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Dyslexia Sticker Scheme: Staff Guidance

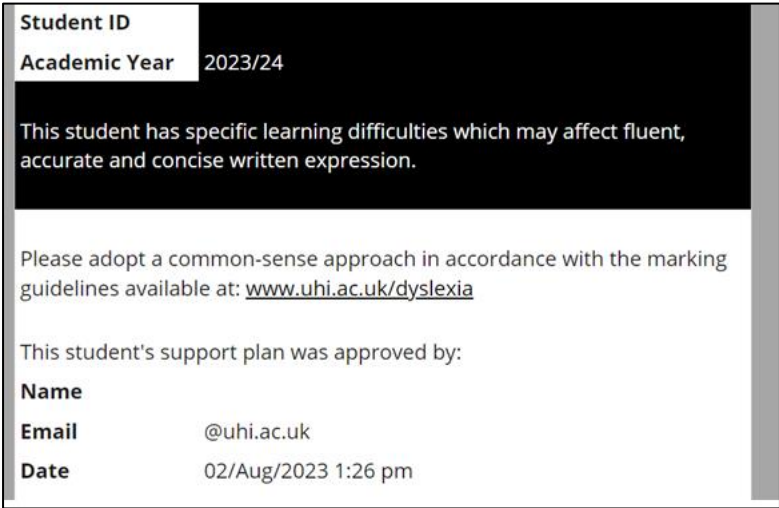
Background

These guidelines are intended to assist academic staff to assess the oral and written work of those students who have specific difficulties of a dyslexic nature.

Under current equalities legislation, UHI has an anticipatory duty to ensure that reasonable adjustments are in place to ensure that disabled students are not substantially disadvantaged relative to non-disabled peers.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's Further and Higher Education providers' guidance highlights UHI's duty to make reasonable adjustments to the process of demonstrating that a student can achieve a competence standard, rather than to the application of the competence standard itself. Thus, the pass mark attached to a particular exam would not be subject to the duty to make reasonable adjustments. However, it might be reasonable for a student to be given additional time in which to complete the exam.

Dyslexia stickers (see Fig. 1, below) can be provided to students formally diagnosed as having dyslexia-related difficulties which affect their writing skills to an extent that they are considered unlikely to be able to fully demonstrate their academic ability in written assessments. It is anticipated that the promotion of assistive technologies and study skills tuition will lead to most students being less reliant upon dyslexia stickers, as they progress towards independence.



The image shows a screenshot of a dyslexia sticker. It is a rectangular box with a white background and a thin black border. At the top left, there are two fields: 'Student ID' and 'Academic Year 2023/24'. Below these is a black box containing white text: 'This student has specific learning difficulties which may affect fluent, accurate and concise written expression.' Underneath the black box, there is a line of text: 'Please adopt a common-sense approach in accordance with the marking guidelines available at: www.uhi.ac.uk/dyslexia'. Below that, it says 'This student's support plan was approved by:'. At the bottom, there are three fields: 'Name', 'Email @uhi.ac.uk', and 'Date 02/Aug/2023 1:26 pm'.

Figure 1: An anonymised dyslexia sticker

Difficulties faced by dyslexic students

Dyslexic students may face a range of difficulties both in written and oral expression. Some of the most common include:

Written Work

- Untidy and/or immature handwriting.
- Inability to proof-read effectively.
- Problems with sequencing or word retrieval, which may produce a stilted style of writing.
- Poor spelling or simplified vocabulary.
- Faulty knowledge of grammar and punctuation, or unsophisticated language, which some students may use in order to avoid making grammatical errors.
- In word-processed work, visually similar words may be confused e.g. form/from, peruse/pursue, happen/perhaps, or homophones may be confused e.g. brake/break.

Oral Work

- Reading aloud can be very stressful. Dyslexic students will often 'trip over' multi-syllabic words, and this can be very embarrassing for the student.
- Oral presentations may put a strain on short-term memory, which is often impaired in people with dyslexia.
- Word retrieval problems are common.
- Organisational and sequencing problems may also impede performance.

