

# Guidelines for Employers

Reasonable adjustments for BU students with  
dyslexia and dyspraxia in placements

Student Services Additional Learning Support



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# 1 - Context

‘The things I am good at outweigh the things I am not so good at.’

BU Placement Student

Bournemouth University provides professional, specialist one to one academic and employability skills support to students with disabilities, sensory impairments, medical and mental health conditions and specific learning differences such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. The support provided is very broad-based as many characteristics of diagnosed conditions overlap considerably in their impact - so much so that we now refer to the neurodiversity of learning support. Students are enabled to develop strategies to experience a level playing field in both academic achievement and graduate employment. The majority of BU undergraduates take a twelve month work placement in their third year, whilst those on health and social services programmes undertake regular practice hours throughout their time at BU as part of the respective lead body registration requirements.

Preparing students for flexible futures with skills to meet the changing demands of work is one of BU's strategic themes. One of the most notable targets the Additional Learning Support (ALS) service identifies, is to empower students to transfer their learning techniques into a workplace setting. Instead of employment being secondary to academic learning, the emphasis is on both being equally focussed.

Combining academic and employability skills into one learning set is efficient, effective and proactive from the beginning. There are specific challenges related to employability that Bournemouth University's ALS students face during their courses, both those in short-term practice as well as in longer placement settings. The first challenge is to decide whether or not to disclose a disability or learning difference to a potential employer.

Anecdotally, the majority of students decline this option not only fearing that negative judgments may be made concerning their abilities and employment but also that opportunities may be compromised by poor perceptions of dyslexia and dyspraxia held by placement and practice providers. Subsequently, the work experience can be demoralising for all those involved. For example, challenging situations in the workplace that could be supported through reasonable adjustments remain unexplained to the employer or mentor. Conversely, the many positive traits students have are under-utilised.



The realities of working life can influence the views of employers, many of whom make assumptions that they don't need to know anything about learning requirements because 'the culture is inclusive' and that adjustments would be 'dealt with by HR'. Others may not want to ask in the belief that to do so would be discriminatory.

Many students with dyslexia or dyspraxia actually require little in the way of support beyond the acceptance that they will need to approach some tasks differently.

Some students may require more support than others until they have achieved a fuller understanding of how their dyslexia or dyspraxia impacts on their learning and behaviours in the workplace.

During 2014, research was carried out by ALS at Bournemouth University looking at the disclosure of dyslexia and dyspraxia by undergraduates applying for work placements. One of the aims was to produce guidelines that could enhance and improve the employment experience for students, placement/practice providers, and employability advisers, by providing a resource that will be helpful when working with students who have dyslexia or dyspraxia. Feedback from employers indicated that they have little awareness of dyslexia and dyspraxia and even less understanding of reasonable adjustments that could support students' experiences in employment. Over half of placement students maintained that they would never reveal their dyslexia or dyspraxia, believing it to be a hindrance to their employability.

The findings of the research showed that openness and clear communications are required from the initial stages of applying for a placement so that students feel able to disclose a condition, the characteristics of which could actually enhance their employability, not hinder it.

The recommended reasonable adjustments outlined in section 03 are drawn from BU students' experiences. Workplace difficulties encountered by mentors and supervisors are presented with solutions and reasons why the adjustments advised would be beneficial. Students contributed to the advice given as they explained, through discussion, what would help them. All the mentors and supervisors had the opportunity to consider if each adjustment per situation was reasonable or not.

Thereby lies the essence of a reasonable adjustment. It is a balance between what works for the student and what works in the workplace. This balance is achieved through discussion and the discussion begins with disclosure.



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Many adjustment strategies are inclusive and would support any student in the workplace, not just those with a learning difference. Others would not be reasonable as they might compromise the work environment, or service users, or be too resource-intensive. When employers who participated in our research saw how minimal some adjustments can be, their responses were very encouraging as agreements were made, for example, to support task prioritisation, instigate proofreading of reports and to be proactive in asking questions to check understanding. For their part, students need to recognise the impact of their dyslexia or dyspraxia within the workplace. ALS empowers them to create a personal action plan to ensure a successful experience in placement or practice.

The research article, Keeping Secrets: a case study of students' disclosure of dyslexia and dyspraxia on application for a work placement, can be accessed at:  
[www.levelplayingfields.wordpress.com/research](http://www.levelplayingfields.wordpress.com/research)

The You Tube videos featuring student voices on the benefits of disclosure, and positive messages from employers and the University Careers and Employability Manager can be accessed at:

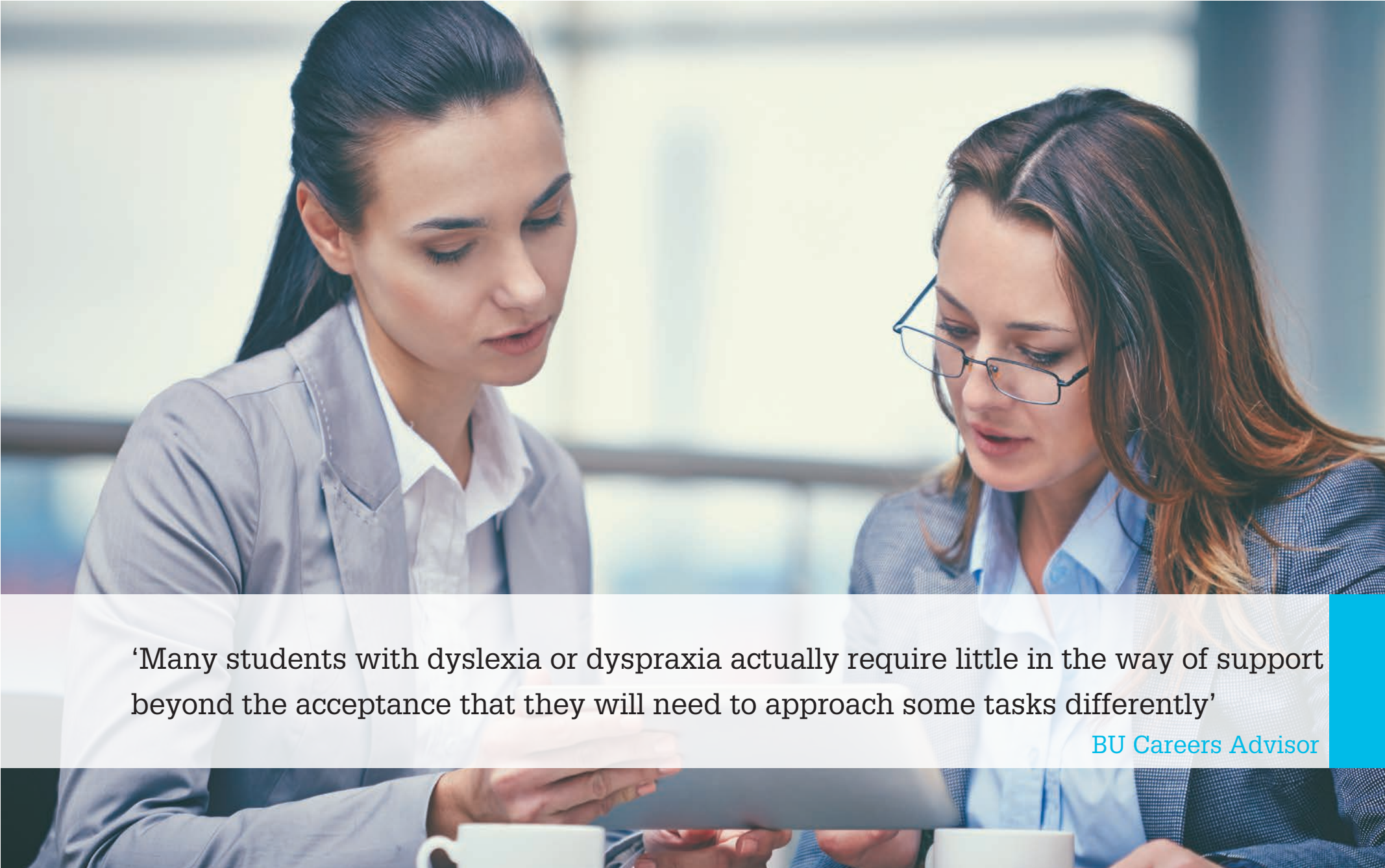
[www.levelplayingfields.wordpress.com/research](http://www.levelplayingfields.wordpress.com/research)

