

### **What is a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)?**

The term Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) can be used as an umbrella term for a range of difficulties. The most common, which are covered in this leaflet include:

- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Dyscalculia
- Dysgraphia
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

### **What is Dyslexia?**

Dyslexia is thought to affect approximately 10 % of the population.

The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) gives the following definition of dyslexia:

“Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that mainly affects reading and spelling. Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties in processing sounds and by weakness in short term memory; its effects may be seen in spoken language as well as written language. Many dyslexic people learn to read, but have difficulties with spelling, writing, memory and organisation.”

Taken from:

<http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/Pages/FAQs/>

People with dyslexia often experience the following difficulties:

- Errors with reading, spelling and writing, confusion or omission of sounds and muddled words.
- Poor short term memory (leading to difficulties in carrying out instructions or copying and remembering what has been said).
- Difficulties with organising work.
- Difficulties with comprehension despite being able to read fluently.
- Difficulties with retrieving words when speaking and mispronunciations caused by difficulties in discriminating sounds and motor problems.

### **What is Dyspraxia?**

The Dyspraxia Foundation gives the following definition of dyspraxia;

“Developmental dyspraxia is an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement. It is associated with problems of perception, language and thought. The term dyspraxia comes from the word praxis which means doing, acting. It includes what to do and how to do it.

The condition is thought to affect up to eight percent of the population in varying degrees.

Dyspraxia sometimes runs in families. There may be an overlap with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia and Aspergers Syndrome.

People with impaired co-ordination and / or perception often find routine tasks such as driving, household chores, cooking and grooming difficult.”

Taken from:

[http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/services/dys\\_dyspraxia.php](http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/services/dys_dyspraxia.php)

People with dyspraxia often experience a combination of the following difficulties:

- Gross motor co-ordination skills (eg: poor balance, poor hand-eye co-ordination, tendency to fall, trip or bump into things.)
- Fine motor co-ordination skills (e.g.: lack of manual dexterity, difficulty with typing and handwriting, difficulty with tying shoe laces, fastening clothes.)
- Speech and language (e.g: difficulty with organising the content and sequence of language)
- Emotion and behaviour (e.g.: difficult to listen in large groups and find team work challenging, some experience stress and/or depression)

### **What is Dyscalculia?**

Dyscalculia is thought to affect somewhere between 3% and 6% of the population.

The British Dyslexia Association gives the following definition of dyscalculia:

“A condition that affects the ability to acquire arithmetical skills. Dyscalculia learners may have difficulty understanding simple number concepts, lack an intuitive grasp of numbers and have problems learning number facts and procedures. Even if they produce the correct answer or use the correct method, they may do so mechanically without confidence.”

Taken from:

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/schools-colleges-and-universities/dyscalculia.html>

People with dyscalculia often experience a combination of the following difficulties:

- Difficulties with mathematical skills such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and mental arithmetic.
- Difficulties with abstract concepts of time, direction, sequences of events and memory games. (e.g: may find it difficult to remember timetable, appointments)
- Difficulties with understanding spatial orientation and direction (e.g.: difficulties in reading maps)
- Difficulties with handling money (e.g.: working out change for cash transactions, long term financial planning and budgeting)

### **What is Dysgraphia?**

The International Dyslexia Association gives the following definition of dysgraphia; “Dysgraphia is a specific learning disability that affects how easily people acquire written language and how well they use written language to express their thoughts. Dysgraphia is the condition of impaired letter writing by hand, that is, disabled handwriting and sometimes spelling. Impaired handwriting can interfere with learning to spell words in writing. Occasionally, but not very often, people have just spelling problems and not handwriting or reading problems. People with impaired handwriting may also have attention-deficit disorder (ADHD). Dysgraphia may occur alone or with dyslexia (impaired reading disability) or with oral and written language learning disability.”

