



6 Getting support

Getting support from others

Getting the ‘right’ support from others may sometimes feel very hard.

Every person with dyslexia is different:

- You may prefer to cope by yourself, even if you run into difficulties.
- Maybe you are used to getting support from teachers, family or friends and they are no longer around.
- You may find it difficult to ask for help, or not know what is available.
- Maybe you haven’t made it clear to others what would help you best.

Every learning situation is different:

- You may feel you need more support, but everybody seems too busy.
- The way you are taught may not seem to be the best way for you to learn.
- Others may not feel that they can meet your requests for help.

It is important for you to help yourself as much as possible, but the behaviour of others towards you may significantly affect your learning experience.

On the next few pages you will find a list of possible support strategies. Decide which ones might be most helpful and realistic in your own situation. If you are not sure, find somebody to talk through the options with (see pages 29–32).



Coping with note taking

- Many students feel that they cannot listen to someone speaking, remember what has been said and take down useful notes at the same time. A good recording device might help you with lectures, seminars, tutorials, practicals or instructions (see section on Technology). It's a good idea to check with lecturers when you are making a recording, especially as you may need to position your recorder as near as possible to the main speaker/s.

It is very helpful to mark particular places of interest on your recording, otherwise you may find yourself spending hours listening back to your recordings. Labelling and organising your disks or cassettes is well worth the trouble.

- Request from lecturers 'skeleton' notes at the start of a lecture with section headings and main points. They may be able to give you copies of notes, diagrams, worked examples or OHPs. Better still, copies may be left in the library or made available electronically.
- You may get another student to make two copies of his/her notes using carbon paper or a photocopy. However, it is still vital for you to personalise your notes by rethinking, recopying and reviewing them, otherwise they will be useless. See section on Mind Mapping page 38.
- Many students with dyslexia spend hours checking the accuracy of their notes from textbooks after lectures. You may be able to make a quick appointment with a tutor or lecturer to check over your notes.
- Team together with other students and share out note-taking tasks. Remember that others can also benefit from sharing their notes with you: it can help them make sure that they have understood the subject, have taken down adequate notes and glue the information into their memory.



Coping with writing tasks

- Most students with dyslexia try their utmost to meet deadlines for assignments, but sometimes feel that there is a lack of understanding of the laborious effort that has gone into producing work at an acceptable standard. You may wish to mark at the bottom of a piece of work, just how long it has taken you from research to final draft. Asking for extensions on assignments is often not helpful, as you can fall behind with other tasks. There are thousands of books on time management, but none are any good if you don't apply the suggestions.
- Ask whoever set the assignment to offer models of what you should be aiming at to get a good grade.
- Many students with dyslexia misinterpret set questions, do too much irrelevant research, don't plan out their assignment or go off the point of their argument. Proof reading can also be very difficult. Make sure that you check your work with someone at each of these vital stages. You will save yourself a lot of time, stress and disappointment.
- Do not worry about spelling and presentation until the final draft. Write on only one side of the page and leave gaps between lines for easy correction.
- Hand in two copies of your final draft. Ask whoever is marking your work, to mark one copy for content and the other for transcription errors: spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. Where work is difficult to understand, tutors have found it less time consuming and more productive to mark the piece of work in your presence.



- Request from whoever is marking you, to highlight any pattern that he/she can see in your errors. Specific feedback with concrete examples of strengths and weaknesses is very helpful.
- In feedback or briefing sessions, you may easily become distracted or overloaded with information: record the session and listen to it again at a later stage.

Coping with examinations

Examinations may feel particularly daunting to students with dyslexia. Good revision and relaxation techniques are vital. So is talking to a professional counsellor or somebody you trust, if you feel you are getting very anxious or depressed.

Basically, you need to demonstrate that you have fulfilled the objectives of your programme of study, at the standard required for the award you seek. The institution in turn must enable you to operate on the same terms as other candidates. It is very important that you discuss as early as possible with a Disability Advisor or your tutor what additional arrangements can be made for you. These may include:

- Extra time in exams or tests
- Use of a word processor and spellchecker
- Use of a dictionary
- Identification to the marker that you are a candidate with dyslexia
- Use of a coloured overlay, if you already use one
- In exceptional cases, other arrangements may be made



A full outline of your institution's examinations policy with regard to students with dyslexia can be found on pages 50–52.

