



Website context: Thinking about Dyslexia → Module design

The legal framework

The Law states that an institution should not treat a disabled person (which in legal terms includes a dyslexic person) 'less favourably' than others for a reason that relates to their disability without justification. If a student is at a 'substantial disadvantage' the University must make 'reasonable adjustments'.

There is also a responsibility to make 'anticipatory adjustments'. This means that institutions have a responsibility to plan ahead for the needs of dyslexic students rather than respond to the individual needs of existing students. In practice, this means having clearly worked out policies and procedures rather than responding on an ad hoc basis.

The legislation is clear also about the necessity to maintain academic standards. There is no expectation that lack of knowledge should not be penalised, nor learning objectives adjusted. In some subject areas (for example Modern Languages), competence in spelling, grammar and written composition may need to be demonstrated by dyslexic students as part of the assessment criteria. Subject areas such as law, medicine, education, engineering are also bound by the standards of their professional bodies, though these bodies are now subject to the legislation.

For more detail on the legislation see:

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/student-support/disability/SENDA.doc>
in particular information on DDA 2005.

For discussion of the implications of the 'Positive Duties' set out in the DDA 2005, see the Introduction to the Report of the SPACE project Inclusive Assessment in Higher Education: A Resource for Change: Staff-Student Partnership for Assessment Change and Evaluation (SPACE)

<http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/pages/view.asp?page=10494>

The report discusses the possible contradictions between inclusiveness and widening participation and the concept of adjustments as treating a particular group differently.