When students understand how their dyslexia or dyspraxia manifests as a learning difference, they are more able to participate in their continuing education and will succeed in their chosen area of work. The majority of reasonable adjustments are inexpensive and uncomplicated but should additional costs be incurred, students can apply for Access to Work funding.

[www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview)

These Guidelines put the support of students with dyslexia or dyspraxia into context and offer advice on reasonable adjustments that could be made, if appropriate, in workplace situations. To find out more, contact:

[als@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:als@bournemouth.ac.uk)

A photograph of two women in professional business attire. The woman on the left has dark hair pulled back and is looking down at a tablet. The woman on the right has long brown hair, wears glasses, and is also looking at the tablet. They appear to be in a meeting or collaborative work environment. A semi-transparent white box with a blue border on the right side is overlaid on the bottom half of the image, containing text.

‘Many students with dyslexia or dyspraxia actually require little in the way of support beyond the acceptance that they will need to approach some tasks differently’

BU Careers Advisor



## 2 - Dyslexia and Dyspraxia

Dyslexia has many definitions arising from clinical, cognitive, biological or behavioural research but is generally agreed to be a neurologically diverse development that affects the way the brain processes information. Around 75% of those who have dyslexia will also have dyspraxia, which is the way motor co-ordination skills and sensory integrations are organised. In ALS, we refer to both dyslexia and dyspraxia as specific learning differences (SpLDs). From an inclusivity perspective, students do not find learning difficult when specific strategies are applied to enable self-learning in a way that works for them individually. Dyslexic and dyspraxic students think and learn differently.

Learning only becomes difficult when an environment or process disables them from expressing their abilities in their own unique way.

For example, some people may take longer to process information than the allocated time given or may forget important details if the mode of delivery is restricted. The impact of both dyslexia and dyspraxia varies so much from student to student and the strategies that work for one do not necessarily work for another. Through discussion, solutions can always be found. Students will be aware of their strengths and potential challenges and are capable of outlining their needs as long as the environment enables them to do so. People with SpLDs can be effective, hardworking and motivated employees whose intellectual abilities are not affected.

Certain adjustments will not be considered reasonable for all sorts of reasons and students are reminded that this may be the case. Legislation requires that a discussion takes place to decide on the reasonableness of any

adjustment and if it is considered not to be reasonable then this decision is accepted as non-discriminatory.

Students with dyslexia or dyspraxia can manifest incredible strengths offset by challenges that would need to be supported with reasonable adjustments in the workplace.



## Dyslexic and dyspraxic skills

The following skills could bring success to the workplace and in life....



Strong leadership

Perceive  
multidimensionally

Intuition

Expression

Strategic thinking



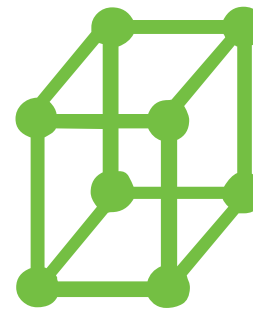
Good social skills

Empathy

Heightened perception

An increased capacity  
to think

Sound motivation



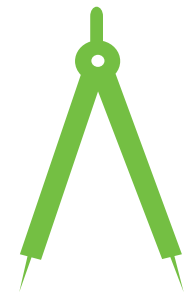
Rapid grasp of concepts

Ability for 3D thinking

Kinaesthetic excellence

Entrepreneurial skills

Good character  
judgement



Trouble shooting potential

Holistic processing

Pragmatic decision making

Practical decision making

Focussed attention



Commitment to learning

Creativity

Pattern awareness

A lot of energy

Graphic visualisation



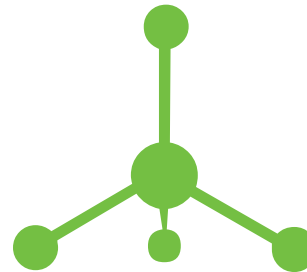
Oral excellence

Problem solving skills

Curiosity

Fast thinking capabilities

Knowledge seeking



Numerical excellence

Being a team player

Influential leadership

Sophisticated ideas

Divergent and Lateral  
thinking



Concentration for long  
periods

Scientific visualisation

Sense of humour

Honesty

Innovation

## Dyslexic and dyspraxic Challenges

In contrast, the following areas may present difficulties in the workplace because of the impact on memory, organisation and processing:

### Writing

Legibility; using appropriate language in reports, care plans, assessments and correspondence; minute-taking; accuracy with work-related vocabulary, spelling and grammar; form-filling especially at speed; using a PC or calculator

### Reading

Ascertaining meaning and purpose; strategies for scanning, skimming, summarising, and proofreading; analysis of written material; embarrassment at reading aloud; misreading unfamiliar words; difficulties reading with distractions

### Organisation and Management

Short and long term objective setting; review, reflection and evaluation techniques; following sequential instructions; ordering ideas, recalling procedures, sequencing tasks; remembering names and job titles; filing, retrieving in alphabetical order; estimating how much time is needed for specific tasks; meeting deadlines, being disorganised or over-organised; missing appointments

Preparation; chairing; scenario management; recalling discussions and decisions; cannot listen and take notes at the same time

## Meetings

Developing criteria to assist decision-making; workload balance, dealing with competing priorities

## Prioritisation

Developing criteria to assist decision-making; workload balance, dealing with competing priorities

## Time Management

## Information Management

Using appropriate software and applications; organising files, storage and retrieval; communication skills with employers for using specialist software; working with organisational IT systems; inaccurate keying

## Oral Skills

Ascertaining meaning and purpose; strategies for scanning, skimming, summarising, and proofreading; analysis of written material; embarrassment at reading aloud; misreading unfamiliar words; difficulties reading with distractions

## Behaviours

Coping strategies for multi-tasking; self-awareness, spatial awareness around people and equipment; self-organisation and speed for task completion; working with others and group working skills; reacting quickly in busy environments; taking things literally, being unable to differentiate words with double meanings; right and left co-ordination difficulties; heightened sensitivity to sound, light, touch or textures

Forgetting techniques for coping and/or improvement in an operational context, retaining information given verbally, remembering phone messages accurately, learning routines quickly

## Memory

Embarrassment, 'I must be thick', lacking confidence; sensitive, anxious, aloof, aggressive or angry; task avoidance, frustrated and despairing

## Emotions

Dyslexic and dyspraxic students can appear to be 'quick forgetters' however, once they have learned information or a task through applying specific strategies, their learning is extremely well remembered and effective.

