



Website context: Thinking about Dyslexia ➡ Assessment & marking

## **Reasonable adjustments in coursework: A rationale**

University policy on the marking of written coursework of dyslexic students is that students should not have to declare their dyslexia on every piece of work and that all work is marked according to the same criteria. (See Quality Manual [Students with Disabilities, Exam arrangements](#)). This means that reasonable adjustments need to be possible at other stages in the coursework process.

### **Extensions**

Dyslexia usually has a direct impact on the time taken to read and compose written work. In addition, if dyslexic students wish to discuss their writing with an academic support tutor, they need to have a draft of the assignment ready at least a week before the deadline. At busy times, they need to have been organised enough to think well ahead in order to get an appointment with an academic support tutor at the time they need it. The option of extensions is therefore an important reasonable adjustment even though most students wish to avoid them and many will not need them.

Extensions should not be automatic: It is suggested that students should discuss their circumstances with tutors and follow departmental procedures.

Publishing assignments early in the semester is important, but does not make requests for extensions unnecessary. Students may be juggling several deadlines that all fall around the same time, sometimes from different disciplines, and are therefore still required to produce written work within a short time frame. Good time-management is crucial and this can be an area of difficulty for some dyslexic students.

### **Adjustments before and after submission**

If there is no differential marking, it needs to be demonstrated that reasonable adjustments have been made before submission while students are working on assignments and afterwards via feedback. Before submission, this might be willingness to advise on the prioritising of reading, or on the plan or relevant content of an essay. Afterwards, there might be an opportunity to discuss written feedback and to give pointers for future improvement. For example, comments on problems with structure might be followed up. If this is available for all students, it is not a reasonable adjustment, but an inclusive approach that benefits dyslexic students.

### **Alternatives to written assessment**

Many dyslexic students, with the help of technology and the opportunity to learn and develop strategies, manage the requirements of written assessments. Sometimes the end product may not appear different from the work of any other student. However, the process will nearly always have taken longer and required more effort.

For a small number of students writing will be such a barrier that they cannot demonstrate ability in this way and creativity will be inhibited. An alternative form of assessment should then be considered.

Further reading:

ADSHE (Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education): 'Guidance for Good Practice: Institutional Marking Practices for Dyslexic Students' pp4 -5.

<http://www.adshe.org.uk/>

(accessed 17 October 2007)

(extract available from this website as 'Alternative assessment')