



Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Trá Lí
Institute of Technology Tralee

STUDENT HANDBOOK

For Students With Dyslexia Or
Any Other Recognised Specific
Learning Difficulty Or Learning
Difference

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This handbook is intended to provide key information about the Support Service in user-friendly language. For further information or explanation feel free to contact the Dyslexia Support Tutor.



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1. OUTLINE OF SUPPORT SERVICE

IT Tralee welcomes students with specific learning difficulties / learning difference onto all its courses. The Support Service is based on the belief that every student is different with an individual story and an individual set of support needs. Students are free to use as much or as little support as they wish. Support needs may vary from time to time and year to year. Students can be confident that this is a fully confidential service; information will be communicated to lecturers / support personnel only with the students consent.

The Support Service is co-ordinated by the Dyslexia Support Tutor, Siobhan Mac Garry, a remedial teacher who has extensive teaching experience among students with specific learning difficulties / learning difference in both secondary school and third level. The role of the Dyslexia Support Tutor involves co-ordinating students' individual programmes of learning support and tutoring / mentoring students on such programmes.

Range of services available

- **Needs Assessment.** All students wishing to avail of this service undergo a needs assessment that examines the student's personal account of their learning history, their Psycho-Educational Report and the demands of their chosen course.
- **Individual Learning Requirement Document.** This document contains the student's programme of learning support, which is communicated to everyone involved in course delivery and assessment. The student and the Dyslexia Support Tutor write up this document together.
- **Screening.** Students currently on courses, who suspect they could have dyslexia, can be screened for possible indicators of a specific learning difficulty. If screening shows up significant difficulties, a recommendation for psycho-educational assessment will be made .A limited number of Institute based

psycho-educational assessments, funded by I.T.Tralee Disability Fund, are carried out each year. Considerable time delays before assessment may be expected for eligible students. Students who do not match criteria for an Institute based assessment will be supplied with a screening report which they can forward to external agencies if they choose to seek a private psycho-educational assessment.

- Advice on effective strategies for learning and how to apply these strategies to individual notes and course assignments.
- Individual study skills sessions.
- Individual reading and writing support sessions.
- Recommendation of examination accommodations and application for same.
- Ongoing mentoring – students are checked once a term to review how things are going.
- Liaison with teaching and administrative staff.
- Ongoing staff information sessions. A Staff Manual on Dyslexia is updated annually and available for staff on the info-web - the internal computerised information resource available to all staff.
- Assistance with application for funding.
- Loans and initial training in assistive technology both hard and software.
- Referral to external specialists.
- Photocopying arrangements.
- Library arrangements.
- Help with arrangement of additional tuition for the purposes of “curriculum differentiation” where dyslexic difficulties are causing a student to fall behind the pace of the class. .
- Possible availability of scribe, note taker, readers.

2. WHO CAN UTILISE THIS SERVICE?

The Learning Support Service is available to students who have a current psycho-educational report - a report written by a Psychologist who has examined an individuals cognitive functioning in detail, describing the nature and

extent of their difficulties.* This report must have been carried out by a recognised practicing Clinical or Educational Psychologist. Currently the C.A.O. states that this Psycho-Educational Report must have been written in the last five years. This will be altered to a three-year rule over the next few years. Students attending second level should contact their schools if they do not currently have a copy of their report.

Some students may have reports from a Speech Therapist regarding difficulties that are ongoing; such reports should also be submitted.

Mature students, or students who have left school some time ago, will be considered on a case by case basis as many would never have had the opportunity to have their learning difficulties investigated in primary or secondary school.

If you are an intending student concerned that you have a possible underlying learning difficulty, it is advisable that you seek a psycho-educational assessment before registering for your course. While the Institute does provide a screening service for students, eligibility for an Institute based assessment is not guaranteed and, if approved, may involve time delays. This would, in turn, delay eligibility for possible E.S.F. funding and delay the rolling out of a full programme of learning support. It is in the student's best interests to have their report in order before starting their course.