What to do when you receive an assessment with a dyslexia sticker attached

The maintenance of academic standards is enshrined in law. Any student must demonstrate ultimately that he/she can meet the required learning outcomes of their course. If a dyslexic student cannot fulfil the academic standards prescribed by course requirements despite reasonable adjustments, he/she will be unable to complete their course successfully.

The dyslexia sticker is one form of additional support arrangement which a student may be entitled to. For a student to have access to multiple support arrangements simultaneously would be to place them at a significant advantage over their peers. Additional time is, however, one of the commonest adjustments for dyslexic students. For example, additional exam time may allow a student to utilise the full potential of assistive technologies and manage dyslexic attributes magnified under timed conditions.

Not every student with a formal diagnosis of dyslexia will want or require the use of a dyslexia sticker. A dyslexia sticker will only be used if the student and member of support services staff both deem this the most effective means of support available, after comprehensive discussion and assessment of student needs. It is highly unlikely that a student will attach a sticker to every assessment submitted.

When you receive an assessment from a student whom you know uses a dyslexia sticker, you should 'keep an eye out' for a sticker. A student can submit a dyslexia sticker with an assessment in one of three ways:

1. By pasting the data from their HTM sticker into the front page of their assessment (e.g. when making a single electronic submission via Turnitin). This option is recommended for all submissions, to ensure the dyslexia sticker is clearly visible to academic staff.
2. By providing a paper copy of their dyslexia sticker with an assessment submitted in hard copy.
3. By providing their sticker as a separate email attachment.

As an alternative to printing off the dyslexia sticker itself academic staff can, if they wish, insert text onto the front page of assessments submitted electronically, under the sticker system. Staff can view further details on [SharePoint](#).

Dyslexia stickers are administered via UHI Records. A student can only use a dyslexia sticker if this has been approved by student services staff at their Home Academic Partner, and indicated in the student's record. Before the student can use a dyslexia sticker, they must agree to each of their lecturers being informed of their dyslexia support needs. If you are in any doubt about a student's entitlement to use the system, you can contact student support services at your Academic Partner. Alternatively, you can contact the member of staff who approved the student's support plan, using the email address on the sticker.

Marking

The student's written work is likely to be 'flagged' with a dyslexia sticker. What does this mean in terms of marking?

Written work

- Try to focus on meaning rather than structure.
- Focus on the aims of the assessment and give credit for the student's effort to demonstrate their achievement of these aims.
- Disregard spelling, grammar and punctuation so long as the meaning is clear, unless errors of this kind are to be directly assessed.
- Make it clear to the student exactly what percentage of marks may be lost due to spelling errors, if there is a requirement for these to be directly assessed.
- Remember that even if the student is using a computer in exams, the availability of spellchecking/grammar checking is unlikely to ensure that the work will be completely accurate, especially if the student has proof-reading difficulties.
- In word-processed work, visually similar words may be confused and/or inappropriate or misspelled words may appear. It is important to understand the reasons for this, to avoid penalising the student:
 - The spellchecker cannot always recognise the incorrectly spelled word and so offers a variety of incorrect options. The student then selects the option that looks closest to the word they wanted, as they do not realise that they are not being offered the correct word.
 - The student realises that the word they want is not being offered by the spellchecker so they have no choice but to keep the incorrect word. For example, the word 'Tyesis' could appear in a word-processed document as the spellchecker cannot determine what is meant so doesn't offer the desired word – 'Phthisis'. Or suppose the only offering for 'Catrosphy' is 'Atrophy'. The student may realise that 'Atrophy' is too short, and therefore incorrect. However, the student has to select 'Catrosphy', when they actually mean 'Catastrophe', because the correct option is not available.
- When writing comments on the student's work, try to be explicit. If your handwriting is difficult to read, provide word-processed comments instead.
- If you mark errors of language, try not to over-emphasise repeated errors.
 - Some students may find that error analysis helps them identify areas for improvement in their work. In this case, the following codes could be used, having ensured that the student has a copy.

Suggested Code for Error Analysis	Error Identified
Sp	Spelling
G	Grammar
SS	Sentence Structure
P	Punctuation
V	Vocabulary
O	Word Omission
R	Repetition
T	Tense

Error analysis must be handled with care. It is often more helpful, and less confusing and frustrating for the student, to demonstrate how something should be written rather than simply highlighting the error. Try to write comments in full wherever possible.