It is important that employers who support students with dyslexia or dyspraxia are aware of the specialist support available from Bournemouth University to assist them as well as the students. Allaying fears and ignorance is beneficial so that students can get the best out of their work experience. Successful students are those who have been supported within a trusting partnership consisting of student, placement or practice employers, and Bournemouth University staff.

Disclosing dyslexia and dyspraxia can be quite a traumatic experience for students. Self-disclosure is advantageous at the right time and in the right place because in order to access support and benefit from any adjustments, students have to disclose what their needs are. However, in a workplace situation there is often a fear of discrimination, which is a very real and legitimate fear. There can often be

feelings of hurt and embarrassment due to previous experiences of being stigmatised and being thought of as incompetent. Therefore, there are risks involved in self-disclosure and no guarantees that it will be a positive experience. Trust and understanding from all concerned are qualities that will support a student more than anything.

There can be quite a negative emotional impact in placement learning. Some students are under emotional stress because they are struggling to conceal their difficulties for reasons outlined above. Others find the workplace more tiring than their peers because of the extreme mental effort that is required of them to carry out daily activities. The impact of some secondary characteristics such as lack of confidence, low self-esteem and anxiety can all contribute to a student's negativity.

Many ALS students struggle to come to terms with low self-esteem. This, together with lacking self-confidence in personal abilities, affects performance in the workplace. Students will often know what should be done but are unable to show their capabilities. This is observed as a lack of being able to demonstrate competencies. Perceiving that others are learning procedures and tasks more quickly or that staff are not observing them at their best engenders feelings of isolation, and the first signs of this stress are usually behavioural. Frustration and anger are common as students will feel misjudged.

‘Employability is a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy’ (Yorke, 2005, p8)

Perceived demands and perceived inability to cope will exacerbate the anxieties around any new learning situation. Even when students eventually disclose (if they haven’t already) and support is put in place, it can take a long time for behavioural changes to occur and for these students to become successful. There is the distinct possibility that some students will never overcome their barriers and learn the coping strategies that are essential for their independent learning.

However, support for students at Bournemouth University is designed to create an awareness of the impact dyslexia and dyspraxia have on living and learning. The strategies taught can enable students to take control, re-frame and adapt their learning habits in order to become empowered to be independent, autonomous people for university learning and for employability in the workplace that they are either in or will soon enter.

Business and industry are not experts when it comes to disability-related issues. The success of students will not be contingent on law and the efforts of workplace employers/employees alone. It will be linked to the capabilities and performance of students themselves (Gerber 1992).

Successful students are those who develop conscious competence, which is succeeding through taking control of their own learning, applying self-knowledge and self-advocacy skills, and re-framing their environment using internalised strategies and identified strengths to achieve positive results.



## 3 - Support in the Workplace




Students are more often than not very aware of their strengths and the challenges that are ahead of them in the workplace. On the whole, if they have developed coping strategies they are careful about what they do on placements in order to avoid making mistakes. It is usually students who have not developed awareness or coping strategies to deal with their learning behaviour who encounter difficulties.

As a general rule of thumb, the following reasonable adjustments could be acceptable in any work environment...

- Give written as well as verbal information
- Allow plenty of time to read, organise thoughts and complete a task
- Give clear, concise information; don't hint or assume you've been understood
- Allow the use of assistive technology strategies eg digital recorders, TextHelp software
- Proof read, spell and grammar check

The following identified issues are drawn from students working in practice, on placements or in the workplace whilst studying undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications at Bournemouth University. They describe the workplace difficulties encountered by mentors, supervisors, assessors and colleagues who have been working with students who have dyslexia, dyspraxia and other related spectrum conditions. These conditions have common neurodiverse behavioural denominators although they are manifested quite differently within each student.

The advice offered proved to be effective so is outlined here for your consideration. Some of the advice is generic and some has been specifically tailored for students in the working environment at the time. Most of the students contributed to the advice by explaining what would help them.



Please remember that SpLDs affect students in different ways and strategies that may work for one student will not necessarily work for another. Also, what is reasonable in one work setting may be unreasonable in another. The important thing to remember is to have a discussion with students about their strengths and weaknesses and then take it from there...

# Communication

▲ 'How do I get the student to meet me?'

**Give written as well as verbal communications providing clear directions and instructions on the place and time. Provide a post code and full address for a satnav. Plan extra time to allow for the student getting lost.**

There will be short-term memory complications and/or orientation inefficiencies.

▲ 'I'm experiencing communication difficulties.'

**Use simply constructed sentences, avoid double negatives and don't use complex grammatical structures. Bullet-point phrasing works well.**

Decoding information and the phonological processing of it can take time and form a barrier to lots of understanding. Also, inconsistencies in the use of language can be confusing.

▲ 'It looks as though the student has switched off.'

**Keep your conversation or instructions structured. Set out the context and relevance for what you are saying and don't deviate.**

Structure acts as a checklist and keeps students on track. Many will lose the context and relevance of what you may be saying if you go off at a tangent.

# Communication

▲ ‘I’m getting a poor performance from this student but I can’t see why this should be.’

**Always give an overview of an activity, contextualise it and explain its purpose and relevance to the bigger picture.**

There will be a need to relate ideas and make internal connective patterns in order to process information. If there is no perceived relevance, the student will not be able to perform. There may also be a misinterpretation of what you have asked.

▲ ‘The student seems disengaged.’

**Check that the student is on track and ask if support is needed.**

Concentration when processing verbal and non-verbal information can mean an avoidance of eye contact, not necessarily disengagement. Some students are too embarrassed to ask for help.

▲ ‘This student lacks confidence and does not join in with group projects.’

**Promote self-confidence by ensuring the student experiences success, no matter how little. Confirm success at every stage possible.**

Positive behaviour reinforcement is needed because there can be constant perceived failure along with a fear of failure. Anxiety will be prevalent too and this can be so embedded that there is often a lack of awareness when things are actually going well, so success must be confirmed repeatedly.

▲ ‘What’s the best way to give feedback?’