If you are a student currently on a course without background documentation about your possible learning difficulty, then you are advised to contact the Dyslexia Support Tutor who will help begin investigations into your learning difficulties.

**The following are examples of various specific learning difficulties and learning difference described on Psycho-Educational Reports submitted by students availing of the service.*

Specific Learning Difficulties.

- **Dyslexia:** A neurological condition possibly impacting on reading, spelling, organisational skills and oral performance.
- **Dyspraxia:** A neurological impairment or immaturity in the organisation of movement which is associated with problems of perception, language and thought
- **Dyscalculia:** A difficulty performing mathematical functions due to visual processing or sequencing difficulties of neurological origin.
- **Dysgraphia:** Difficulty with fine motor control required for writing.
- **Dysphasia:** A speech and language delay/deficit.

Other learning differences include:

- **Attention Deficit Disorder:** with or without hyperactivity **ADD/ADHD.**
- **Non-Verbal learning Difficulty:** where an individual possesses a better ability to reason with words relative to their non-verbal/visual reasoning. Students in this category may display some similarities in behaviours.
- **Aspergers Syndrome:** A complex brain disorder that falls within the autistic spectrum.
- **Mild Intellectual Disability:** In some cases students with mild intellectual disabilities may be facilitated with learning support, additional tuition and use of assistive technology.

3. NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND THE INDIVIDUAL LEARNING REQUIREMENT DOCUMENT.

Needs assessment.

In order to provide support for coursework, students who declare dyslexia on registration will be invited to an interview with Siobhan Mac Garry, the Dyslexia Support Tutor, who will work with them to identify which supports might be helpful to their situation. At this meeting the student's learning history will be looked at in terms of the difficulties and strengths they have experienced along the way. It is vital that a copy of the students Psycho-Educational Report is presented before this meeting, as it will be a reference point to guide the meeting. During this meeting academic demands will be considered in the light of the students difficulties and supports will be chosen to best accommodate individual student needs.

This assessment of the student's needs will be reviewed over the course of the academic year. Any examination accommodations requested will be reviewed at Christmas and then finalised with the Institute's Examinations Office.

Individual Learning Requirement Document.

All support requests made by a student will be drawn up on an Individual Learning Requirement Document (ILR). The names of lecturers and support staff involved with the student will be listed on this document. The document will be signed by the student and sent to lecturers who will treat this information as confidential. The student has complete control over the amount of information released on this document. Students find this document helpful as it opens the door for them to discuss their needs with lecturers in a confidential and informed manner.

4. LEARNING SUPPORT

Following their needs assessment students may wish to request immediate support sessions or may wish to wait. Contact with the Dyslexia Support Tutor, Siobhan Mac Garry, will secure an appointment to organise individual / group support sessions. The number of sessions a student may require depends very much on his or her individual situation and will be agreed individually with each student.

Individual learning support sessions

A suitably qualified tutor, familiar with the specific needs of the student, facilitates these sessions. Sessions can cover such areas as:

- Identification of learning style;
- Time management;
- Proof reading;
- Support with individual assignments and
- Reading support.

Study skills are also attended to. Areas covered include:

- Note taking,
- Background reading,
- Essay writing,
- Memorisation techniques and
- Examination performance.

Study skills may be taught in individual or group sessions depending on demand. The most popular format currently used is the individual session where the student is encouraged to apply learnt skills to assignments and revision notes, while being monitored by the support tutor.

Curriculum Differentiation Tutorials

Tutorials giving academic tuition are available in situations where difficulties caused by a specific learning difficulty/learning difference are preventing the student from keeping pace with work covered in class. These tutorials are not designed as an alternative to class. Attendance at class and other learning sessions organised

by the Lecturer is compulsory before tutorials can be sanctioned. Failure to attend class will result in cancellation of tutorials at any stage through the college year.

