



POLICY FOR SUPPORTING DYSLEXIC STUDENTS AND THOSE WITH OTHER SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 prevents unlawful discrimination relating to disability. Under the Act, a person is considered to be disabled if they have or have had a physical and/or mental impairment which has 'a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

Dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties (such as dyspraxia) are covered by the Equality Act as they are ongoing conditions. Dyslexia is a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process in one or more of reading, spelling and writing. Accompanying weaknesses may be identified in areas of: speed of processing, short term memory, organisation, sequencing, spoken language and motor skills.

Cranfield University recognises its responsibility to make anticipatory and reasonable adjustments to the provision of services and policies and procedures where appropriate and actively seeks to widen the participation of disabled people in Higher Education.

The University has Learning Support Officers on both campuses to act as the initial point of contact within the School to provide support for disabled students and those with specific learning difficulties. The Learning Support Officers work closely with the University Diversity Manager, and Assistant Registrar (Student Support), in formulating policy and procedures in all areas of diversity for staff and students.

Assessment of needs

Students who have already been assessed as having dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties should bring a copy of their latest assessment with them to the university at Registration. If the assessment by a registered educational psychologist (or dyslexia professional) was carried out when the student was under the age of 18 or is more than five years old, a further assessment may be required and this will be arranged by the Learning Support Officer, for as soon as possible after registration.

At student induction sessions, presentations and information will be provided on the sources of support and guidance available to dyslexic students at Cranfield University. This information (which includes a link to the QuickScan screening tool on the intranet) will prompt students to consider whether or not they have difficulty in studying, taking notes, writing essays, spelling correctly,

organising their work and remembering what they have learnt. Details will be given on whom to contact if students suspect they are dyslexic. The initial contact will be the Learning Support Officer based in the Student Advice Centre E: studentadvice@cranfield.ac.uk. Information will also be available via the Intranet and the Cranfield website.

A diagnostic assessment or re-assessment will be organised by the Learning Support Officer – wherever possible within the first term of the academic session. As it is important that no disabled student should be further disadvantaged on grounds of inability to pay for effective support, the University will fund the cost of the (re-)assessment in most cases.

The diagnostic assessment report will belong to the student who will then discuss its recommendations with the appropriate Learning Support Officer who will agree how to proceed and what additional assistance is required. The Learning Support Officer will draft a Learning Support Agreement based on the recommendations from the diagnostic assessment report. Confidentiality will be maintained as far as is reasonable and consistent with ensuring the appropriate provision of effective support.

Study skills tuition can be provided off campus by an independent consultant and this can be arranged via the Learning Support Officer. Advice will be offered to those wishing to apply for a Disabled Students Allowance or Hardship Funds to resource this support. Schools will be approached to fund the cost of study skills tuition where a student is ineligible for support from the Hardship Funds or a DSA.

University assessments and progression

The Learning Support Officer will advise the appropriate members of staff (Course Director, Student Academic Support Lead, Examinations Office etc.) via the Learning Support Agreement of any practical measures required, in the light of recommendations in the diagnostic assessment report. These might include:

- additional time for formal examinations (25% extra time)
- use of specialist software throughout the year
- use of coloured paper (for those with scotopic sensitivity syndrome)
- oral examinations to supplement written examinations and to enable the student to clarify written work
- oral explanation of the examination paper
- scribe to clarify spelling/meaning of words written in examination scripts (in exceptional circumstances)

Academic approval for concessions such as use of extra time or oral examination to supplement written examination shall be sought by the Learning Support Officer or Assistant Registrar (Student Support), acting on recommendations from the student's diagnostic assessment report. Details will be notified to the examination invigilators at the time of the examinations.

Use of computers in examinations

Cranfield University will allow the use of computers in examinations when this is specifically recommended in a student's diagnostic assessment report. Where the use of a computer is permitted in a formal examination, the University will usually provide a laptop without internet access, which has had its hard drive cleared. In exceptional cases where a student is permitted to use his or her own laptop, Education Services staff will liaise with IT to ensure that the hard disk has been cleared before the candidate sits the examination.

Additional Time for examinations and assessments

Where additional time is required for examinations (following the recommendations made in the diagnostic assessment report), the Learning Support Officer will note this in the Learning Support Agreement and ensure that the appropriate staff e.g. the Examinations Office are aware of the specific support requirements.

Where additional time is required for the completion of coursework assignments (following the recommendations made in the dyslexia report), this should be negotiated between student and Course Director as appropriate. Deadlines for the submission of projects should wherever possible be adhered to since part of the learning process is to meet deadlines. However, in exceptional circumstances, requests for extensions to the Thesis Handing in Date (THID) on the grounds of difficulties encountered by dyslexic students will be considered on an individual basis.

Should a Course Director refuse a request for additional time, the student has the right of appeal (see grounds for appeal in Student Handbook on Assessment Rules), to Education Committee. The student should contact the Learning Support Officer in the first instance to discuss the particular circumstances of the appeal.

While a student may be given additional time in examinations or additional time in which to submit a project or other coursework assignments, no additional concession will be given in the marking. However, during an examination no marks shall be deducted for spelling or grammar mistakes provided that the communication of the student's ideas has not been impeded.

Specialist equipment and funding

The University cannot always provide specialist equipment but will make every effort through the Student Advice Centre to assist students in making an appropriate application for support from the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), Access to Learning Fund or sponsor. The Learning Support Officer is the initial point of contact for students applying for a DSA.

The Learning Support Officers will maintain a register of the specialist equipment purchased by the university for individual students together with listings of equipment and support services available externally.

Training and advice to academic staff

Academic staff should ensure that they have a general understanding of the learning implications for students with Specific Learning Difficulties. As part of their induction, academic and support staff will undertake development on disability and equality issues and the range and types of support available to students with Specific Learning Difficulties both within the university and externally. More specific advice can be sought from the University Diversity Manager.

Teaching and learning strategies should make the delivery of the course as inclusive as reasonably possible (e.g. videos, visual displays, lecture notes in advance etc).

Policy review and monitoring

The University will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through the Learning Support Officers and the Student Experience Committee comprising representatives from across the University.

A series of questions on disability and diversity have been added to a number of student satisfaction questionnaires and will be issued to all students and reviewed by the Student Experience Committee. The results of these questionnaires will be collated and analysed by the Assistant Registrar (Student Support) to help inform policies and action plans.

Publications

The University will publish details of its Disability Statement (Student Disability Policy) in positive terms in pre-registration material, prospectuses and other relevant corporate material. The emphasis will be solution-focused and will stress the aim of maximising potential rather than of addressing inherent disability. The policy will advise that, although the university has a formal policy, each student with a registered learning difficulty will be considered on an individual basis within those guidelines. All advice and appropriate follow-up action will be discussed confidentially as far as is possible. Responsibility will lie with the student to decide whether or not he or she wishes to take advantage of the services available once these have been made known.