

Students with Disabilities Policy

Policy updated September 2021.

Introduction

Tobias School of Art & Therapy welcomes applications from students with disabilities. We are committed to a policy which allows, as far as possible, for equality of opportunity and access to higher and further education. Central to this policy is the following statement, which is contained within our *Equal Opportunity and anti-discriminatory Policies* "We are fully committed to a policy of challenging all prejudice and discrimination, for example: age, gender, disability, language, racial, ethnic or national origin, belief, sexual orientation, class and employment status."

The Tobias' Disability Policy aims to outline our provision for students with disabilities and/or specific learning difficulties. Our Student Welfare officer Helena O'Sullivan is the coordinator regarding the teaching provision.

You will see from reading our literature, that the campus is made up of two buildings, built in the 1970s, and have steps and other physically limiting factors but we have a ramp for wheelchair access and a disabled bathroom in the main school block. Access to some areas of the School is restricted for those who have mobility difficulties although, as far as reasonable, we work with our students to ensure they are able to fully participate in their course. We strongly recommend that you take the opportunity to visit the campus so that you can assess the arrangements for yourself and discuss the issues with members of staff.

With the active involvement of both staff and students, provision is constantly being developed and improved, to add to the learning experience of all our students. It is therefore important that we are aware of your needs so that, where possible, we can work with you to help support you. If you have any queries as a result of reading this, please do not hesitate to contact her on 01342 313655 or e-mail info@tobiasart.org.

Financial Assistance

UK Students:

It may be possible for students to apply for a *Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA)*. Postgraduate students from the UK (full-time or part-time) are eligible to apply to Local Authorities (LAs) for a DSA if they have been assessed as having a disability, such as dyslexia. The allowances are intended to cover extra costs or expenses that may arise whilst studying, which are a direct result of the disability.

International Students:

International students, including EU students who do not qualify as UK students for statutory student support purposes, are not eligible for a DSA.

The rules on eligibility on these and other disability allowances are under constant review and so we recommend students also conduct research into possible funding/support for their particular need.

We would welcome comments that you have about this statement, the application procedure to the School and any other aspect of our provision.

1 Dyslexia and specific learning difficulties

Support for students with dyslexia and/or specific learning difficulties is available via Helena O'Sullivan, our Student Welfare Officer.

1.1 Policy Statement

1.1.1 The School acknowledges that the cluster of differences linked to processing language (both written and spoken) reading, memory and organisation associated with the terms dyslexia, dyspraxia and other related specific learning difficulties is prevalent within art and design education. Within this document the term 'dyslexia' is used in a comprehensive way to refer to all of the above.

1.1.2 The School is committed to ensuring that students with dyslexia are supported on the basis of their relevant needs, merits and abilities and are given equal opportunities within the School, enabling them to perform to their full potential.

1.2 Diagnosis

1.2.1 Although some students will have severe difficulties, others will have learnt strategies to manage these by the time they register at the School. This does not mean, however, that their underlying difficulty has disappeared. Some students will not have been diagnosed as dyslexic before their arrival at the School. For some the diagnosis of a specific learning difficulty may come as a relief, an explanation for previous poor performance. For others a diagnosis is less welcome, and may initially lower confidence. All personal information about individual students is regarded as confidential and the student's permission must be obtained before information about their dyslexia is communicated to anyone else, including members of staff responsible for teaching them or providing support. The benefits of disclosing their dyslexia to the necessary members of staff will be explained to students prior to inviting them to sign a consent form.

1.2.2 Some people with dyslexia will experience difficulties not exclusively associated with a disparity between ability in speaking and in reading and writing. These difficulties might include perceptual problems such as spatial orientation, sequencing and other organisational skills, hand-eye control (legibility of writing) and poor short-term memory. Even if the student has learnt to be relatively fluent in some skills, they may still have difficulty in other areas and, in stressful situations, may become less skilled than usual. The range of effects of these conditions means that dyslexic students at the School have difficulty with work in the studio and not solely with academic studies.

1.2.3 Students diagnosed with dyslexia will need to provide a copy of the assessment report to Helena O'Sullivan, Student Welfare Officer, who will make a decision about whether the report is appropriate. In the case of the **students with specific learning difficulties** this will take the form of a full diagnostic educational assessment report (post 16 years of age) by either an Educational Psychologist or an appropriate Specialist Dyslexia Tutor. (Reports for GCSE or A level examination arrangements or screening assessment reports are not acceptable.) Helena O'Sullivan will organise an updated assessment for the student if necessary. The cost of this assessment to be borne by the Student.

1.2.4 Students who have not previously been assessed for specific learning difficulties, but feel that they may have difficulties in this area, should inform Helena O'Sullivan, who can arrange a formal assessment. There may be funding available to the student to help with the cost of this

assessment. If requested, the student will then be referred to an Educational Psychologist for a full assessment.

1.2.5 It is important to ascertain the student's **current** needs. Although a student may previously have received special learning/assessment/examination arrangements this does not provide sufficient grounds for making similar arrangements at FE/HE level. Any consideration of special arrangements at the School must consider the student's current capability, and the demands of the programme of study. However, provided it has considered any 'reasonable adjustments' that can be made to learning/assessment/examination arrangements to ensure that students with disabilities are not placed at a disadvantage, the School is not obliged to accept a standard of achievement that is lower than it would accept from a student without a disability.

1.3 Agreement

If there is clear recent evidence of dyslexia or other specific learning difficulty, a Dyslexia Services Agreement is completed and signed by student and tutor. This sets out the agreed special learning/assessment/examination arrangements which are most appropriate for the student, together with recommendations for other reasonable adjustments.