5. EXAMINATION ACCOMMODATIONS

A full range of examination accommodations are available to the student depending on the recommendations of their Psycho-Educational Report and their own examination experiences.

- **Extra time.** Extra time is allocated at the rate of 10 minutes per scheduled hour for students who have a specific learning difficulty which impacts on their speed of processing information. Extra time at the rate of 15 minutes per scheduled hour is allowed for students who are allocated either reading support in a separate/alternative venue or a scribe in a separate centre. A maximum of 20 minutes per scheduled hour can be allocated to a student in particular circumstances where full justification exists. Rest breaks of 5 minutes per scheduled hour may also be allocated where a documented need is identified. No individual student may exceed extra time at 20 minutes per scheduled hour for any examination.
- **Alternative venue with reading support.** This is a small group venue available to students who require reading clarification; students are permitted to request reading support from the invigilator.
- **Scribe.** A scribe is allocated where recommended by Psycho-Educational Report. The scribe may read for the student and write all or part of the students answer script. The Institute guides students who would have availed of a tape-recorder at Leaving Certificate towards the option of a scribe as the vast majority of students report a lack of comfort with the use of a tape recorder for formal examinations.

- **Computer.** Where recommended in the Psycho-Educational Report students are offered the opportunity to use a computer without assistive software. Only students who have the required typing speeds are advised to avail of this accommodation.
- **Vocabulary wordbooks.** Students may be permitted the use of a pre-approved spelling list, drawn up by the student and formally approved by the Lecturer.
- **Scripts marked in the light of guidelines available for marking dyslexic scripts.** All correctors have access to these guidelines and staff information sessions are provided around this information.

The Institute will endeavour to facilitate all accommodations requested provided they are reasonable and have valid documentary support.

6. ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

A wide range of assistive technology, purchased with European Social Funding, is available to students who qualify for funding for the duration of their course. Some students take to technology instantly but some students are a little fearful. The Institute will work to support students in their use of assistive technology through initial training and ongoing support.

- **Tape recorders:** 2 types available:
Digital and Digital Downloadable,

Digital Down-Loadable Recorders can be downloaded and material saved on computer. Students with strong auditory learning preferences are encouraged to make their own digital recordings summarising course work – these can be listened to while engaging in other activities, to assist learning. This process helps facilitate the over-learning process required for students with dyslexia

Digital Recorders have a memory of approximately two hours and are of advantage where a student wishes to short term record and then write out notes on paper – e.g. recording a lecture, tutorial, grind, study group etc. They are of particular value to the student who needs assistance with management of workload as no backlog of recordings can build up. Students are made fully aware that should they wish to record lecture sessions they can only do so after screening with the Dyslexia Support Tutor and with the full consent of any lecturer involved.

- **Hand held Thesaurus:** An electronic desktop dictionary and thesaurus for students challenged by the nature of vocabulary required for his/her course work.
- **Kurzweil 3000:** A computer program with print to reading software, which can scan a page, as it appears in an original document, with all graphics intact. Students can set the text reading to a suitable pace and tone of voice. Students can also use the reading software to have their own documents read back to them, thus improving proof reading opportunities. The Internet is also available for both listening and reading assistance. A Large range of study skill devices are included as are spell checks and dictionaries specifically designed for dyslexics.
- **Wordsmith 2.0:** Software providing a toolbar, which can be activated in Microsoft word '97-2000 allowing text to be scanned and read aloud. It will read documents, the Internet, and aid with pronunciation, provide various dictionary type supports and speak in a range of voices. Wordsmith is completely networked within the college - any student can access it and can use it in any lab provided they have headphones. The Institute is currently pursuing the updated version of this software from TextHelp –It is expected that this will be networked across the Institute during the academic year '08/'09.