**Always supplement verbal feedback with written. Ensure your comments are concise and in context, highlighting positives as much as possible. Students may often latch onto negative feedback and disregard the positive.**

What is heard is likely to be forgotten but written feedback can be re-visited.

▲ ‘My student is having difficulties with the PC.’

**Allow her to change the desktop, font and font size. She is probably experiencing visual stress which can make using a computer very difficult.**

Students using a PC can be slowed down considerably unless the desktop can be personalised in terms of size and colour of the background and fonts. A sans serif font is easier to read against a coloured background. The movement of the pixels on the desktop can result in exaggerated movement of the whole screen which destabilises vision and processing. This can induce weepy eyes, tiredness and headaches. If the desktop and fonts of networked computers are fixed, it should still be possible to use a minimum size 12 font.



# Reading and Writing

▲ 'The student may need to do private study from time to time.'

**Provide a quiet place to maintain concentration and to consolidate what has been learned. Ensure the student has clear targets for what needs to be studied.**

The distractibility factor can be very prevalent so a structure will help to keep the student on track.

▲ 'There have been problems with specialist terms and the wrong use of critical vocabulary.'

**Write them down. Allow the student to write words phonetically if appropriate or create short lists of related words with similar spelling routes. Allow the student to use a digital recorder to record someone using the correct pronunciation and within a sentence to get the correct context.**

Reading and spelling complex phonological terms will take time to learn. Students have to find their own unique way of remembering the patterning of words.

▲ 'He isn't able to scan information in a meeting so he doesn't take part in the case discussions as well as he should.'

**Give the student any essential reading before the meeting so he can prepare. Highlight any salient text you want to focus on. Pre-reading will enable the student to be prepared and he will concentrate better during the meeting.**

Some students read slowly for all kinds of reasons and find skimming text difficult to do quickly. There could be phonological processing difficulties or visual stress which distorts the text.

⚠ 'Our placement student is rather reluctant to take minutes when we have our meetings and I've said that we all take turns so this is letting us down.'

**Compromise by reassuring the student that a digital recorder can be used to supplement the minute taking and the notes can be written up later. The student will feel part of the team and yet be supported in the note taking.**

Some students have processing and word-retrieval difficulties as well as short-term memory inefficiencies.

Anxieties about working together in a team will exacerbate the situation and cause feelings of failure.

⚠ 'Such poor spelling is not really acceptable.'

**Ensure that presentations, memos or reports that will be widely read are proofed before issue. Check that the student is using spelling strategies or software such as TextHelp.**

Phonological processing difficulties combined with unlearned spelling strategies will mean ever vigilant proofing will be needed.

⚠ 'Our student has untidy and practically unreadable handwriting and presents figures quite badly.'

**Encourage the student to use assistive technology that negates the need for hand writing but if handwriting is absolutely necessary, give plenty of time for her to write things down.**

There is a weakness in the hand-eye fine motor coordination combined with visual stress resulting in poor motor control.

# Reading and Writing

▲ ‘I’ve noticed a reluctance to read, especially out loud in front of the team.’

**Be aware of this and don’t ask the student to do it without practising. He may miss out words or whole sentences and mispronounce words causing great embarrassment. It will be OK after practising.**

Phonological processing difficulties and visual stress will make him anxious if expected suddenly to read out loud without any practice. Also, the fear of making a fool of himself will certainly make matters worse.

▲ ‘This student always misses out details in reports.’

**With important sequential tasks, allow extra time for the student to write pre-notes that can be checked. The student will have to be drawn to the omissions as he won’t notice any. A sample report or template will act as a structure on which to model a report so he will have a clear idea of expectations.**

Students who process information predominantly holistically will miss out small details in language, number or activity and often do not notice their omissions. They will assume the detail is implicit and will need to learn how to write information explicitly and then proofread.

▲ ‘There are problems digesting complex instructions or information.’

**Allow time for this and provide opportunities for discussion and clarification. Allow the use of a digital recorder so that the student can record and re-visit the instructions.**

Phonological processing can be achieved successfully but time is needed above and beyond what you may consider to be normal.

⚠ 'We have problems like calculating drug dosages.'

**Allow the use of a calculator and support her with memory anchors for working out calculations. Discuss the association with the outcome against the real life situation to check understanding of the dosage effects on the patient.**

Students may have an inability to integrate quantitative and spatial information but will be able to rote learn how to calculate even if they cannot fully understand what it means. With drug calculations though they must learn to associate the outcome of the calculation with the real-life situation or else there will be a serious risk to patients and a question of fitness to practise.

⚠ 'We've noticed that this student's practical abilities far exceed the listening and written abilities, especially with form-filling.'

**Encourage the student to use his strengths and strategies to cope with listening and writing, and allay fears of discrimination or reprisals. Let the student take home a blank form to familiarise himself with it. If possible allow him to record information and fill out the form later.**

This inverse correlation can cause stress due to feeling disconnected or stigmatised. Using his strengths and strategies puts things into perspective and can assure success.



# Verbal Communications

▲ ‘There doesn’t appear to be enough time to digest verbal information.’

**Provide visual forms of information to supplement verbal ones and allow the use of a digital recorder.**

Alternative forms can be revisited later for thorough processing, according to the student’s specific learning style, in order to gain understanding.

▲ ‘I need to ask questions but I know that the responses I’m getting are not right.’

**Avoid multi-questioning. Try asking the student to repeat what you’ve asked to clarify an understanding of your question. Always check after an interval that there is underpinning knowledge. Never assume that there is.**

Decoding and comprehension takes time and effort but is not impossible. An inefficient short-term working memory may void any apparent understanding so re-visiting the question is essential to check that there has been full assimilation of what you’ve asked.

▲ ‘I have to give instructions at the beginning of the shift but there appears to be a difficulty with this.’

**If appropriate allow the use of a digital recorder. If not appropriate, prepare the instructions in a written or drawn format. Try not to give too many instructions at once, particularly if only delivered verbally.**

Short-time working memory inefficiencies will manifest as forgetfulness and the student will not be able to remember large chunks of information unless it can be given in an alternative format.

▲ 'Why is it that this person constantly asks questions, which actually I don't think are relevant?'

**Students with a holistic learning style need to ask questions in order to make connections. This is highly relevant for their learning style so by answering questions, you are helping them to learn.'**

Some students are knowledge driven, not process driven and need to ask questions to process supplementary information in order to understand and learn effectively. Holistic processors need to pattern their knowledge and make associations. This makes it more meaningful.

▲ 'Quite often messages are not relayed accurately or I notice that the wrong information has been given.'

**Encourage students to repeat messages to check they are correct before delivery and suggest they write them down straightaway as a matter of process.**

Phonological processing and short-term working memory difficulties combine to cause confusion. There can sometimes be misinterpretation of the words used in the message so a specific protocol should always be followed as a strategy.

▲ 'There appears to be an inability to pronounce words properly.'