1.4 Teaching Strategies

Students with dyslexia should be able to rely on the positive attitudes and cooperation of School staff.

1.5 Reasonable Adjustments

All FE/HE colleges are obliged to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students, including students with specific learning difficulties, and not to treat a disabled person 'less favourably' because of his/her disability without 'justification.' This could include:

- setting up one to one learning support tuition
- access to specialist IT support
- recommendations to academic staff around different exam and assessment arrangements

In order to access this support, students will need a full, up-to-date report that confirms specific learning difficulties / dyslexia. This would be carried out by a practising psychologist or a qualified teacher (OCR Diploma SpLD). Specialist teachers and IT equipment may need to be funded by Social Services or other agencies.

Learning/Assessment/examination recommendations

Usually:

25% extra time

Flagging of scripts

Sometimes:

Papers provided in alternative formats – e.g. enlarged font or coloured paper

Exceptionally:

A reader or amanuensis

A viva or other alternative assessment format in place of written assessment.

Guidelines for marking the work of students with dyslexia/dyspraxia

When marking dyslexic candidates' scripts, examiners are asked to focus on the clarity of the argument, rather than on details of expression. Try to separate marking of transcription errors and marking of content. However, while sympathetic treatment of assessed work submitted by dyslexic students implies the disregarding of errors of spelling and grammar, the communication

itself must be effective. If academic standards are to be safeguarded, sympathetic treatment cannot extend to written expression so poor that coherence and intelligibility are at issue. Errors in written expression may be due to these students having difficulty expressing themselves well under timed conditions.

Students with SpLD should not be penalised unduly for errors that have nothing to do with the understanding of the subject, so simple errors of spelling/punctuation should be discounted for example:

- omitted words or punctuation;
- excessive or misplaced punctuation;
- repeated information or phrases – this would not be detected by a spellchecker or by a dyslexic student proofreading their own draft.
- unsophisticated language structures – in order to avoid grammatical errors,
- many dyslexics adopt simplified language structures, which do not necessarily denote unsophisticated thinking;
- simplified vocabulary – in order to avoid spelling errors, many dyslexic students adopt a simplified vocabulary when writing;
- difficulties with sequencing or word-finding may produce a stilted style of writing which may not match the student's oral performance in seminars etc.
- homophone substitutions (e.g. there/their, effect/affect, course/coarse)
- phonetic equivalents (e.g. fernetec for phonetic, homerfone for homophone)
- incorrect word substitutions, (distance for disturbance)
- American spelling (e.g. colorful, fueling)

1.6 Sources of Information

Websites

The Association of Dyslexia Specialists in HE

<http://adshe.org.uk>

Best resources for achievement and intervention concerning neurodiversity in HE

www.brainhe.com

British Dyslexia Association

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/

Dyslexia Action

www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/

The Dyspraxia Foundation

www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/

Books

Geraldine Price and Janet Skinner, Support for Learning Differences in Higher Education, Trentham 2007

Open University Course Team Studying with Dyslexia, 2008

Jeanne Godfrey, Reading and Making Notes (Pocket Study Skills), 2014

Monica Gribben, The Study Skills Toolkit for Students with Dyslexia, Sage Study Skills Series, 2012

Barbara Pavey, Dyslexia-Friendly Further and Higher Education Paperback

Geraldine Price and Janet Skinner, Manual for Learning Differences in Higher Education: The Essential Practitioners' Manual Paperback, 2007

2 Mobility difficulties

2.1 For those with mobility difficulties, access is not comprehensive across the campus and for some cases limited, and therefore we strongly recommend you visit to enable you to assess if there are any adjustments which can reasonably be made in order for you to study here. If you have a query about access issues please contact Helena O'Sullivan.

2.2 Your mobility difficulties may be part of a fluctuating condition such as ME, you may have difficulty walking or you may be a permanent wheelchair user. Access to the site will be one of your main concerns and the degree to which you can access the campus. The School will, however, in consultation with you, make reasonable adjustments to facilitate your needs. If you accept a place on a programme of study, we will need to liaise with you in advance of your arrival at Tobias in order that we can timetable any adjustments so that they are carried out before you arrive. These may include using ground floor studios wherever possible, organise assistance to navigate steps or arrange the installation of ramps for wheelchair access.

3 Deaf and hard-of-hearing impairment

3.1 Where possible, and usually prior to the start of your course, you will be offered the opportunity for an advance meeting with Helena O’Sullivan, our Student Welfare Officer, who will be working with you. This meeting will allow you both to discuss your specific requirements in relation to the course and accommodation (if needed).

3.2 Helena O’Sullivan, Student Welfare officer, can help with:

- finding human support: note-takers and communicators.
- deaf awareness training for School staff
- examination provision
- advice on and help with audiological equipment
- on-going monitoring support

4 Other disabilities, including medical conditions

4.1 There are many other conditions that are also considered a disability. These include epilepsy, diabetes, asthma and conditions that affect health and stamina such as ME, sickle cell, HIV, haemophilia and cystic fibrosis. Many of these can be controlled by drugs and will usually not affect your ability to study. These conditions should be noted by your Doctor on your Medical Report, which is requested with the application forms. If any of the above medical issues have implications for your studies you may need more specialist assistance. This can be arranged and paid for through Social Services or other agencies, if you are eligible. Please come and talk to Helena O’Sullivan, our Student Welfare Officer.

4.2 Medical services

For those who need it, we recommend all students register with their local Doctor’s surgery and Dental Practice.