resources on the campus for assistance; this may be through Health or Counselling Services, or another office. You can also seek advice and ideas from colleagues and supervisors.

**If dealing with a crisis situation please seek emergency help immediately.**

## 5 CLASSROOM SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

The phrase Specific Learning Disability is sometimes used to describe a person who does not find general learning to be difficult, but rather finds that certain task types under particular conditions make learning, performing or demonstrating the knowledge and understanding quite difficult.

All students with **Specific Learning Disorders** (SpLD) should be able to enjoy the same rights, freedom, responsibility and quality of academic life as every other student at our University. In order to be able to offer them a full and rich tertiary experience while preparing them for the world of work. Students with specific learning disabilities can have normal to superior intelligence but the information processing mechanisms are problematic. This can result in underachievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

There are generally significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. The manner in which the student receives and processes information accurately via auditory, spatial or visual means, retains and then expresses knowledge, can be a significant barrier to academic success.

Accompanying difficulties may include poor hand-eye co-ordination; difficulties with manual dexterity; the planning, organisation and sequencing of language and thought and weakness in short-term memory. The processes most affected could be reading comprehension, verbal and written expression, writing mechanics, visual processing, auditory processing and receptive processing as well as sequencing and memory.

In a lecture situation, it is the process of reading, writing, listening and summarising simultaneously at speed that can be particularly difficult and often impossible for students with SpLD's. This process necessitates holding ideas in short-term memory while processing into writing at a relatively slow speed. We need to remember that understanding and engaging with lecture content is not the problem but rather the lag between coding and remembering what is being said and recording it.

Not all students will experience all of the possible difficulties and the range of areas of difficulty experienced will vary from individual to individual. Students with a SpLD will have developed a range of compensatory strategies. However, these strategies may come under pressure in different environments and also during times of increased stress. Therefore, the difficulties may become more noticeable when under time pressure during class tests and examinations where there is an increased burden on memory and the rapid retrieval and organisation of information.

Specific Learning Disability is an umbrella term often used for **dyslexia**, **dyspraxia**, **dysgraphia** and **dyscalculia**. These four areas will be individually discussed looking at the presenting problems and ways of helping the student overcome them. These disorders should not be confused with normal variations in academic achievement due to poor teaching, lack of opportunities or cultural factors. Sometimes **Attention Deficit Disorder** with or without **Hyperactivity** co-presents with these disorders and will therefore be included in this group of disabilities.

**Some problems common to these four disorders that we have found with our students are:**

- the inability to work quickly enough to finish a test or exam paper within the prescribed time limits
- inability to quickly absorb information when reading
- inability to scan large amounts of text
- slow reading due to slow information- processing speed
- poor spelling, mixing letters,
- inability to write concisely
- inability to proofread effectively as personal errors are not picked up
- organisational and planning task management difficulties
- difficulty in structuring writing and ideas in an ordered and logical sequence
- retaining and executing involved oral instructions
- problems with punctuation, grammar and syntax
- inability to summarise or paraphrase source material effectively and efficiently
- non-fluent written composition
- slow auditory perception and processing of lecture material or class discussion
- difficulty with visual perception and processing of graphs, power points etc
- inability to distinguish between letters or focus when multiple images are presented
- difficulty listening and concurrent note-taking
- short and long-term memory challenges
- speed, legibility and accuracy of written work
- remaining focused for a lengthy period of time
- difficulty in mathematically calculating and expressing problems that are described in words.

**SPECIFIC DISABILITIES**

**1 DYSLEXIA**

Dyslexia is an underlying language processing difficulty that affects the learning process in one or more of speed, accuracy and fluency of reading, spelling and writing. It is particularly related to mastering and using written language, which may include alphabetic, numeric and musical notation.

This involves phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory, processing speed, organisation and sequencing and the automatic development of skills that may not match up to the student's other cognitive abilities' Other areas that are affected may be attention span, fine and gross motor abilities, social problems as well as emotional problems.