**Accept whatever pronunciation is given if it is understandable. If correct pronunciation is vital, record it on the student's digital recorder and write the word phonetically so that she can practise it.**

Verbal motor coordination differences and phonological processing challenges can cause mispronunciation. Pressure and anxiety will make things worse.

# Verbal Communications

▲ 'There seems to be confusion when I'm asking questions.'

**Be direct, specific and consistent.**

Questions such as: 'Would you like to take this to the foyer?' may not be interpreted as you intended. Turn the question into an instruction: 'Please take this to the foyer.'

There can be an inability to get the gist of subtle language and possible misinterpretation due to phonological mistiming. Or there could be a literal translation of idiomatic English.

▲ 'I've noticed the student doesn't join in when we have a group Q and A session.'

**Encourage even the most obvious of questions to check understanding. The student may be anxious, unconfident, fearful, worried or have switched off.**

Oral processing is important as it allows for meaningful connections to be made and it will demonstrate any underpinning knowledge – or indeed the lack of it. Sometimes re-phrasing questions helps the communication process.

▲ 'This student constantly asks me to repeat a question. Why can't she remember what I've asked?'

**Try not to re-phrase the question you have first asked. Repeat the original question or better still, write it down. If it is a long question, the student will not be able to remember it so try making it shorter.**

Decoding and processing anomalies mean that if a question is re-phrased, new information will have to be processed making the activity longer. Seeing the question visually always helps.

▲ 'I hear muddled client telephone conversations with disorganised speech.'

**Encourage the student to write down a script before starting a conversation using clearly sequenced key phrases.**

**Familiarity will build self-confidence but a new situation will need structure or else the muddling will return.**

Phonological processing and unpractised strategies can faze students. If the student has poor oral skills this will cause anxiety. The disorganised speech will be alleviated as competence develops.



# Time and Task Planning and Organisation

▲ ‘There’s always a panic at the mention of a deadline.’

**Give clear dates and times whenever a deadline is expected. Support the student to plan ahead using a wall planner, visually highlighting daily, weekly or monthly deadlines. Suggest the student uses his alarm on his watch or phone or uses the features on his PC/laptop.** Time and task management techniques will need to be learned due to an abstract understanding of time, its duration and associated organisational issues. When these techniques are not learned and used, there will always be anxiety and panic.

▲ ‘My student is never in the right place at the right time, doesn’t have the right equipment and always has a messy work station.’

**Have a regular structured pattern of daily activity if possible with the minimum of variations. Estimate with the student how much time will be needed for a particular task and discuss what materials will be needed to carry this task out. Constantly focus on small, achievable time and task targets such as To Do lists, using Outlook or diaries and building planning time into every day.**

Organisational matters and short-term working memory inefficiencies, coupled with an abstract irrational understanding of time durations means that time and task management techniques need to be learned and re-visited often.

▲ ‘This student is hesitant when asked to go to another place even though I give him instructions and a map.’

**Accompany the student until he is confident. Talk through the map highlighting points of interest en route to fix the directions. Ask the student to talk you through the directions he finds the easiest to remember and remind him to visualise the route and points of interest.** Some students have spatial disorientation and directional and map reading difficulties. Some students may need to overcome this by having full control and self-management of spatial familiarisation.

# Sequencing

⚠ 'My student shows confusion when carrying out this sequenced activity that we've been doing over and over for ages now.'

**Check the consistency of instructions for a sequenced task as some staff may do it differently. If consistency is not important for the completion of the task, clarify this to the student. The sequence could be set out visually on a wall chart, in a manual or on an instruction sheet.**

Students will learn a sequenced task but get confused when others in a team do it a different way. They may think they are doing it wrongly. A student with a visual learning style will understand the sequence better with visual instructions as opposed to verbal ones.

⚠ 'There is a panic when following instructions to learn a task.'

**Follow a physical sequence, provide visual instructions, do a role play, provide a written checklist or allow the student to record the verbal instructions to re-visit and consolidate in her own time.**

Combinations of different sensory inputs will increase the ability to memorise information and then recall it. Multi-sensory input is always more successful than a single-sensory one.



# Sequencing

⚠ 'Whenever I demonstrate a technique, which is not particularly difficult, it seems to take a long time for the student to learn what to do.'

**Use multi-sensory strategies for explaining and showing. Be prepared to demonstrate quite a few times and allow the student to practise in a simulated environment wherever possible, especially before being observed or formally assessed.**

A clear overview of expectations will be needed in order for the student to prepare strategies for learning a skill. To achieve the automaticity of a skill, a student will have to re-visit it more times than you would expect. Learning the sequence of the skill as well as doing it can be tiring and cause

concentration levels to fall. It can take a long time to gain automaticity and the confidence to carry out a technique. However, once learned it will never be forgotten.

⚠ 'This student has little perception of time.'

**Support with constant referrals to a watch or clock or phone alerts or the MS Outlook reminder. The student needs to get into the habit of using prompts to sequence time.**

Students will have an inability to integrate time with activity. Time is abstractly perceived and not understood as a measure of activity length so students will always need prompts.

# Listening and Concentration

🚩 'I've noticed some anxiety when the student is listening to me.'

**Supplement verbal information with written information and allow the use of a digital recorder.**

Absorbing information is stressful unless the strategies for doing so are well-learned. There can also be a fear of not remembering, which exacerbates anxiety. If the student has a range of multi-sensory information-gathering techniques there will be no problem.

🚩 'This student doesn't concentrate on what is being said.'

**Break up any verbal delivery into varied sections. Try to supplement verbal delivery with multi-sensory input.**

A long uninterrupted spell of straight talking will be a strain on the student's auditory processing and concentration levels will drop dramatically.

🚩 'There are occasions when this student is easily distracted.'

**Check if there are any physical or sensory distractions that could be alleviated. Keep students on track with structure and revisiting the context.**

Some students are hypersensitive to sensory stimuli eg a flickering light or persistent noise, which prevents concentration. Some students are affected by the displacement of random thoughts so will need to be kept on track by constant re-visiting.

# Behaviours

▲ 'I get hostile body language and emotional outbursts of anger from time to time. Perhaps it's embarrassment or something.'

**In a 1:1 situation, ascertain the nature of the frustration and check that strategies are being learned and used. Encourage the student to explain any difficulties and discuss how they can be resolved.**

Negative experiences of stigma and discrimination affect a student's emotional and intellectual engagement. This often manifests as unacceptable behaviour. Frustration at not being able to cope or losing control can cause outbursts of negative responses.

▲ 'Our student doesn't react quickly enough in this busy environment.'

**Coupling up with an experienced worker will enable an action to be learned whilst the student gains confidence. Lots of practice will help to gain speed so allow time for simulated practise. Plenty of positive reinforcement of success, however little, will also help.**

There can often be an inability to multi-task which will slow a student down. Anxiety and fear of failure will be ever present which will also slow things down. Time is needed to process a task, practise it and gain confidence.

▲ 'This student appears diffident and lazy and appears not to be grasping things.'