- **Dragon Naturally Speaking:** This voice activated dictation system is constantly improving with updates. This package enables the computer to type material spoken by the student. Use of such a system requires a commitment of approximately six weeks to train the computer to the student's voice. This is a disadvantage to many students who require support instantly. However suitable candidates are advised of the possibilities of this software for their long-term progress through college and any request for its use will be facilitated provided funding is approved for the particular student.
- **Wordshark 3:** This spelling software allows students to enter their own vocabulary and partake of a multi-sensory workout to improve their ability to learn difficult spellings.
- **Inspiration:** A mind-mapping package that can be very helpful for students attempting to organise their thoughts for essay writing. This package can also act as an aid for summarising lecture notes and revision notes. Students can use the diagram or sentence format, or both. Often students with dyslexia/ learning difference are holistic thinkers, this package helps them sort out their thoughts and build logical structure to their thinking.
- **Quicktionary pen:** A tool, which can scan printed text and offer alternative meaning for difficult vocabulary. Its small size makes it useful during lectures.

Students can also be allocated the use of a laptop, printer and scanner to facilitate use of the above software.

In individual circumstances where students cannot currently match the criteria for funding, the Institute may be in a position to assist with the purchase of assistive technology for student use. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis and is subject to available budget.

7. FUNDING

Students with specific learning difficulties, learning difference or mild intellectual disabilities may apply for European Social Funding (E.S.F.) to support their studies. The National Access Office administers this fund and the Dyslexia Support Tutor makes an application on behalf of the student.

Who can apply for funding?

Students, who are in possession of a Psycho-Educational Report written in the last five years, identifying valid learning difficulties, can apply.

What is involved in the application?

The Dyslexia Support Tutor completes a Needs Assessment Document based on information outlined in the Psycho-Educational Report and the student's personal story. This document identifies needs and proposes valid supports to facilitate the student.

The Dyslexia Support Tutor fills out an E.S.F. Application Form requesting the proposed supports for the student.

The student signs off on both the Needs Assessment Document and the E.S.F. Application Form.

What supports can be applied for?

Any support identified by the Psycho-Educational Report and recommended by the Dyslexia Support Tutor can be requested. Possible supports include

- Assistive technology – hardware and software
- Learning support
- Study skills support
- Scribe/note-taker
- Additional tuition for the purposes of curriculum differentiation, where dyslexic difficulties have caused the student to fall behind the pace of the class.
- Photo-copying /printing allowance.

As and from the academic year 06/07 successful applicants who come into the category of specific learning difficulty will be allocated a per capita lump sum- 3,820 Euro was allocated per student in '07/'08 . This lump sum may be used to support the named student in their studies, as best determined by their Needs Assessment documentation. In addition, this lump sum can be used in conjunction with other students' allocations to provide further appropriate supports, shared or individual.

Do I have to apply each year?

Once a student has been allocated funding they continue to be funded for the duration of their course. Should a student undergo a change of circumstances, which significantly alters their support needs, then an additional application will be made on their behalf.

I.T. Tralee Disability Fund

In some circumstances for reasons beyond their control, students cannot match requirements for E.S.F. funding. The Institute has allocated some limited funding to furnish supports to students in this situation. Allocation of this fund is co-ordinated by the Dyslexia Support Tutor in consultation with the Access Office.

8. TIPS ON HOW TO HANDLE COURSE WORK

Attendance

Regular attendance is essential for all students wishing to progress through their course. The tips and guidelines outlined below will only be effective if the student is attending class.

Lectures A good set of notes is the key to success in your course work.

- Attend sessions with the Dyslexia Support Tutor to equip yourself with good note taking skills.
- Log in to useful study skills sites to pick up note making tips. (See chapter 11)

- Access any notes available on computer before the lecture begins.
- Fellow students may be able to assist with good quality notes. Use your photocopying allowance to copy additional course material.
- Return to your lecture notes within 48 hours and re-work them, summarising key points and key examples.
- If experiencing huge difficulties, discuss your situation with the Dyslexia Support Tutor to examine all available options.

