

Support for Dyslexic/SpLD students



A breakdown of students registered with the Disability Advisory Service in 2020/21



943

Mental health conditions

Including anxiety, depression, eating disorders, bipolar disorder and personality disorders



1221

Specific learning differences

Such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia. ADHD is also included in the number of supported students.



148

Physical impairments

Including wheelchair users and other physical impairments



662

Chronic Health Conditions and Other

For example; students with multiple conditions or Chronic Health Conditions such as diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome, Crohn's disease and arthritis.



117

Sensory impairments

Deaf students and those who are hard of hearing, and students who are visually impaired



178

Autistic Spectrum Disorders

Specific Learning Differences (SpLDs)

If you are doing your best with your studies and working really hard, but all your efforts are not producing the grades that you need or expect, you may be one of the 10% of people in the UK living with a Specific Learning Difference or Difficulties (SpLD) which includes dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia /DCD.

Specific Learning Difficulties affect the way information is learned and processed. They are neurological (rather than psychological), and occur independently of intelligence. They can have significant impact on education and learning and on the acquisition of literacy skills. As neurodiversity is the intrinsic cause of SpLDs, conditions vary from person to person and each has a unique profile.

SpLD traits can present in positive ways:

- Above average intelligence
- Exceptional creativity
- Unique problem-solving skills
- A strong sense of empathy and justice
- Good intuition

However, someone living with a SpLD may also experience:

- Poor focus and attention
- Poor handwriting
- Poor spelling and sentence construction
- Short-term and working memory difficulties
- Difficulties with reading, absorbing information and comprehending text.
- Difficulties in organising thoughts for writing
- Poor personal organisation and coordination skills
- Left/right confusion

The effects of SpLDs can be difficult to manage but with the right guidance, interventions, technologies and strategies, they need not limit potential, academic attainment or career aspirations.

Registering with DAS

You can register with DAS by completing our online registration form. We encourage you to register with us before you start your course. This will enable us to get you all set up for the start of term.

DAS is based on the ground floor of the Carrington Building and are open each weekday from 10.00am to 4.00pm.

Submitting your evidence

You will also need to submit evidence of your SpLD. This means that you will need to provide the university with a clear diagnosis of a learning difference.

We can only put your support in place once we have reviewed and accepted your evidence.

Your evidence should be a full diagnostic report carried out by a qualified and registered Specialist Teacher/Assessor or Psychologist. At school or college, you may have been assessed for access arrangements and given a JCQ Access Arrangement (Form 8). While this provides useful information, universities do not accept a Form 8 as sufficient evidence of your learning difference, as it does not contain formal diagnosis.

Diagnostic reports must be in English. All evidence written in another language must be translated by a qualified transcription service and formally authenticated as such.

If you have questions about the suitability of your evidence, please contact the DAS Office.

What if I don't have a SpLD Diagnosis?

We always recommend getting your diagnostic report before you go to university, as this will help to ensure that your support and adjustments are in place when you start your course.

If you do not have a formal diagnosis, completing an online screener might be a good place to start as it will highlight the likelihood of you living with a SpLD. If the screener indicates the likelihood of a SpLD, you may want to undertake a formal diagnostic assessment.

Diagnostic Assessments

Who can conduct a SpLD diagnostic assessment?

Universities require that assessors are either qualified Specialist Teacher Assessors or Educational Psychologists.

Specialist Teacher Assessors must have approved qualifications and hold a current practising certificate in assessing specific learning differences issued by their relevant professional association, for example, PATOSS (the Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties), Dyslexia Action or the British Dyslexia Association.

Educational Psychologists must be registered with the Health Care and Professions Council.

Dyslexia assessments are not free and can cost between £360 and £450.

What happens during an assessment?

Assessments are either held face-to-face or virtually and usually take about 3 hours to complete. During the assessment the Assessor will:

- Explore your relevant background history
- Determine your underlying abilities, literacy attainments and cognitive abilities using a range of appropriate psychometric tests
- Identify your strengths and determine the nature and extent of any learning differences and SpLD traits.

Some feedback will be given at the end of the assessment and you will be given the opportunity to ask any questions that you have.

What happens after an assessment?

The Assessor will review your results and carefully form a diagnostic conclusion about whether you are living with a SpLD and write an extensive report.



What is included in a diagnostic report?

If you are living with a SpLD, the Assessor will produce a comprehensive report which will provide you with:

- An accurate, evidence-based diagnosis
- Appropriate and relevant recommendations for your needs
- Suggestions for teaching interventions, additional support, reasonable adjustments and specialist equipment
- Possible follow-up referrals
- Appropriate next steps
- A list of suggested websites where you find out more information about your learning difference

If there is insufficient evidence and indicators to diagnose a SpLD, this is fully explained in your report.