Coping with reading

- You may find reading exhausting, frustrating and very time-consuming. You may try to avoid reading completely. Ask others to help you make choices about absolutely essential reading, including advice about clearly structured, expressed and presented materials. You may be able to find a video, CD or Internet containing the same information. Don't forget that your librarians can be a useful source of support and advice.
- There are several organisations that can record books for you. In the case of very severe reading difficulties, you may be able to use the DSA to fund a reader to read aloud to you.
- Many students with dyslexia find it very difficult to read aloud: explain this clearly to your tutor. You may also wish to ask for reading material to be given to you well in advance, so that you are not put on the spot.
- Some students get very tired or have frequent headaches after short periods of reading. Others find that print distorts, or they frequently lose their place. If you have any of these problems when reading, you should to see a specialist ophthalmologist.



Below you will also find some self-help strategies on how to make print easier on your eyes:

- Change the background colour of your computer screen
- Change the size and appearance of the print
- Change the spacing between lines
- Print out your finished document on coloured paper of your choice

1. Change the background colour of your screen

- Click on 'Format' from the menu bar
- Click on 'Background' from the scroll down menu
- Click on the colour you want
- or click on 'More colours' to mix your own

2. Change the size and appearance of the print

Many students find Arial size 12 or above easy to read:

- Click on 'Format' from the menu bar
- Click on 'Font'
- In the Font column, scroll up or down until you see 'Arial' and click on it
- In the Size column, scroll up or down until you see the size you want



Many students also choose to expand the font to make the gap between letters wider:

- Click on 'Format' from the menu bar
- Click on 'Font'
- Select 'Character Spacing'
- In the 'Spacing' box, scroll down to 'Expanded'
- In the 'By' box, scroll up or down till you get to 0.8
- Click 'OK' to confirm your choice.

3. Change the spacing between lines

- Click on 'Format'
- Click on 'Paragraph'
- Click on 'Indents and Spacing'
- In the 'Spacing' box, select 'double'
- Click on 'OK' to confirm your choice

This is a sample of Arial 12 point, expanded by 0.8, with double spaced lines.

This is a sample of Arial 14 point expanded by 0.8

This is a sample of Arial 16 point expanded by 0.8



Several other suggestions about using technology to help reading are made in chapter 5.

Coping with the general frustrations of study

Dyslexia and its implications can be extremely frustrating and distressing. The actual demands put on you will vary throughout your studies. How you deal with these demands will depend on your coping strategies. One important coping strategy is to find people that you can talk to, if you have a problem.

Fill in the contact list on pages 54 and 55 so that you can quickly and easily contact them if you need to.

If you feel that you may need extra help finding supportive work placements and negotiating with employers, contact your local work placement unit or the Careers Service.

Study skills support

What is specialist study skills support (sometimes known as ‘Dyslexia Support’)?

This is tuition in strategies for helping you improve your weaker areas. These could include: memory; time management; essay planning; drafting and proof-reading; examination technique; reading strategies; making oral presentations; coping with stress; numeracy etc.



Dyslexia support does not mean that the tutor re-writes and corrects your work for you. They may however help you with the drafting and proof-reading process, in order to teach you these skills.

How do I find a dyslexia support tutor?

A dyslexia support tutor should ideally be trained and qualified in adult dyslexia. Preferably he/she should be experienced in working with dyslexic adults at university level.

It is very important that you work with somebody you trust and who can tune into your immediate needs and preferred learning style, when helping you find effective ways to learn. It is up to you to guide your tutor in how you wish to be helped. If you really don't click, then it's probably best for both of you to work with somebody else.

Study support can be organised for students on the University's premises. For further information, contact The Disability Administrator on 020 7911 5000 ext 2667. There is also a list of dyslexia organisations, who might be able to advise you on finding a tutor, in the section on 'Other useful information'.

What approach is recommended?

Individualised:

Each person has his/her own personal preference for how he/she learns best. Each person learns best when working at his/her own pace, preferred time, and according to their own needs and interests. However, you may need to unlearn some unhelpful learning habits and take some risks with trying out some new ones.