Organisation

- Use separate folders for different subjects.
- Date every set of lecture notes.
- Use colour coding to mark clear differences between subjects and within subjects.
- Use a wall planner to mark important dates for assessments and exams.
- Keep a notebook to log queries, thoughts and reminders.

Reading

- Get familiar with the assistive technology available to support reading of difficult texts.
- If you experience dazzle or visual confusion experiment with different coloured transparencies on top of your text to see if they steady the print for you.
- Attend support sessions on effective reading strategies and note making from reading.
- Seek guidance from lecturers as to the key texts on the reading list.
- Ask peer or family member to read text on to tape.

Essays

- Attend writing support sessions to acquire mind mapping skills and guidance in planning the various stages of essay writing.
- Avail of assistive technology.
- Time plan work to allow for extra re-working.
- Compile written answers in numbered sentences to help build up order and structure at the draft stage. These can be converted to more formal writing at a later stage.

- Present a planned draft to your lecturer for feedback and guidance, where appropriate.
- Allow time for proof reading and rewriting.
- Proof read twice – once for meaning, the second time for spelling and grammar.
- Proof reading strategies can be acquired through sessions with the Dyslexia Support Tutor.
- Ask for an interview with your lecturer to consider their feedback on your final presentation – you can learn so much from this feedback, this will give you focus next time you have to write an essay.

Memory

- Attend individual study skills sessions that will help you identify your learning style. Memorisation strategies can then be learnt which best suit you eg. Pegging, Mnemonics, Visualisation, Coding etc.

9. DISABILITY REPRESENTATIVES

Within our student body we have Disability Representatives who are very happy to assist students in settling into college life. These students can help with getting to know surroundings and they can fill in the gaps with regard to the many instructions given in the first few weeks in college. In addition these Disability Representatives will be happy to work on a one to one basis helping with Webct (the Institute's internal computer system) and with how to access and print off lecture notes on the shared/student network drive. Throughout the year, they are contactable at any time – their e-mail address is disabilityreps@ittralee.ie

Disability Representatives work in conjunction with the Students' Union and Students Services to ensure students with any form of disability are represented in student matters. If you would like to know more about the Disability Representatives contact the Dyslexia Support Tutor who has further information and can put you in touch.



10. Disability Resource Rooms

Room Q114 North Campus

Room A124 South Campus

Well-equipped Resource Rooms are available on both campuses for students who declare a recognised disability. These rooms are equipped with a computer loaded with all available software, a printer and a scanner. If any student requires additional specific software, every effort will be made to install it. The Resource Rooms offer students a quiet space where they have access to all available technology to support their studies. Students can book this room by contacting the Student Services Office in the North or South Campus.

Access to the room is via a coded keypad. Students will be advised of this code when they book a time slot.

11. Useful Websites For Students With Specific Learning Difficulties / Learning Difference

The following are just a hand full of websites that give valuable study skills tips to help you come to terms with studying at third level.

1. <http://www.questforlearning.org/>
2. The university of St. Thomas website has an excellent section on Study Guides and Strategies <http://www.studygs.net/>
3. <http://www.aheadweb.org/home/pages> - Click on to ABLE 4 COLLEGE.
4. <http://www.metamath.com/> - This will give you access to a Learning Style Questionnaire. Having completed the questionnaire, guidelines are given on the most suitable approaches to study for your particular learning style.
5. <http://www.howtostudy.com/> - More designed for second level but very good for basic common sense tips.
6. <http://www.dyslexia.org.uk> - Check out the section called "All about dyslexia", click in to 'Study skills' from there.
7. A very useful book - Buzan B. et Buzan T. "The Mind Map Book" BBC Worldwide Ltd.2000

I hope this handbook has been of assistance to you. As it will be updated annually any feedback will be most welcome. Please address feedback to the Dyslexia Support Tutor.

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