Dyslexia Fact Sheet

What is Dyslexia?

- Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling and/or writing, such difficulties being unexplained in relation to an individual's other abilities and educational experiences.
- Dyslexia can be described as the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically characterised by inefficient information processing, including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills.
- Difficulties in organisation, sequencing and motor skills may also be present.

How is a student's college experience impacted by Dyslexia?

Difficulty	Possible impact in College
Accessibility of teaching and learning material & environment	- Difficulties **seeing print, presentation slides and whiteboards**. - Difficulty **keeping up with lectures** that use large quantities of written/visual content. - Difficulty, or inability, with **notetaking during classes/lectures**. **Completing academic tasks** may take significantly longer, particularly if students need to **spend extra time converting materials into accessible formats.** - Difficulties **expressing knowledge in written form**. Often students with dyslexia have difficulties with **spelling and grammar** and find it challenging to impose order on their ideas. - Reduced **reading pace** and **reading comprehension skills** affecting performance in class and exams **Poor short-term memory** resulting in difficulty retaining information

Managing Assistive Technology (AT)	• Although AT has significantly enhanced the participation of students with Dyslexia, **learning to use new AT can initially take extra time**. • Types of AT which students may use include **spelling/grammar software, screen reading software, voice recognition software, recording devices, etc.** • Using AT **may slow the student's speed of work** such as not being able to read for long periods of time, making it more difficult to complete assignments and perform under the time pressures of exams.
Other difficulties	• Students who have been **recently diagnosed may experience emotional difficulties** and/or difficulties with practical tasks. Furthermore this can affect a student's **self-esteem** and **confidence**. • Students entering college straight from secondary school may not be used to the classroom or exam supports as these may differ from those previously experienced throughout their second-level education. Those recently diagnosed may not have experienced any supports previously. • Students with Dyslexia often experience difficulty with **organisation** which can lead to ineffective **time or work load management** (meeting deadlines etc.).

How can you support a student with Dyslexia?

1. **Student-Centred Approach:**
   • If you are in doubt about how to support a student at any time, **ask the student** – they are the experts of their own needs!
   • Create a space for students to **feel comfortable approaching you with any issues** (e.g. provide contact and student office hour details etc.).
   • Implement any classroom and exam accommodations which were determined at the **student's Needs Assessment.**

2. **Teaching and Learning:**
    - **Design course material so that they can be produced in an accessible format** on request. Following the [Guidelines for Accessible Documents](#), which provides guidelines for Word, PDF, websites and PowerPoint slides.
        - **Microsoft Word files can be easily manipulated** by the student into a format that suits them.
    - Be guided by [Universal Design principles](#) when designing coursework.
    - **Provide lecture notes, in a suitable format, in advance of the class.** Providing notes/slides before lectures helps students to focus and engage in class rather than becoming stressed and overwhelmed with note-taking.
    - Read PowerPoint **slides aloud** and **describe any diagrams or visual aids**.
    - **Provide reading lists in advance and assistance with prioritising readings** for students who require an alternative format such as audio. The production of texts in alternative formats is time consuming and can be costly. Producing a prioritised, annotated reading list can help students to focus on the most important readings. This is particularly important as students' reading speeds can be greatly reduced.
    - **Provide a clear schedule of assessment** for the module. Providing a detailed guide to how the course is assessed will help students to understand what is expected of them. **Providing sample answers or templates** for assignments is also extremely helpful.
    - **Permit the student to use Assistive Technology** in the classroom.
    - Consider the student's needs when **planning field trips, placement or other activities**.
    - Consider the **exam needs of the student for in-class or mid-semester exams** (e.g. does the student require a computer/assistive technology/reader/scribe?).
    - Support the student if they have **difficulties meeting deadlines.**

3. **Communication:**
   - **E**nsure all material presenting on slides/whiteboard is **communicated verbally**. Less emphasis on written content and more on verbal communication can lessen the pressure on a student to scan written content on slides in a short time frame. Furthermore, this will allow students to allocate more focus on understanding the content of the lecture.
   - Provide a **brief orientation** at the start of each module, regardless of year of study, to show students how to access material on Blackboard, how to use relevant library databases and how to find other useful resources.
   - **Giving feedback** on draft assignments can help students to improve their writing skills. Guidance on proofreading, editing and structure can be particularly useful.

To find out more, please visit:

- https://www.ahead.ie/inclusiveteaching
- www.dyslexia.ie