**In the academic environment the specific characteristics of dyslexia can present in a number of ways:**

Language

- takes longer to process auditory information
- grammatical and word meaning errors

- spelling difficulties
- takes longer to grasp concepts
- difficulty in finding appropriate words
- difficulty with written expression
- difficulty with analysis and synthesis
- difficulty integrating material from various sources
- difficulties following complex instructions
- difficulty grasping abstract concepts without concrete examples
- often has information overload as many ideas cannot be processed quickly

### Visual/Spatial perception

- confused by maths signs resulting in maths skills problems such as direction, space and calculation facts +, x, ~, ≤, ±, ≥
- reversal or rotation of letters (p and q, b and d, J and L)
- reversals or rotations of numbers ( 5 and 2, 9 and 6, )
- reversal of words such as mirror writing
- confusion with similar words when writing
- confusion with Left and Right in space, position and direction
- following or creating a sequence is problematic; following and understanding the structure of a lecture, presenting facts in chronological order
- difficulty with “Search and Locate” strategies necessary for research

### Memory

- works more slowly
- has slower reading rate
- difficulty studying for tests and exams
- more time needed to comprehend material
- organisational problems
- struggles with problem solving activities

### Attention

- tires easily
- needs regular and more frequent breaks
- output is often inconsistent
- organisational problems
- difficulty focussing on only one line of thought

### Combined language, memory and attention deficit

- spelling problems
- slow new skill acquisition
- learning inconsistency
- poor or illegible handwriting

- grammar use problems
- difficulty in sequencing ideas
- problems recalling maths concepts

### Social and emotional problems

- low self-esteem
- displays frustration
- anxious and tense especially in test situations
- anxious about performing in front of others can affect tutorials
- fails to respond to requests
- takes longer to respond and interpret social cues such as facial expression, body language, spoken instruction, peer or staff interaction

### How to help in the classroom

- provide a clear overview of what will be covered, preferably as a hand-out, highlighting the main arguments, key concepts and new / difficult vocabulary
- when introducing a new theme or concept, clarify the new language and provide as many concrete examples as possible
- use a variety of teaching methods
- allow students to record lectures/tutorials or use other technological support, if required
- regularly pausing to summarise key themes/issues covered especially at the end of the lecture
- allow time for students to read a hand-out if used during the lecture
- avoid asking SpLD students to read aloud or to respond to questions
- use clear overhead projections or slides and keep the slides as simple as possible
- provide essay/assignment questions as early as possible
- give specific instructions and using unambiguous language in essay and test questions
- use a clear, concise writing style
- when writing notes or creating slides, avoid patterned backgrounds and use a clear font such as Arial rather than Times New Roman
- use printed rather than hand-written notes
- avoid lots of dense text – use paragraphs, headings, sub-headings, bullet points
- print on cream paper rather than white as the glare of black on white can make text harder to decode. Yellow paper is also suggested
- where there is a choice, provide references that have electronic copies available which enables the student to use text-to-speech software
- stress the importance of pre-reading/ preparing for each lecture
- stress the importance of making good short summaries after each section
- stress the importance of consolidating each day's lecture on the day that it is given
- stress the importance of revision, revision, revision.

## **2 DYSPRAXIA**

Dyspraxia affects the way the brain processes information and impacts upon perception, language and thought thus the planning of what to do and how to do it becomes

problematic. It is an impairment of the organisation of movement and a student with dyspraxia can experience difficulties with physical (motor) co-ordination, visual perception and spatial awareness making some practical tasks rather difficult. The student may experience poor hand-eye co-ordination, difficulties with manual dexterity, the planning, organisation and sequencing of language and thought and weakness in short-term memory.

### **In the academic environment dyspraxia can present in a number of ways:**

- physical clumsiness
- pronunciation of some words and/or stuttering
- difficulties with expressing oneself
- laborious writing which can be untidy and illegible
- difficulties with note-taking
- difficulties with general organization and with planning and structuring essays
- difficulties organising and managing information and filing
- problems maintaining accuracy when copying or producing sounds, writing, movement
- clumsy movements around learning area
- handles objects or field equipment in a slow or clumsy way
- difficulty in interpreting two or three dimensional models or diagrammes
- problems following directions or maps
- difficulty in judging distances
- difficulties in social interaction, especially in groups;
- may have difficulty distinguishing sounds and screening background noise
- may have difficulty following more than one instruction simultaneously.

