Website context: Thinking about Dyslexia → Module design

Dyslexia: the importance of context

The profile of cognitive differences associated with dyslexia varies from person to person but particular profiles will not determine the effects of dyslexia on study. The effects of dyslexia are driven much more by the different learning contexts in which the students find themselves. Certain contexts will tap into areas of difficulty, whereas others will offer opportunity to use strengths.

Some examples

- Strongly visual thinkers can produce creative designs in Architecture or Engineering or generate interesting interlinked ideas. They may struggle to translate this into a logical linear argument in an essay.

- The short term memory inefficiencies characteristic of dyslexia make rote learning difficult particularly in exam situations. Students will need to learn strategies, will spend a disproportionate amount of time on this kind of learning and some will always under-perform.

- Students can easily lose the thread of verbal information presented without any visual backup or auditory support via a recording.

But all students learn differently

Teachers generally acknowledge that students learn differently and are aiming to teach in a way they think their students can learn most effectively. Dyslexia is a very definite learning difference, but it is not possible to say that dyslexic students learn in particular ways just because they are dyslexic. It is recognised that some dyslexic people are strongly visual learners, but this should not be generalised to all. The key point is that flexibility may be more difficult as dyslexic learners have developed particular ways of learning in response to the difficulties they have faced. This means that the more flexibility lecturers can offer, the more likely that dyslexic students will find a way of learning that suits them. This approach is also likely to benefit all learners.

++ This document is intended to be read as part of the Thinking about Dyslexia website ++
Thinking about Dyslexia: A Staff Resource for Developing Practice
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