



Guidelines

For supervisors and placement providers for candidates who have dyslexia

Background

Dyslexia is a registered disability under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and is defined as a specific learning difficulty. People with dyslexia typically have certain difficulties with reading, spelling and writing.

The British Dyslexia Association defines dyslexia as “*a specific learning difficulty which mainly affects the development of literacy and language related skills.*”

It is likely to be present at birth and to be lifelong in its effects. It is characterised by difficulties with phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory, processing speed, and the automatic development of skills that may not match up to an individual's other cognitive abilities.

It tends to be resistant to conventional teaching methods, but its effects can be mitigated by appropriately specific intervention, including the application of information technology and supportive counselling.”

The word 'dyslexia' comes from the Greek and means 'difficulty with words'.

Difficulties and strengths:

People with dyslexia may experience a number of difficulties but also may have particular strengths. There are a number of ways in which an employer can support someone with dyslexia in order to minimise the difficulties they experience.

Possible difficulties

- Reading hesitantly.
- Misreading, making understanding difficult.
- Difficulty with sequences, e.g. getting dates in order.
- Poor organisation or time management.
- Difficulty organising thoughts clearly.
- Erratic spelling.

Possible strengths:

- Innovative thinkers.
- Excellent trouble shooters.
- Intuitive problem solving.

- Creative in many different ways.
- Lateral thinkers.

(Source: The British Dyslexia Association website)

Helping candidates with dyslexia

Candidates for our qualifications are normally engaged in work based learning and the preparation of evidence for assessment. Candidates who have dyslexia may require support both in the workplace and in their academic work.

Support in the work place

Dyslexia falls under the definition of a disability in the Disability Discrimination Act, which means that employers have a responsibility to provide reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

An employee will need to have a post-16 dyslexia assessment conducted by an appropriately qualified practitioner. Their local dyslexia association will be able to help them find a practitioner to conduct the assessment. To find your local dyslexia association check the British Dyslexia Association website (<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk>).

The assessment will indicate what adjustments would be helpful to the employee in the workplace. The strategies which can help people overcome problems related to their dyslexia vary so it is important to have the assessment to help identify the strategies which will help this individual. Some of these are inexpensive and uncomplicated such as providing coloured paper or a quiet work space. However, if additional expense is incurred the employer can apply for funding through the Government's Access to Work Scheme.

The following list of possible adjustments to assist a person with dyslexia is taken from the British Dyslexia Association website. Individual needs can vary so specialist advice is essential to determine the most appropriate adjustments for an individual.

Adjustments to assist with general difficulty with reading:

- Give verbal rather than written instructions.
- Highlight salient points in documents.
- Use voicemail as opposed to written memos.
- Use screen reading software.
- Supply screen reading software and scanner.
- A Reading Pen may be useful for unfamiliar words.
- Provide information on coloured paper (find out which colour helps the person to read best).
- Set up a computer screen with a coloured background to documents.

Adjustments to assist with difficulty with reading and writing:

- Allow plenty of time to read and complete the task.
- Examine other ways of giving the same information to avoid reading.
- Discuss the material with the employee giving summaries and/or key points.

- Utilise information prepared in other formats for example audio or videotape, drawings, diagrams and flowcharts.
- Use mind-mapping software such as Inspirations, Mind Genius.
- Use digital recorders.
- Use speech to text software.
- Get someone else to take the Minutes of meetings

Adjustments to assist with spelling and grammar errors:

- Offer assistive text software such as ClaroRead or TextHelp.
- Proof read work.
- Instant spell checker on all computers.
- Offer assistive text software on all applications where possible.

Adjustments to assist with working at a computer:

- Change background colour of screen to suit individual preference.
- Supply anti-glare screen filter.
- Allow frequent breaks - at least every hour.
- Alternate computer work with other tasks where possible.
- Avoid continuous all day computer work.

Adjustments to assist with verbal communication, such as difficulty remembering and following verbal instructions:

- Give instructions one at a time.
- Communicate instructions slowly and clearly in a quiet location.
- Write down important information.
- Demonstrate and supervise tasks and projects.
- Encourage the person to take notes and then check them.
- Ask instructions to be repeated back to confirm that the instruction has been understood correctly.
- Write a memo outlining a plan of action.
- Use a digital recorder to record important instructions.
- Back up multiple instructions in writing or with diagrams.
- Difficulty with hidden meanings in conversation. Give clear concise and direct instructions; do not hint or make assumptions that you have been understood.

Adjustments to assist with time and work planning - concentration difficulties/distractions:

- Make sure the workplace is quiet and away from distractions for example away from doors, busy phones, loud machinery.
- Allocate a private workspace if possible.
- Where feasible allow an employee to work from home occasionally.
- Provide a quiet working environment for a dyslexic employee by allocating libraries, file rooms, private offices and other enclosed areas when others are not using them.

Adjustments to assist with coping with interruptions:

- Use a “do not disturb” sign when specific tasks require intense concentration.
- Encourage co-workers not to disturb the person unless absolutely necessary.
- When interrupting, allow the person to pause and write down what they are doing to refer to when resuming work.
- Ensure that each task is completed before starting another.
- Encourage outgoing rather than incoming calls. Offer training in how to use the telephone effectively for example jotting down key points before making the call.