### **How to help in the classroom**

- get to know the students particular needs in advance through a 1-1 meeting.
- be understanding and supportive
- allow use of tape recorders
- present information as far as possible in a structured, holistic way
- explain at the beginning of lectures what the structure/main points will be
- if possible, provide a written outline of lecture
- support and reinforce spoken information with hand-outs and visual aids, models, concrete examples
- provide glossaries of terms and acronyms
- invite feedback to check understanding
- stress the importance of pre-reading/ preparing for each lecture
- stress the importance of making good short summaries after each section
- stress the importance of consolidating each day's lecture on the day that it is given
- stress the importance of revision, revision, revision

## **3 DYSGRAPHIA**

This concerns the organisation of fine motor control and may be accompanied by processing difficulties. This coordination is necessary for handwriting and therefore affects speed and legibility. Dysgraphia may exist in isolation but often occurs with other

learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and attention deficit disorder (ADD) with or without hyperactivity (ADHD).

**In the academic environment dysgraphia can present in a number of ways:**

- poor, illegible handwriting
- slow handwriting
- hand tires quickly making writing painful
- muscle cramping or spasms may be reported
- difficulty keeping letters and words on a writing line
- difficulty moving the hand smoothly across the page while writing
- in extreme cases, slow keyboard typing
- difficulties with note-taking, both in lectures and from books
- difficulties in writing during exams

**How to help in the classroom**

- allow use of recording devices during lectures
- the student may take notes on a tablet or laptop
- use a variety of means for presenting information e.g. videos, flow-charts, diagrams etc so that note-taking is reduced
- if computer skills are reasonable, the student may be granted use of a computer during class tests and examinations
- the student be granted an extra time concession for all class tests and examinations
- in an extreme case, the student may have to use a scribe for all class tests and examinations
- stress the importance of pre-reading/ preparing for each lecture
- stress the importance of making good short summaries after each section
- stress the importance of consolidating each day's lecture on the day that it is given
- stress the importance of revision, revision, revision

**4 DYSCALCULIA**

Dyscalculia affects the ability to acquire arithmetical skills and an inability to perform arithmetic operations and calculations or understand mathematical concepts. The student may have difficulty understanding number concepts may, lack an intuitive grasp of number or have problems learning number facts and procedures.

In the academic environment dyscalculia can present in a number of ways:

- confusing arithmetic signs  $+$ / $-$ / $\times$ / $\div$
- difficulties with multiplication tables and mental arithmetic
- higher level calculations become difficult
- sequential processing is problematic even when using a calculator

- basic number concepts such as calculating prices, estimating and measuring, handling change
- mixing up times of scheduled appointments – miscalculating how long it will take to travel between venues
- have problems organising budgets and keeping track of finances
- have poor self-esteem as a learner of mathematics.

### **How to help in the classroom**

- find out from the student what has worked well previously in the classroom environment
- additional support may be necessary in courses that have numerical content
- allow recording of lectures
- try to avoid asking the student to solve numeracy problems in front of the whole class
- stress the importance of pre-reading/ preparing for each lecture
- stress the importance of making good short summaries after each section
- stress the importance of consolidating each day's lecture on the day that it is given
- stress the importance of revision, revision, revision

## **5 ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER**

This disorder is a condition that affects the parts of the brain that control attention, impulses and concentration (executive functioning) and can occur with or without hyperactivity. Here are three main types namely:

- predominantly hyperactive and impulsive
- predominantly inattentive
- a combination of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity

Causes are thought to include neurobiological, genetic and environmental factors. Students who have AD/HD are found to have strengths in certain areas and:

- are highly creative, original and inventive
- contribute well to discussion and debate
- are intuitive and intelligent
- are highly energetic, enthusiastic and motivated for specific tasks
- have the ability to see the bigger picture
- possess good strategic thinking and problem solving skills
- are determined to succeed
- are hardworking
- take risks and push innovation

In the academic environment AD(H)D can present in a number of ways:

- failure to give close attention to details thereby making mistakes
- poor listening skills
- intolerant of boredom or frustration so will search for highly stimulating activities
- procrastinate and fall behind with workload