**Structured:**

Learning needs to progress in small, planned steps, with plenty of opportunity for hands-on practice and revision.

Multi-sensory:

Learning should involve as many senses as possible: hearing, sight and movement.

Creative:

It is important to find creative ways to build on your strengths to get round your weaknesses. Original methods to get round most problems can usually be found. In this case, two heads are usually better than one.

For an example of a very useful study strategy, see the section on Mind Mapping on the next page.





7 Mind Maps

A Mind Map can be used to help you find, organise, express and store your ideas on paper. Tony Buzan invented this method to help people make far more use of their brain page 40 for an better idea of what a Mind Ma



Mind Maps - most frequently asked questions

What are Mind Maps used for?

- Taking and presenting notes
- Planning any piece of writing including letters, reports, exam answers or essays
- Problem-solving and group work
- Exam revision
- Making spoken presentations

Why are Mind Maps supposed to be such an exciting breakthrough?

Mind Maps make use of many of your brain's possibilities. There are more cells and connections in your brain than there are people on earth. Most people only use a tiny amount of this brain power. Mind Maps mirror the way your brain prefers to work, by associating bits of information which link to other



words, pictures and ideas. Mind Maps help you see both the whole overview of a task, and the smaller parts that make it up, thus new and logical connections can become visible.

Are Mind Maps easy to do?

To make a Mind Map, you start by writing the main idea down in the middle of a page; around that idea, you write the main ideas that relate to it; you continue to work outwards in different directions producing a growing, but organised structure, made up of key words and key images.

You will need to take a little time to learn to use the special method for displaying key words, lines, numbers, symbols, colours and images: eventually Mind Maps become second nature. But to begin with, you need some practice.

What do you need to get started?

You will need two sheets of A3 paper and lots of coloured pens to get started.

1. Brainstorming

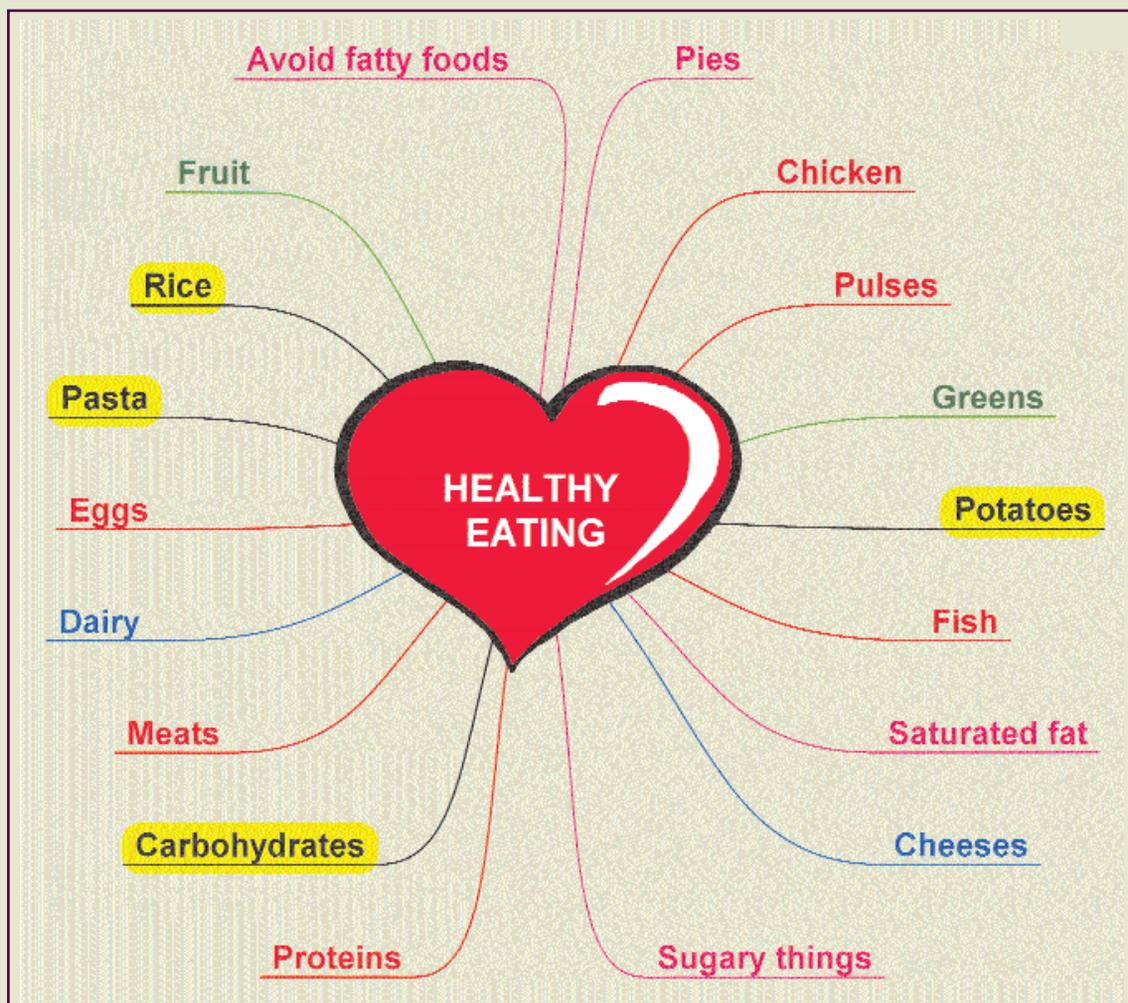
- Take your first piece of paper in landscape position.
Write the subject you are tackling in large capital letters in the middle of the page.
You can also draw an image or symbol to represent that idea.
Then draw a circle round it, so that the subject is inside a bubble.
- Round this bubble, quickly jot down any ideas about your subject.
Let your mind come up with as many ideas as possible, as quickly as possible, in any order you like. Don't worry about spelling or putting anything 'wrong' down.