**This is not always the case.**

**Concentration can be so acute that the student is oblivious to body language. Try a change of activity to allow for relaxation or allow a rest break.**

Extreme concentration to acquire automaticity of a task or decode phonological information means often giving out the wrong communication signals.

▲ ‘It’s very strange but this student repeats every step in a process from the beginning every time. Shouldn’t he be able to remember the short cuts?’

**An inefficient working memory causes difficulty with structuring and learning, and this repeating behaviour could be a learned strategy, so allow for it and expect it to always happen.**

Working from first principles means that there is no need to constantly remember and organise facts, especially in maths, theoretical and applied physics, and certain administrative and management processes. For example, if interrupted when using a keyboard, it will be difficult to immediately start up again. Your student may well have

to read everything from the beginning up to the point of interruption before carrying on.

▲ ‘She appears to be flouting regulations and guidelines.’

**Draw attention to the behaviour and give reasoned explanations for the purposes of, and adherence to, the procedures. Draw attention to the relevance of a particular rule.**

There can be a disregard for the acceptance of rules that are perceived to be unnecessary or if the sense of them is not recognised or understood. The context and relevance of any given situation, guideline or regulation often has to be understood explicitly before acceptance of them is internalised.



# Behaviours

▲ 'I give an instruction and there is quite an over-zealous response.'

**Always give reasoned instructions in context and explain the relevance of them within the overall process. There will be significant productivity if the instruction relates to a personal interest or passion.**

Some students are knowledge driven, not process driven, and their curiosity and learning appetites are such that the purposes of an instruction become theirs and not necessarily those of the process giving rise to fervent responses. This is not necessarily a bad thing unless overdone.

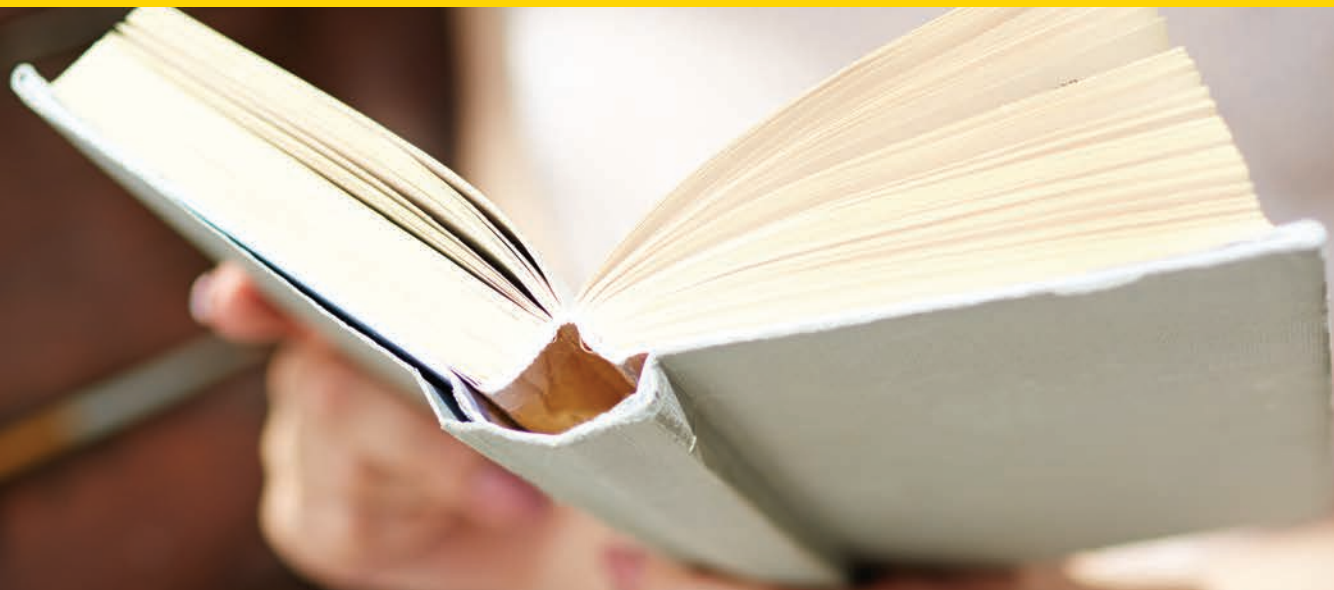
▲ 'There is often a fluctuation in concentration or mood.'

**Be aware. Allow the student to take controlled rest breaks if it gets out of hand. Refer him to time and task management techniques. Ask if he's had a drink or something to eat.**

Extreme tiredness will prevent any further useful work. The student needs to learn how to pace himself with activity, rest and nutrition. An unawareness of time causes an undisciplined approach to work.



## 4 - FAQs



## 1 WHAT IS MEANT BY NEURODIVERSITY AND SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFERENCES?

Neurodiversity is an American term to convey that people are not disabled or abnormal but that their brains are 'wired differently'. (Pollack 2009, Hendricks 2010) Specific Learning Differences (SpLD) is an umbrella term used to describe a range of conditions including dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, ADD, Tourette's syndrome and Asperger's syndrome. These conditions all have distinct areas of difficulty associated with their neurocognitive profiles that often overlap. Sometimes Educational Psychologists diagnose SpLD rather than attach a specific label of dyslexia or dyspraxia to a student's diagnosis.

## 2 HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF A STUDENT HAS DYSLEXIA OR DYSPRAXIA?

Students may disclose a disability before they start or during their studies at the university. Once a student has approached Additional Learning Support, Faculty staff will be advised via an Advice Note, which is sent to Programme Administrators. Staff in a workplace environment should contact either the Programme Administrator for the course on which the student is studying or the appropriate University Practice Learning Adviser (NHS) or the Placement Development Adviser (PDA) in the relevant Faculty.

## 3 WHAT IS MEANT BY WORK PLACEMENTS/PRACTICE?

A placement/practice is a planned period of work-based learning whereby the learning outcomes are part of a programme of study. This is usually provided outside the university. Work placements/practice can be part of a sandwich course, a short placement, a work taster, temporary work or a period of supported employment as part of vocational training. Placements can also take place abroad. Whether students set up their own placements or they are set up by the university, the duties under the Equality Act are the same.

#### 4 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR FUNDING ADJUSTMENTS ON WORK PLACEMENTS?

The duty for making reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act falls on the university. In some cases, alternative funding sources may be available or the placement provider may be persuaded to fully fund or contribute towards the costs of adjustments. Where students are under a contract of employment with the placement provider, the employer may also have a responsibility to make adjustments. The fact that the employer has a responsibility does not diminish the University's responsibility.