- lose or forget things, fail to plan ahead
- poor organisation and misjudge how long it will take to complete tasks, such as essays
- poor timekeeping
- difficulty prioritising tasks, may have difficulty in getting going on an assignment
- difficulty extracting relevant and salient information , may give too much/too little
- can seem impatient, unpredictable and display inappropriate behaviour
- genuinely forgetful, may miss deadlines, lectures or medical appointments
- become 'locked into' / obsessive about a task or activity and unable to switch between tasks
- have very fixed ideas and sometimes showing little flexibility
- hyperactive – appear over-stimulated and often fidgety
- can become disorientated, get lost, difficulty in getting to new places on time
- easily distracted, hypersensitive to external stimuli especially libraries and large exam venues
- may demonstrate impulsive or risky behaviour
- inattention in a range of different situations and be easily distracted
- may be poorly co-ordinated
- may also have a specific learning disorder
- may talk excessively, have difficulties waiting for their turn and interrupt others
- can find it difficult to remain sitting.

### **How to help in the classroom**

- Start the teaching session by reviewing the previous one and providing overviews of the main topics and structure of the previous one
- Provide notes at the start of each teaching session
- Allow recording of lectures using a digital recording device
- May make use of a note-taker
- Present material in a variety of ways diagrams, flow charts, practical demonstrations, tapes
- Students with ADHD may need to check the accuracy of information that they have got from lectures. If asked to re-explain perhaps try using different terminology or more straightforward language
- Encourage working with a buddy or making use of s tutor or mentor to direct study attention
- Suggest using specialist software
- Pause and sum up frequently when giving instructions and explanations
- During lectures that are longer than one hour provide a short break in the middle
- Register with the Disability Unit and apply for extra time and/or writing class tests and examinations in a separate venue.

### **GENERAL TIPS FOR TEACHING STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISORDERS**

- give permission to record lectures, tutorials etc
- give permission to take notes using a laptop computer
- leave information on the board to allow adequate copying time
- identify essential information
- provide guidance with reading tasks

- student needs time to process information and prepare answers to verbal questions
- provide group discussion materials in advance
- use concise, clear and explicit language
- break information down if task details are long
- provide instructions in written form if required
- provide assignment deadlines well in advance
- provide exemplars and models of expected work/assignments (e.g. an example of a 1st class essay, a 2:1, a 2:2, etc)
- provide constructive written and verbal feedback
- provide detailed, legible feedback on strong points of the essay or assignment as well as areas for improvement
- provide copies of PowerPoint presentations, OHTs, handouts, lecture notes and discussion documents, where available, preferably in advance in electronic format
- provide PowerPoint presentations on a dark background where possible
- number PowerPoint slides to assist with referencing during note taking
- stress the importance of pre-reading/ preparing for each lecture
- stress the importance of making good short summaries after each section
- stress the importance of consolidating each day's lecture on the day that it is given
- stress the importance of revision, revision, revision

### **Practicals:**

- give permission to record instructions
- break lengthy tasks into stages
- repeat information when necessary
- provide instructions, processes and protocols in written and verbal form
- assist the student in finding effective peer note-takers from the class or provide the student with a copy of your lecture notes or outline
- allow the student to tape record lectures
- allow the student additional time to complete in-class assignments, particularly writing assignments if necessary
- provide feedback and assist the student in planning the workflow of assignments. It may be helpful to break the larger assignment into smaller components with opportunities for draft feedback
- provide assistance with proofreading written work if needed

### **Class Test and Examination Accommodations**

If a lecturer come across a student who presents with any of the above symptoms and the academic performance is suffering or is of concern, the student should be sent to the Disability Unit. Once registered there and after in-depth discussion and counselling, the student may be referred for a full psycho-educational assessment to determine the difficulty in order for the Unit (and other relevant agencies) to best support the student so that his/her true potential can be brought to the fore.

Further reasonable accommodations may be offered by the Disability Unit and the student may:

- have an extended class test and exam time concession
- take exams in a separate venue with reduced distractions

- have the assistance of a reader, scribe, or word processor for exams
- have the option of an oral exam
- be able to use spelling and grammar assistive devices for essay exams
- be able to use a calculator for exams
- be able to use scribble paper during exams.

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