- Now find which ideas seem to go best together.
Colour coding each group of similar ideas is very helpful.
If any idea doesn't seem useful, cross it out.

The topic of the example below is 'Healthy eating'.

Illustration 1





2. Main ideas

- Now take a new piece of paper. Again, place the title of your subject in the middle of the page, inside a bubble. Add an image or symbol if you like.
- Use a coloured pen to write a key word for each main idea that branches out from the central bubble. Keep your writing horizontal.

Tip: You should only write down **key words** when you are making a Mind Map. Key words are those words which are the most important to express an idea. If you took all the key words away from your writing, it would mean nothing at all. If you can't express your idea in one key word, you can use up to three, but no more.

For example:

“remember to buy some brown bread.”

Key words = brown bread

Illustration 2

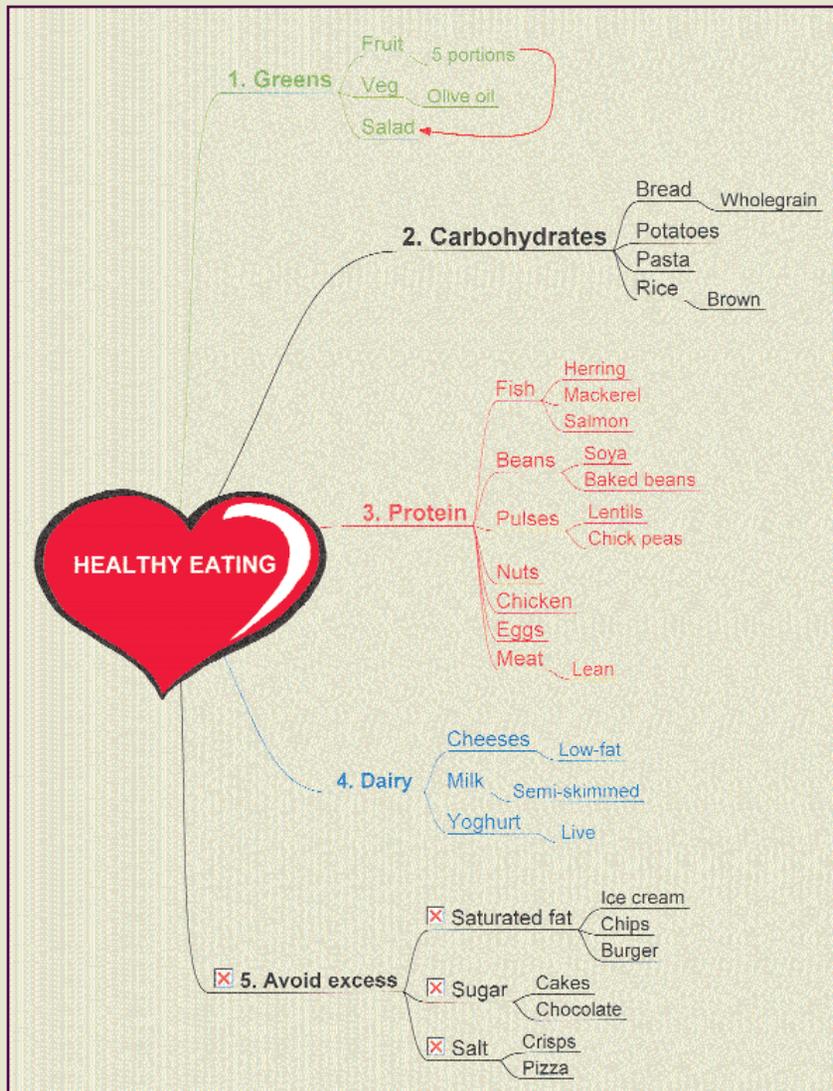




3. Adding more details

From each thick main branch, draw smaller branches for each related idea. You can go on drawing smaller and smaller 'twigs', depending on the level of detail you want to go into. Remember: it's not good to make your page too crowded.

Illustration 3





4. Finishing touches

Add symbols, pictures, numbers or arrows. Finishing touches are important, as they give each Mind Map its unique appearance.

It's quite normal that your first attempts at a Mind Map are messy or disorganised. The good news is that the more you re-think and re-draw your Mind Map, the more you will fix it in your brain. You don't have to be good at drawing. The more Mind Maps you make, the easier it will get. There is also some very good computer software for making Mind Maps (for example: Mind Manager).

Memory and Mind Maps

Mind Maps make information memorable. The use of key words in note taking has been proven to be the most effective way of remembering that information later. Tony Buzan conducted research into how much students remembered after lectures, having tried out various note taking methods. Students from group 1 were given a complete transcript of the lecture. Students from group 2 were asked to write a full transcript from the lecture. Students from group 3 were given a summary of the lecture. Students from group 4 were asked to write a summary. Students from group 5 were given key words only. Students from group 6 were asked to write their own key words. The results were that group 6 learnt more than all of the others.

- Page after page full of lines of visually similar information send the brain to sleep, just like driving for miles along a straight, dull motorway. The brain stays switched on to the Mind Map's interesting, original and fun representation of ideas. Information is linked and organised for maximum memory.



- You may feel that making a Mind Map is quite time-consuming, but the actual process of making the Mind Map already creates deep memory traces. Each active revision reinforces these traces in the brain.