#### 5 WHAT ARE REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS?

The Equality Act does not require institutions to make adjustments that would compromise the maintenance of academic, workplace or other standards and core competencies appropriate to the learning programme. Appropriate reasonable adjustments enable a disabled student to participate in education on the same basis as a student without a disability. The underlying philosophy is inclusion; adjustments should level the playing field so that disabled students are included. However, too many adjustments can lead to an exclusive practice, which is not inclusive for non-disabled students and offers an unfair advantage. Adjustments should be mutually agreed through discussion with the student and they can be considered reasonable if they are based on the following:

1. Documented evidence
2. The most integrated experience possible
3. Not compromising the essential requirements of the job
4. Not posing a threat to personal or public safety
5. Not imposing an undue financial or administrative burden

## 6 CAN I GET SUPPORT TO HELP A DISABLED STUDENT?

Yes. Opening discussions with students about what their needs are is an excellent start. ALS staff will always endeavour to support practice assessors, mentors, PDAs and staff in the workplace either by specific training in disability issues, attending team meetings, contributing to case conferences on particular students or 1:1 briefings. Information, advice and guidance will always be available from Bournemouth University.

## 7 WHAT IS MEANT BY A TEAM APPROACH WHEN SUPPORTING DISABLED STUDENTS?

The sort of team approach that is encouraged both on and off-campus is one that involves the individual student, the employer and Bournemouth University academic and support staff. The student through self-advocacy; the employers, supervisors, mentors or assessors by making appropriate adjustments; and academic and support staff through their teaching, advice and guidance.

## 8 WHAT SHOULD I DO IF A STUDENT DISCLOSES A DISABILITY TO ME BUT DOES NOT WANT TO DISCLOSE IT TO ANYONE ELSE?

There is no legal obligation to disclose a disability. The Data Protection Act (1998) overrides disability legislation so students can keep their disability private if it is a hidden one. However, Health and Safety Legislation takes precedence over both so there may be an obligation to disclose if there are any considerations concerning children, vulnerable people, chemicals, dangerous equipment or specific health and safety issues in the workplace, practice or placement.

Talk through the issues that disclosure raises, preferably at the planning stage, so that any implications for practice/placement can be discussed as well as the student's responsibility for disclosure. If it is beyond the planning stage and the student is already in practice/placement, then discussion should still be around the student's responsibility to disclose a disability and the impact it may have on the work placement. Disclosure will mean that the student will get help and support from Additional Learning Support. If there is no awareness of any need, there can be no reasonable adjustments made to support the student therefore they are putting themselves at a disadvantage.





## 5 - Checklist for Signs of Dyslexia and Dyspraxia

## ■ Checklist for Signs of Dyslexia and Dyspraxia

Follow this guide and tick the Yes or No box by each **descriptor**. If there are any Yes answers, encourage the student to contact the Student Co-ordinators in Additional Learning Support for further screening and/or assessment.

For further information, advice and guidance, please contact the Student Co-ordinators on:

01202 965663 or email [als@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:als@bournemouth.ac.uk)

	Descriptor	Yes	No
1	Is there a discrepancy between the student's oral skills and ability in other areas such as writing notes or reports on paper?		
2	Is there a discrepancy between the student's intellectual/practical ability and the structure and use of language, especially in the written form?		
3	Does the student show a poor comprehension of language by misinterpreting what is said or wrongly using critical vocabulary?		
4	Does the student have poor time management, difficulty following a schedule, show an inability to meet deadlines, show confusion with orientation or get lost following directions?		
5	Do you notice the student demonstrating different success rates from day to day such as misreading or miscopying simple or complex information, or spelling the same word differently within one document?		
6	Is the student unable to tell you what has just been said as though s/he hasn't been listening or is demonstrating poor memory?		
7	Have you noticed an inability to complete standard forms and reports correctly by missing out details?		
8	Does the student show poor co-ordination either in fine motor control or verbally, or use Spoonerisms or wrong consonant clusters as in pacific for specific?		
9	Have you noticed the student learning well when information is presented one way but not another, for example, visually as opposed to aurally? Practically as opposed to theoretically?		

■ Checklist for Signs of Dyslexia and Dyspraxia

	Descriptor	Yes	No
10	Does the student misinterpret social cues, appear unforthcoming or lazy?		
11	Does the student have a short attention span and/or difficulty maintaining focus in specific work areas?		
12	Is there impulsivity about the student's behaviour above and beyond an expected enthusiasm?		
13	Have you noticed the student display difficulty with calculations, number reversals, maths language or maths concepts appropriate for the level of work?		
14	Have you heard the student having muddled telephone conversations, being curt with patients, clients, customers or staff, not relaying messages accurately or giving wrong instructions?		
15	Do you notice the student not following the gist of what is being discussed in a meeting?		
16	Have you noticed the student showing emotional displays of embarrassment, anxiety, frustration or anger over and above what you would consider normal?		
17	Have you observed frequently poor organisational skills such as a messy work space, missed appointments or never having the right equipment or materials?		
18	Have you noticed difficulties with sequencing skills, either written as in reports or taking notes, or physically as in filing.		
19	Does the student lack confidence and a sense of humour and show a reluctance to engage in social discussion with patients, clients or customers?		
20	Have you noticed an inability to multi-task or not react quickly in a busy environment?		

All BU students are encouraged and empowered to self-advocate and take responsibility for independent learning by acquiring strategies that deal with their specific requirements, however, some students do not disclose their difficulties. Indeed, they may not even be aware that they might have any. If you suspect either to be the case, do please encourage each student to contact Additional Learning Support.

Student Services Additional Learning Support  
Bournemouth University  
DLG17 The Sir Michael Cobham Library  
Talbot Campus  
Fern Barrow  
Poole, Dorset  
BH12 5BB

tel: 01202 965663  
e-mail: [als@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:als@bournemouth.ac.uk)



## 6 - Legislation

All of the existing legislation related to equality and diversity has been brought together under the Equality Act (2010) which clarifies key terminology and makes the responsibilities of both individuals and organisations much easier to understand. It subsumes the previous legislation including most of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995/2005/2007. The Disability Equality Duty in the DDA continues to apply. This places a duty on all public sector bodies to promote disability equality resulting in improvements for disabled students, staff and service users.

