Best practice guide - tutors and teachers

For tutors and teachers to support dyslexic learners in tertiary education

Introduction

International statistics about the proportions of dyslexic people in the population mean that it is inevitable that you will encounter significant numbers of learners with dyslexia in your classes. Some subjects attract greater proportions than others, but there is a history of people with dyslexia studying every known discipline.
There are many simple modifications in practice that can be made to make a significant difference to learner outcomes and improve the success rate for students. Changes made to improve the outcomes for learners with dyslexia do not disadvantage other learners.

Tips from learners

Here is some advice for tutors from dyslexic learners. These comments describe some helpful practices.

- Draw pictures and diagrams on the white board.
- Talk slowly during presentations.
- Go over tests beforehand.
- Use kinesthetic activities.
- Encourage and create opportunities for peer support.
- Encourage taking photos of information on the white board.
- Check with students individually to see if they understand content, if not then give them guidance how to get extra assistance.
- Review assignment requirements.
- Upload the learning session online before class.

Preparing for class

- Make it a professional development goal to familiarise yourself with the latest information about what dyslexia is, and how it fits in with the other neuro-diversities (see links over the page)
- Understand your student through discussion – they are all different and have a different set of symptoms and challenges.
- Provide proofreading support.
- Present material in more than one method. That is, verbalise instructions but also write them down.
- Use mind maps as often as possible. This helps dyslexic learners organise their learning.
- Where possible make PowerPoint presentations or notes available the day before.
- Maximise the use of charts and diagrams. Colour coding is effective.
- Consider asking someone to be a note taker for a dyslexic learner.
- Try to organise a “buddy” for each dyslexic student.

In the classroom

- Learners with dyslexia often struggle with metacognition. They will benefit from extra guidance to understand how to manage their learning.
- Be on the lookout for learners who show the signs of dyslexia. They may not have yet realised or

accepted that they are dyslexic. There will be many learners who fit into this category.

- Remember that time is the biggest challenge for people with learning differences like dyslexia. It takes dyslexic learners longer to put answers on paper and they need assistance with managing time.
- Make note-taking easier for students with dyslexia. Consider providing alternative ways for dyslexic learners to record notes.
- Never ask dyslexic learners to read aloud.
- Consider increased font size for dyslexic learners.
- Read to the class to put dyslexic students on equal footing with non-dyslexic learners.
- Remember that dyslexic learners have an issue with working memory.
- Be realistic about spelling. Spelling is the greatest challenge for people with dyslexia.
- Let it be known to your classes that your classroom or lecture theatre is a "dyslexia friendly environment".
- Allow oral assessments and presentations.
- When writing on the white board make sure you read text aloud at the same time you write it.
- Make tuition as multi-sensory as possible
- Make it standard practice to use coloured paper or coloured backgrounds for PowerPoint presentations or on line written resources.
- Encourage learners to use technological aids to assist learning.

Further information

Dyslexia: Implications for Learning, Teaching and Support by Judith Waterfield

Tips From Students by The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity

Good Practice in interventions for teaching dyslexic learners and in teacher training in English-speaking Countries by Jenny Thomson

The Inclusion of Students with Dyslexia in Higher Education: A Systematic Review Using Narrative Synthesis by Marco Pino and Luigina Mortari

Supporting Dyslexic Adults in Higher Education and the Workplace by Nicola Brunswick

Learning and Study Strategies in University Students with Dyslexia: Implications for Teaching by Ake Olofsson, Astrid Ahl and Karin Taube

YouTube clips

Strategies to support students with dyslexia in the classroom: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFqWT0c9tZI

Tips for working with dyslexic students: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5R-Tq5koBRc

A strategic approach and dyslexia: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-R4TMv2E-8

TEDX Talks

How a font can help people with dyslexia to read, Christian Boer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVaeGOflF7w

New solutions for dyslexia, Luz Rello: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1dRqpRi4cs

The True Gifts of a Dyslexic Mind, Dean Bragonier: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dPyzFFcG7A

Bring on the learning revolution! Ken Robinson: https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_bring_on_the_revolution

Do schools kill creativity? Ken Robinson: https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_eativity

This resource is part of the an Ako Aotearoa co-funded project.
For more information, visit: https://ako.ac.nz/dyslexia-support

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