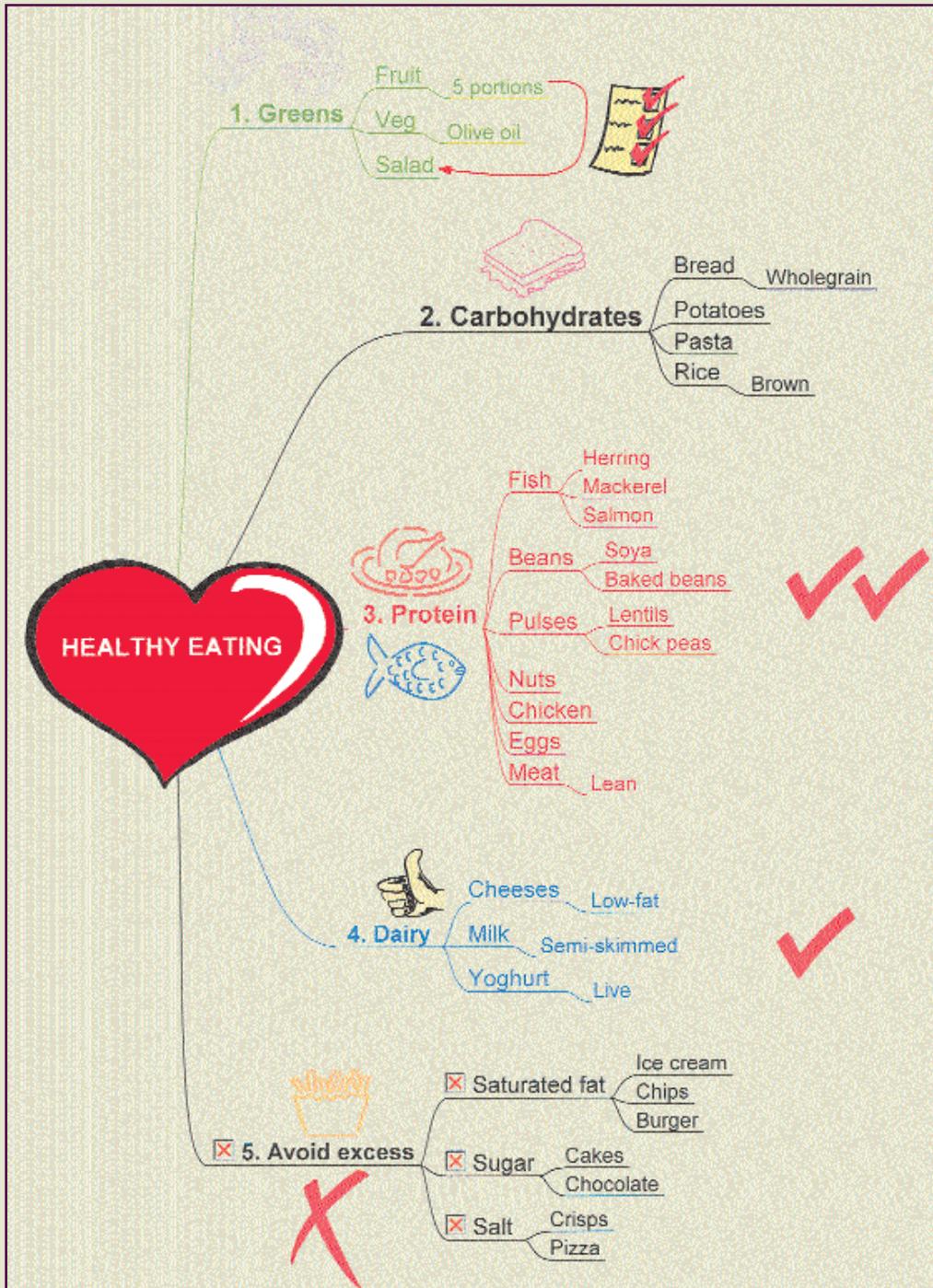
Exam revision using Mind Maps

- **The LOOK – COVER – WRITE – CHECK method is extremely effective:**

1. **Study your Mind Map for a few minutes.**
2. Cover it up and recreate a new Mind Map from memory.
3. Compare both maps, noting the parts you have missed out.
4. Make a new Mind Map.
5. Again compare with the original map, noting what you have missed out.
6. When your latest map is similar to the original, you will know that you have created very strong memory traces.
7. To fix your Mind Map into your long long-term memory it is important you to revise **at particular points in time**: the same day, 24 hours later, three days later, one week later and one month later. Research has shown that if you don't revise within 24 hours, you may have lost up to 85% of the information. If you have particular problems with memory tasks, you may have to revise even more frequently.



Illustration 4





8 Other useful information

Support or information - within/outside the University

Support or information - within the University

Please contact the appropriate Disability Adviser if you would like to discuss your support needs in more detail.

West End sites, CCPD

Tel: 020 7915 5456

Fax: 020 7911 5162

Email: k.d.mann@wmin.ac.uk

Harrow Campus

Phone/Fax: 020 8357 7360

Email: flemina@wmin.ac.uk

For general enquiries email: disabilities-westminster@wmin.ac.uk
or visit our website at: www.wmin.ac.uk/ccpd/wmindis.htm

Support or information - outside the University

British Dyslexia Association

Helpline: Tel: 0118 966 8271 www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk

National campaigning body for people with dyslexia; information; good practice/policy formulation; conferences; newsletter; publications; self-help groups; referrals for assessment and tuition.