The report may take up to 10 working days to return to you.

Once you have your report, you can ask for a meeting to discuss the findings of your report and discuss appropriate next steps.



Reasonable Adjustments

University Support and Reasonable Adjustments

In order to minimise any impact that a specific learning difference may have on a student, a range of reasonable adjustments can be made for examinations and assessments. However, these adjustments are made only when there is a clear disability-related reason and the course learning outcomes are not compromised.

If you are living with a diagnosed SpLD, reasonable adjustments may be applied to examinations and written work can be marked empathetically. You will need to provide your full diagnostic SpLD report to support your request.

Any requests for reasonable adjustments must be submitted by the second week of February. This is to ensure there is enough time for appropriate adjustments to be put in place.

Typical adjustments can include:

- Additional time (usually 25%) for examinations and in class tests
- Rest breaks or bathroom breaks
- Use of a computer
- Access to assistive technology, such as read aloud programmes (It is important to note that, in our experience, speech-to-text programmes such as Dragon can be unstable in examination settings)
- Examination scripts and course work can be marked empathetically to ensure that students are not penalised for errors with spelling and grammar (unless this is a specific learning outcome of the course)
- Provision of exam papers with enlarged fonts or on coloured paper, or coloured overlays.
- Students may be permitted to present to the tutor only rather than to the whole group.

At the University of Reading students are not usually given automatic extensions for coursework. These will need to be negotiated with your department on a case-by-case basis.

Teaching and Learning

The UoR has an inclusive practice in teaching and learning. A range of adjustments can be made to ensure that the university's teaching and learning is accessible to SpLD students.

Alongside the university-wide adjustments, such as having notes available on Blackboard prior to lectures, the following individual adjustments to support disabled students can also be recommended:

- We can inform tutors when students may need to move or stretch during lectures to alleviate discomfort and promote concentration.
- All students are permitted to make recordings of lectures (unless the content is confidential) and to listen back to them afterwards.
- If additional assistive technology is needed, such as an assistive listening device/radio aid system, we can advise lecturers of what they may need to do in order to facilitate this.
- In practical sessions, additional help can be requested if students struggle to follow demonstrations, or follow written instructions, or have difficulties with physically using any of the lab equipment.
- In language learning classes, students can have questions repeated in speaking and language assessments.



The Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

Can I Apply for the DSA?

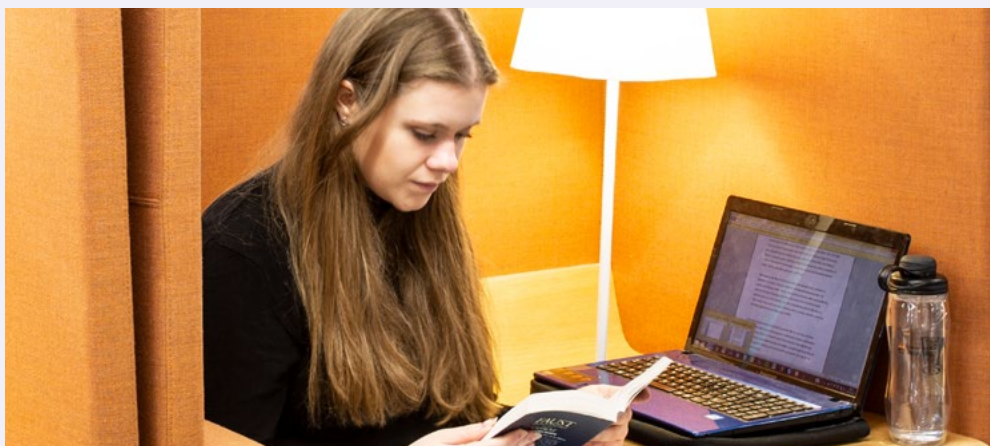
With a diagnosis of a SpLD, you can apply for the DSA. Your diagnostic report is used as evidence of a disability. The DSA process is quite lengthy and so do not wait until you arrive at university to apply for it.

If you are diagnosed with a SpLD while on your programme of study, DAS can help you with your DSA application, securing your exam recommendations and additional support.

International students are not eligible for the DSA, but DAS will be able to discuss further options with you and you are encouraged to contact your home government for information on any funding that may be available.

Applying for DSA is one of the key steps in accessing additional support whilst at university.

If you want to know more about DSA and how it may benefit you, please ask a Disability Adviser or go to:
[gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa/further-information](https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa/further-information)



1. Apply for the DSA

You can do this through the DSA tab in your Student Finance Portal or through the DSA1 forms downloadable from for your student finance provider.