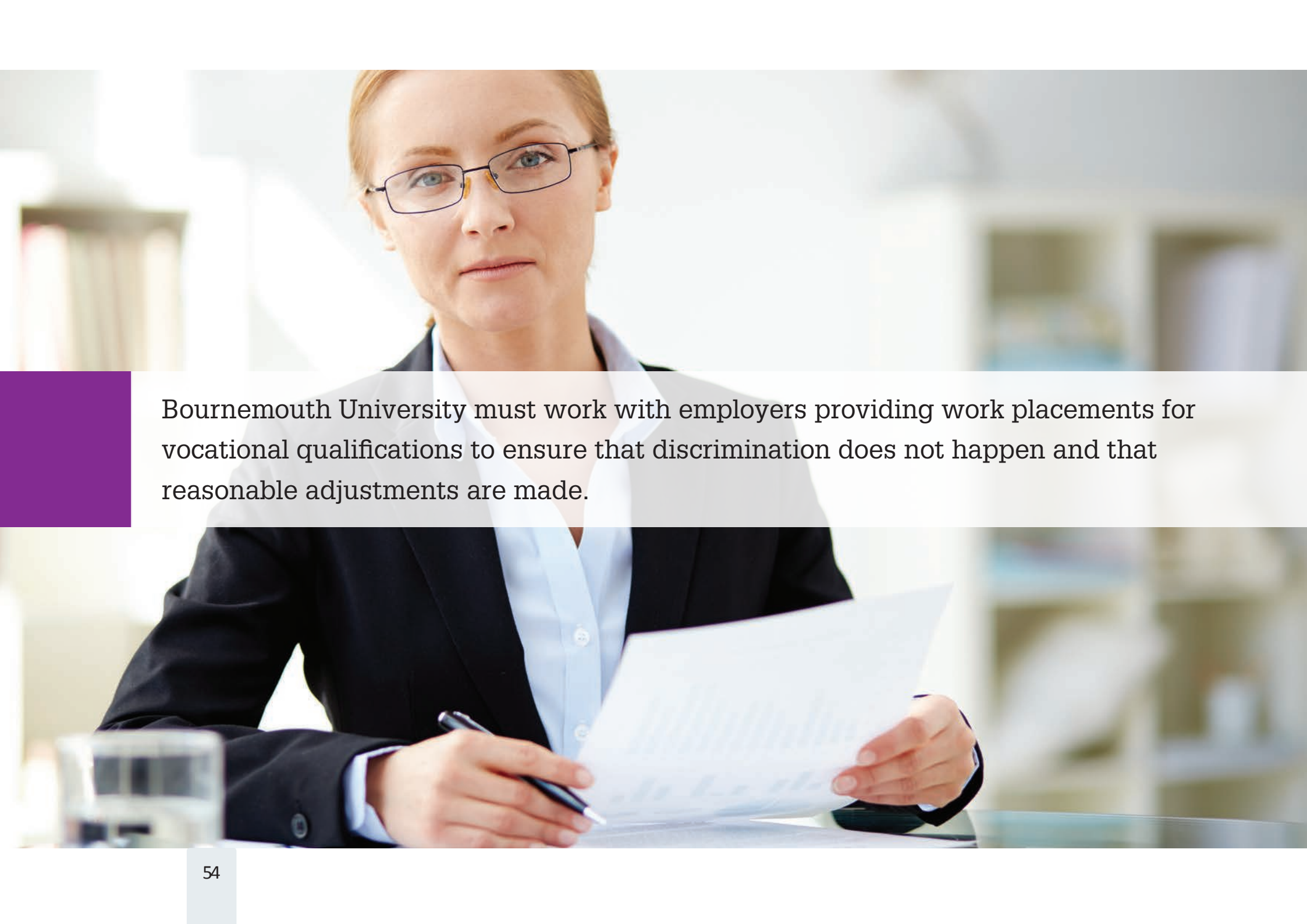
The enshrined disability legislation in the Equality Act 2010 requires organisations to promote equality of opportunity and demonstrate positive attitudes towards disability. There are different parts covering the duties that organisations have towards disabled people. The relevant parts for Bournemouth University are as follows:

### ✿ **Definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010:**

A person has a disability if they have an impairment which must have: 'a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to perform normal, day-to-day activities' and 'have lasted for at least 12 months and be likely to last for 12 months or more.' Substantial in this context means more than minor or trivial. Whether or not a person is disabled is generally determined by reference to the impact that a condition has on that person's ability to carry out normal activities. Both dyslexia and dyspraxia are lifelong conditions that can impact, to a greater or lesser extent, on a student's ability to perform normal, day-to-day activities.

### ✿ **Employment and vocational training, including work placements and qualification bodies:**

There is a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people and where competency standards apply, these must not be discriminatory. Competence standards apply to all aspects of courses: in admissions (entry criteria), on-course assessments (exams), and awarding qualifications. When providing services to the general public, as in training placements, Bournemouth University must not discriminate against disabled people and take reasonable steps to overcome impediments whilst not necessarily anticipating the needs of every individual.

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing glasses and a dark blazer over a light blue shirt, is seated at a desk. She is holding a pen in her right hand and looking directly at the camera. A document is open on the desk in front of her. The background is a blurred office environment.

Bournemouth University must work with employers providing work placements for vocational qualifications to ensure that discrimination does not happen and that reasonable adjustments are made.

## ⦿ Education:

Disabled people cannot, without justification, be discriminated against or receive less favourable treatment for a reason related to their disability. Bournemouth University must make reasonable anticipatory adjustments. The reasonable adjustment duty does not apply to competence, defined by Section 54(6) of the Equality Act as:

**‘An academic, medical or other standard applied by, or on behalf of, an education provider for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability.’**

Bournemouth University is responsible for implementing the competency standards (whether external or internal) in a non-discriminatory way, however, whilst there is no duty to make reasonable adjustments to genuine competency standards, the duty does apply to the assessment of that standard. There is a difference between a competency standard and the process by which the standard is assessed. All students must be able to demonstrate their competence in the most appropriate way for them.

There should be clarity in determining exactly what is being assessed so that a reasonable adjustment can be applied to the assessment process without compromising the competency standards themselves. Whilst the Equality Act identifies a general entitlement of disabled students to reasonable adjustments, it also permits the application of academic judgements for specific competency standards that need not be altered.

There are instances of the process of assessment being linked to the competences as set by external bodies such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) or the Law Society. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) recommends that a mutual working relationship be set up between external bodies and higher education institutions to discuss issues of applying the standards in respect of individual disabled applicants or candidates, subject to the person's consent.

✿ **Disclosure:**

There is a requirement for a proactive approach in encouraging students to disclose their disability. Bournemouth University reflects this commitment in its Corporate and Strategic Plans through its references to equality and diversity. Effective channels of communications between relevant staff are important, especially as both direct and indirect related discrimination can take place without Bournemouth University knowing that someone is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act:

**There is an obligation to disclose a disability if there are considerations concerning children, vulnerable people, chemicals, dangerous equipment or health and safety implications. (Health & Safety Act)**





## 7 - Summary

**The interface between a student's difficulties and the competence requirements are those areas where reasonable adjustments can be focussed.**

In summary, the following table clarifies what an employer could do and what an employer does not have to do in order to be compliant with the current disability legislation.

What an Employer can do	What an Employer does not have to do
Encourage disclosure on any pre-placement documentation	There is no need to have extensive knowledge of dyslexia and dyspraxia in order to provide a reasonable adjustment
If a student discloses dyslexia and dyspraxia, have a discussion together to see what local adjustments could reasonably be put in place	An adjustment is not reasonable if it incurs a significant financial burden
If appropriate or reasonable, allow the student to use assistive technology solutions	There is no need to provide specialist equipment or assistive software. The student will either already have it or can get funding through Access to Work
If any untoward behaviours or difficulties are noted, encourage the student to fill in the 05 Checklist For Signs of Dyslexia and Dyspraxia	There is no need to significantly compromise the work environment, services users or the requirements of the job when putting adjustments in place

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