Scottish Dyslexia Association

Helpline: Tel: 01786 446650



Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association

Helpline: Tel: 028 9065 9212

The Arts Dyslexia Trust

Tel: 01303 813 221

www.sniffout.net/home/adt/default.htm

Information, support, database and exhibition space for dyslexic people involved in design or creative pursuits in the widest sense

Visual problems/colour sensitivity

For an in-depth assessment of possible visual problems causing reading difficulties, contact:

Peter Irons at Tintavision: Tel 01778 349233

Cerium Visual Technologies: Tel 01580 765 211

Personal experiences of dyslexic people

Every Letter Counts - a collection of autobiographical writing by dyslexics, compiled by Susan Hampshire, published by Bantam Press

The Reality of Dyslexia - Channel 4 Video, *Tel: 020 8788 2718*

The Scars of Dyslexia (1994) by Janice Edwards, published by Cassell

In the Mind's Eye: Visual Thinkers, Gifted People with Learning Difficulties, Computer Images and The Ironies of Creativity (1997) - by Thomas West, published by Prometheus books

Understanding Dyslexia

Demystifying Dyslexia (1995) by Krupska and Klein, London Language and Literacy Unit



Dyslexia and the Bilingual Learner (1997) – by Helen Sunderland et al,
published by London and Language Unit *Tel: 020 7815 6290*

Study Skills

Dyslexia at College (1996) by Dorothy Gilroy and Tim Miles,
published by Routledge

The Study Skills Handbook, by Stella Cottrell, published by Palgrave 2003

The Good Study Guide, by A.Northedge, first published by Open University
in 1990

Unscrambling Spelling (1990), by Millar and Klein, published by
Hodder & Stoughton

Use your Head, Use Your Memory, Mind Mapping – a wide selection of
books, videos and computer programmes about creative study techniques,
by Tony Buzan
Tel: 01202 674676

Mind Manager – software for Mind Mapping
www.mindman.com or contact Tony Buzan Centre

Dictionaries

Oxford Wordpower and Oxford Dictionary in colour

Mathematics and dyslexia

Basic Topics in Mathematics for Dyslexics (2001) by Henderson and Miles,
published by Whurr



Computers and other technology

For suppliers/advice, contact:

National Federation of Access Centres

Tel: 01752 232278 for an Assessment of Need or for training in specialist technology – a charge will be made

IT for Dyslexic Adults (1998) by C.Kaufman, C.Singleton and J.Hutchins, published by British Dyslexia Association