If you select the consent to share information boxes on the form, DAS can talk to Student Finance about your DSA application on your behalf. Complete the form and attach your evidence and return to your Funding Body. If you are already at UoR, a DAS Adviser can help you with your application, if you need it.

2. Arrange your Needs Assessment

About 10 days after you submit your application you will receive a notification from your funding authority asking you to arrange your Needs Assessment. The Needs Assessor will determine your support package whilst at university.

The DSA will identify a list of providers.

If you do not arrange a needs assessment, the process will stop.

3. Attend the Needs Assessment

You will discuss all your support needs with the Assessor. The Needs Assessor will write a report setting out your support requirements and how they will be best met.

4. Funding authority approves recommendations

The funding authority will review the recommendations, approve the request and release the funding for support.

They will notify you of this in your DSA2 Letter. We will also get a copy of this letter.

5. Ordering equipment

In some cases the needs assessment may recommend equipment for you. Your DSA2 Letter will tell you how to order your equipment. You will often have to contact the suppliers directly.

The funding authorities will pay the equipment suppliers.

If the DSA2 letter is not acted on, the process will stop.

6. Arranging support at university

Providing you have given consent, a copy of your Needs Assessment will also be sent to DAS.

If you have been awarded Non-Medical Help (NMH) such as a Specialist Mentor or a Study Skills Tutor, speak to your Disability Adviser as they can help arrange that for you.

7. Progress Check

If at any stage you want to check the progress of your application you can call them directly or talk to your Disability Adviser.



Placements

The DAS works with academic departments and placement providers to consider reasonable adjustments to the type of work undertaken. It is important to check with your department about the types of adjustments that can be made if you are undertaking a vocational course.

For example, it may be possible to arrange adjustments to working hours for students to allow for shorter days, or different working patterns to allow a day off in the middle of the week for students with high levels of fatigue.

Recommendations may also be made to consider the impact that travel arrangements and travel time to and from placements may have on a student's wellbeing.

It might be possible to produce written reports in alternative formats and set up your assistive technology within the workplace. However, it is important to consider that due to the working constraints of the placement, these types of considerations might not be possible.

Always check with your school or department at the university.



Study Advice

The UoR Study Advice team works with students in all disciplines and at all levels of academic study—from undergraduate to PhD. They can help:

- Develop more effective practices for studying at university
- Have a clearer understanding of what tutors expect
- Make studying less stressful
- Achieve better marks

They offer bookable one-to-one advice sessions, a quick query service and a termly programme of study seminars and other events. The Study Advice webpages contains study guides and tutorials. These can be found at reading.ac.uk/library/study-advice/lib-study-advice.aspx

Library Support

Your Academic Liaison Librarian is your main point of contact with the Library – there is one for every subject offered at Reading. They can help you make effective use of the huge range of resources the Library has to offer. Your librarian can offer in depth one-to-one help in finding information, including identifying the most relevant e-resources for you to use. The Library has guidance online for Library users with disabilities and a guide to Inclusive technology to support your learning.

For any specific 1-1 advice and support for all accessibility requirements you can contact your Academic Liaison Librarian, go to the Welcome Desk or email library@reading.ac.uk

Academic and Social Mentoring

Academic mentoring

If students have organisational difficulties which require additional support, DAS can arrange academic mentoring. This can provide a number of one-to-one sessions to help with organisation and time management. The support is usually provided by a post-graduate student with experience of the specific academic discipline being studied.

Academic mentoring does not provide teaching support, or direct assistance with assessed work, but aims to help with disability-related barriers that students may face with their studies

Social mentoring

Where students are likely to face specific challenges managing the social demands of transitioning to university, DAS can arrange social mentors. The mentors are students who can provide help and advice about settling in. The social mentor role responds to the specific requirements of each student, from help with joining university clubs and finding their way around campus.

Assistive Technology

Apps Anywhere is a web-based tool which provides access to a range of software applications which can then be used by students using their own Windows device or from a university owned PC.

The applications available include:

- **Texthelp** Read&Write (text-to-speech)
- **MindManager** (mind mapping)
- **Audacity**, which can be used to make and edit recordings
- **EndNote** to help with referencing.

Useful Information

Finding an Assessor

You can find an assessor in your area through:

patoss-dyslexia.org/Tutor-Index-Landing

bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/assessments

Dyslexia Checklist

You can use this checklist to identify any SpLD traits:

bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexia/how-is-dyslexia-diagnosed/dyslexia-checklists

Dyspraxia Information

<https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/dyspraxia-adults>

 If you have any questions, please contact DAS for a chat.

Disability Advisory Service

Carrington Building, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 6UA

Tel: 0118 378 4202

Email: disability@reading.ac.uk

reading.ac.uk/essentials/support-and-wellbeing/disability