Taken from:

[http://www.interdys.org/ewebeditpro5/upload/Understanding\\_Dysgraphia\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_12-01-08.pdf](http://www.interdys.org/ewebeditpro5/upload/Understanding_Dysgraphia_Fact_Sheet_12-01-08.pdf)

People with dysgraphia often experience a combination of the following difficulties:

- Difficulty with writing (work maybe illegible and inaccurately spelt)
- Unfinished letters and irregular letter size shape
- A mixture of upper and lower case letters. (This is because there is lack of coordination and fine motor skills)

### **What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?**

ADHD is a disorder that affects these parts of the brain which control attention and concentration. A person can be hyperactive and may also suffer from mood swings and / or clumsiness. About two thirds of children diagnosed with ADHD have persistent problems that affect them as adults. The Attention Deficit Disorder Information Services gives the following definition of ADHD: "ADHD, hyperactivity and related problems are very common, affecting the lives of many children and adults. The disorder is recognised as one of the most important cause of problems that some children have with their schoolwork and relationships with friends and family. These problems often have long-term consequences. "

Taken from:

<http://www.addiss.co.uk/allabout.htm>

People with ADHD often experience a combination of the following difficulties:

- Short attention span and poor concentration
- Being disorganised, fidgeting, excessive levels of activity
- Impulsive behaviour.
- Poor short term memory (leading to difficulties in carrying out instructions or copying and remembering what has been said or read)

### **I think I might have a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD). What should I do next?**

If you think you might have any of the Specific Learning Difficulties listed in this leaflet, you will need to be assessed by an Educational Psychologist to confirm a diagnosis of a SpLD. The Disability Team can help you to arrange a diagnostic assessment. For students studying in Higher Education, the report must follow the SpLD Working Group 2005 DfES guidelines.

### **Funding a Diagnostic Assessment**

A diagnostic assessment by an Educational Psychologist costs approximately £375. Current students may be able to apply for funding for help towards the cost of an assessment, if they cannot cover the cost themselves. If you choose to pay for the assessment yourself, please contact Disability Support or a list of Educational psychologists. Alternatively, the following funding may be available for current students studying Higher Education courses at University of West London:

#### **Home Students (Full time and Part time)**

Home students (undergraduate and postgraduate) may be eligible to apply to the Access to Learning Fund (ALF) for help towards the cost of an assessment.

Please contact Disability Support to arrange an appointment with a Disability Adviser to discuss their circumstances.

#### **International and EU Students (Full time and Part time)**

International and EU Students may be eligible to apply to the University's Disability Contingency Fund (DCF) to help cover the cost of an assessment.

International and EU students are advised to make an appointment with a Disability Adviser to discuss their circumstances.

#### **What Happens after I have applied for funding?**

Your application will be assessed by either the ALF panel or DCF Panel, and you will be informed in writing as to whether or not your application for funding has been successful. If your application is successful, a list of Educational Psychologists will be included with this letter. It is your responsibility to book an appointment to see the Educational Psychologist.

When you book your appointment with the Educational psychologist you will have to inform them how you are funding the assessment. They will need to know how much funding you have from ALF or DCF.

If your application for funding is not successful, you may choose to appeal the decision. Please contact Disability Support for more information about this.

***All students should be aware that it may be 3-4 weeks between applying for funding and attending an appointment with an Educational Psychologist.***

**After the assessment**

Your Educational Psychologist will send you a report confirming your diagnosis. This may take up to four weeks. When you receive your report, you are advised to provide a copy to Disability Support and make an appointment to see a Disability Adviser. Your Disability Adviser will be able to discuss with you any reasonable adjustments you may require, and assist you in applying for further funding to cover the cost of any essential support provision.

**How can I contact Disability Support?**

You may contact us between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday in the following ways:

- By telephone, **0208 231 2739**
- By email, [disability.support@uwl.ac.uk](mailto:disability.support@uwl.ac.uk)
- By letter, address to **Disability Support, One Stop Shop, University of West London, St. Mary's Road, Ealing, London, W5 5RF**
- In person, at **One Stop Shop, St Mary's Road, Ealing Campus**