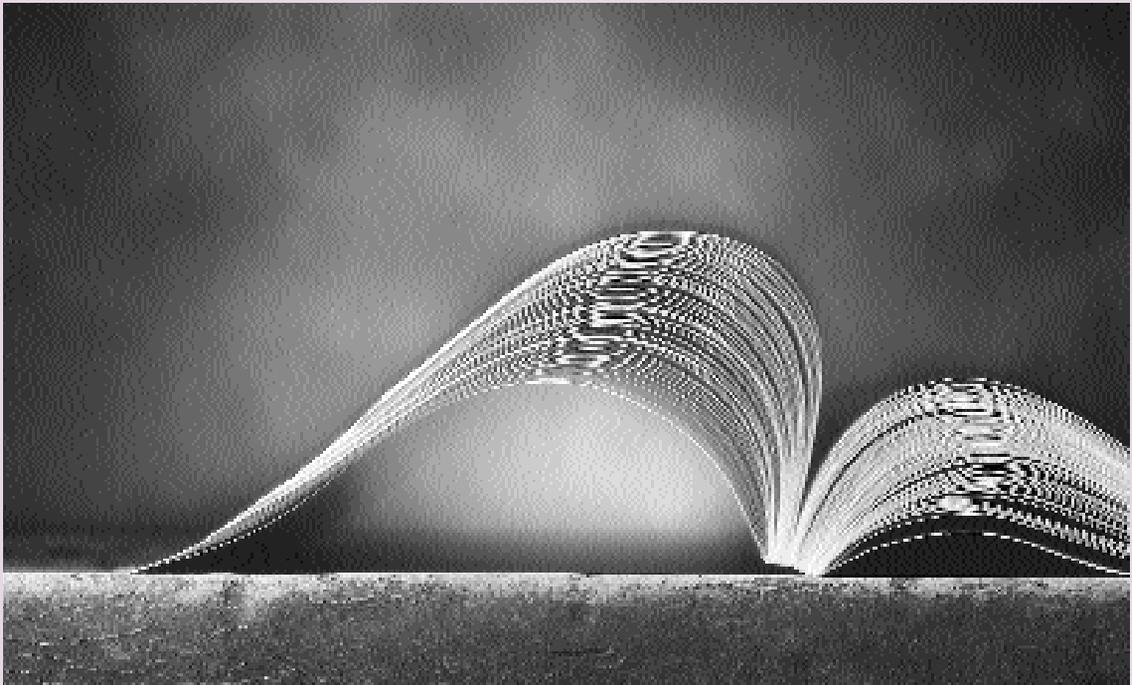
Journals

Dyslexia - An International Journal of Research and Practice

Tel: 01243 770634

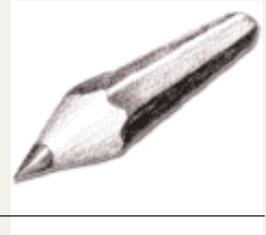
To join an e.mail discussion network on dyslexia - ‘Dyslexia’ forum

www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/dyslexia.html





9 Examinations policy for students with dyslexia



1. Exams and other forms of assessment

1.1 Students with dyslexia need to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the objectives of the programme of study, at the standard required for the award they seek. The University, in turn, should enable the candidate with specific learning difficulties to operate on the same terms as other candidates without gaining an unfair advantage, or compromising the validity or reliability of the examination or assessment.

1.2 **Students with dyslexia will be required to submit their coursework according to the normal deadlines stipulated for the module.**

They are encouraged to use all of the facilities and support services available to them to help with time management and planning. Hand-in dates and deadlines are set within the overall context of the teaching and assessment of a module, and there are often tight deadlines for markers to return work or report marks to assessment boards.

Extensions to the normal deadline will therefore only be granted where additional extenuating circumstances arise, which are not directly related to the specific learning difficulty, and which are accepted by an Extenuating Circumstances Board through the application of its standard procedures and criteria.



1.3 **Special arrangements may be made for students with dyslexia in formal written examinations, upon completion and submission of a formal request to the relevant Campus Office** and in accordance with the University's standard procedures for requesting special assessment arrangements. The request must be backed up by independent documentary evidence from a Chartered Psychologist or other appropriately qualified professional. The special arrangements which will normally be made are detailed below:

- Students may elect to undertake written examinations in sheltered conditions, for which they will receive an additional time allowance of 15 minutes per hour. The University will provide a standard English dictionary for use during the examination when taken in sheltered conditions. In addition, the Campus Office will place an identifying sticker on these candidates' examination scripts to indicate that markers should not penalise students for mistakes which are directly related to this disability when marking their scripts. A detailed guidance note will be provided for use by all markers.
- Alternatively, students may elect to undertake their written examinations in a Computer Laboratory which will be specially set aside for this purpose during each assessment period. Under this arrangement students will have access to appropriate software only. Currently this is MS Office Word, including the spell-checking tool. Students will receive an additional time allowance of 15 minutes per hour. The Campus Office will place an identifying sticker on these examination scripts, and the guidance note referred to above will be issued to markers.



- 1.4 Students with dyslexia should wherever possible also receive an additional time allowance of 15 minutes per hour for any in-class tests. The student should notify the module leader/seminar tutor of his/her additional time requirement at the start of the module, so that appropriate arrangements may be made. The student must obtain confirmation from the Campus Office that s/he is entitled to this special provision, and pass this to the module leader/seminar tutor who will then make the necessary arrangements. Because in-class tests may occur at any time during the teaching period the University cannot guarantee the availability of a computer for in-class tests as computer labs are likely to be fully booked. The module leader/seminar tutor may, however, issue the student with a standard dictionary if a computer cannot be provided.

Students with dyslexia who find the use of a personal tinted overlay helpful may use their own overlay for all examinations or in-class tests.