Adjustments to assist with remembering appointments and deadlines:

- Remind the person of important deadlines and review priorities regularly.
- Hang a wall planner that visually highlights daily/monthly appointments, deadlines, tasks and projects.
- Supply a PDA personal digital organiser.
- Supply an alarm watch.
- Encourage the employee to use the daily calendar and alarm features on his/her computer.

Adjustments to assist with organisation of property:

- Ensure that work areas are organised, neat and tidy.
- Keep items where they can be clearly seen for example shelves and bulletin boards.
- Ensure the team returns important items to the same place each time.
- Colour code items.
- Ensure work areas are well lit.

Adjustments to assist with organising workflow:

- Supply and use a wall planner.
- Prioritise important tasks.
- Create a daily, dated “To Do” list.
- Use diaries.
- Write a layout for regular tasks with appropriate prompts for example for meetings or taking notes.
- Allow extra time for unforeseen occurrences.
- Build planning time into each day.

Adjustments to assist with general difficulties:**Reversing numbers:**

- Encourage the person to say the numbers out loud, write them down or press the calculator keys and check the figures have been understood.
- Supply a talking calculator or use the calculator function on TextHelp software.

Directional difficulties:

- Always try to use the same route.

- Show the route and visible landmarks.
- Give time to practice going from one place to another.
- Supply detailed maps.
- Supply GPS car navigation system.

Short term memory problems especially names, numbers and lists:

- Use mnemonic devices and acronyms.
- Organise details on paper so that they can be referred to easily using diagrams and flowcharts.
- Check back understanding.
- Use multi-sensory learning techniques such as reading material onto a tape machine and then playing it back whilst re-reading.
- Use computer software; sometimes well developed programme menus and help features are useful.
- Use a calculator.

(Source: The British Dyslexia Association website)

Support with preparing work for assessment

Supervisors have a role in supporting candidates and this includes reviewing submissions before they are sent in for assessment. Where a candidate you are supervising has dyslexia you may find that work prepared for submission has presentational, spelling and grammatical errors which are not consistent with the candidate's ability. A list of the difficulties which may be experienced by people with dyslexia in an educational setting is included at Appendix 1.

The British Dyslexia Association website (www.bdadyslexia.org.uk) provides advice for FE and HE tutors which may also be useful for Co-ordinating Supervisors/Co-ordinators of Training/Supervisors.

The Society has guidelines for the assessment of work submitted by candidates with dyslexia and it is a good idea for you to read these guidelines. You may be able to assist the candidate by discussing their work and advising them on strategies for reducing errors. For example, strategies or specialist software adopted in the workplace may also be applied to submissions.

When providing feedback to a candidate on their work you should keep in mind that they have dyslexia. Written feedback should be word processed if possible and should be clear and in complete sentences. Feedback should be constructive and should acknowledge strengths in the work as well as weaknesses. Honest feedback is important to help the candidate develop competence and progress through the qualification, but should not be overly critical as people with dyslexia often perceive any criticism as disparaging.

Finally, you should remind the candidate that they need to send a copy of their dyslexia assessment to the Qualifications Office (if they have not already done so) and that they need to ask the Qualifications Officer to affix a Dyslexia Sticker to their submitted work or examination script before it is sent to the assessors. If the candidate is registering for a written or oral examination, remind them to contact the Qualifications Office when they send in their registration form to discuss any adjustments or special facilities they may need.

Appendix 1 –Difficulties which may be experienced by people with dyslexia

The British Dyslexia Association identify the following difficulties associated with Dyslexia in an educational setting. Not all people with dyslexia will experience all of these difficulties, but usually will experience some of them.

Written work

- Has a poor standard of written work compared with oral ability
- Has poor handwriting with badly formed letters
- Has neat handwriting but writes very slowly indeed
- Produces badly set out or messily written work with spellings crossed out several times
- Spells the same word differently in one piece of work
- Has difficulty with punctuation and/or grammar
- Confuses upper and lower case letters
- Writes a great deal but 'loses the thread'
- Writes very little but to the point
- Has difficulty taking notes in lectures
- Difficulty with organisation of homework
- Finds tasks difficult to complete on time
- Appears to know more than can be committed to paper

Reading

- Is hesitant and laboured especially when reading aloud
- Omits, repeats or adds extra words
- Reads at a reasonable rate but has a low level of comprehension
- Fails to recognise familiar words
- Misses a line or repeats the same line twice
- Loses his place - or uses a finger or marker to keep the place
- Has difficulty in pin-pointing the main idea in a passage
- Finds difficulty with dictionaries, directories, encyclopaedias

Numeracy

- Finds difficulty remembering tables and/or basic number sets
- Finds sequencing problematic
- Confuses signs such as x for +
- Can think at a high level in mathematics, but needs a calculator for simple calculations
- Misreads questions that include words

Finds mental arithmetic at speed very difficult

Finds memorising formulae difficult

Other areas

Confuses direction - left/right

Has difficulty in learning foreign languages

Has indeterminate hand preference

Has difficulty in finding the name for an object

Has clear processing problems at speed

Misunderstands complicated questions

Finds holding a list of instructions in memory difficult although can perform all tasks when told individually

Behaviour

Is disorganised or forgetful e.g. over sports equipment, lessons, homework, appointments

Is immature and/or clumsy

Has difficulty relating to others: is unable to 'read' body language

Is often in the wrong place at the wrong time

Is excessively tired, due to the amount of concentration and effort required

(Source: The British Dyslexia Association website - www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)