Above all, ask the student what works best for them.

Oral work

- As a general rule, a common-sense approach also applies to the assessment of oral work:
- Wherever possible, do not ask a student with dyslexia to read aloud in tutorials or seminars, particularly if they have not had the opportunity to rehearse the material to be read out.
- Encourage the student to use PowerPoint to help organise any formal presentations.
- Focus on the content rather than the standard of oral presentation.

Acknowledgement

These guidelines are adapted from:

Hill, S and Brown, L. (2009) *Guidelines for Marking Dyslexic Students' Work*, August, Disability Services, Dundee: University of Dundee

Further information

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's [guidance for further and higher education providers](#) is useful.

For further information on the use of these guidelines internally, staff can contact the UHI's Disability Support Coordinator, [Mark Ross](#).

UHI Dyslexia Champions

UHI's student support team is keen to identify a named member of academic staff within each Subject Network, whose experience of assessing written and oral work using the approach advocated by the sticker scheme would enable them to advise markers on an ad hoc basis as specific academic queries arise.

Please contact Mark Ross if you are interested in volunteering for, or finding out more about, this role or would be willing to share your marking practices as good practice with colleagues across the partnership.

Dyslexia sticker scheme – staff FAQs

Background

Question 1 Should markers ignore weaknesses in the student's English?

Answer In subjects where competence with spelling, grammar, etc. is a core requirement of the course, any student will lose marks for errors of this kind. In this case, it should be made clear to all students exactly how many marks will be lost for errors of this kind.

Regardless of how many reasonable adjustments are made, the student must ultimately be able to demonstrate his/her ability to achieve the learning outcomes of their course of study. If a dyslexic student cannot fulfil the academic standards prescribed by course requirements despite reasonable adjustments, he/she will be unable to complete the course successfully.

The dyslexia sticker scheme is one support option which a student with a formal diagnosis may wish to use.

Question 2 Is guidance available for academic staff on the practical and technical aspects of marking a script with a dyslexia sticker attached? Are there any worked examples?

Answer In time, we aim to provide guidance based upon the experiences of UHI academic staff who have assessed students' work under the sticker system. In the meantime, please contact Mark Ross to arrange a time to discuss the scheme with support staff and/or academic staff in your Academic Partner.

Question 3 Have students been notified of all the details they need or should academic staff/Personal Academic Tutors raise this with students?

Answer It is certainly worth asking staff/PATs to raise this with students. Students can be signposted to our [dyslexia guidance web page](#) for further information and details of how the scheme works in practice.

Question 4 By disregarding dyslexic attributes, markers will be making allowances for errors of spelling, grammar, etc. Therefore, how can the work of all students be 'assessed in a way which neither penalises nor compensates for dyslexic attributes'?

Answer The statement quoted above is intended to ensure that no student has an advantage or disadvantage over their peers due to their use of a dyslexia sticker.

The dyslexia sticker scheme is a means of levelling the playing field for all students, rather than leniency towards dyslexic students. The scheme does

not involve making allowances – markers are expected to adjust their marking practices in response to a learning need flagged by a dyslexia sticker.

Question 5 **How is it anticipated that the promotion of assistive technologies and study skills tuition will lead to most students being less reliant upon dyslexia stickers, as they progress towards independence?**

Answer A student's support plan should be reviewed regularly, to ensure the dyslexia sticker scheme remains appropriate for them to use. While dyslexia support needs will persist, all students should be encouraged to develop study skills and coping strategies as their studies progress. Thus, a student may not wish to use so many dyslexia stickers as their studies progress. The decision to use a sticker lies with the individual student, if they are eligible to use the sticker system. The main benefit of a sticker is that it highlights the student's dyslexia support needs to the marker. Thus, the dyslexia sticker itself is useful at any stage of a student's academic career, if the student opts to use it.

Question 6 **Students may require multiple support strategies for different purposes. How might a student be placed at an advantage over their peers by having access to multiple support arrangements simultaneously?**

Answer In time, all students are expected to develop coping strategies and develop study skills. The dyslexia sticker is most likely to be used when the student works independently but this does not preclude the use of other support options. For example, additional time is one of the commonest forms of reasonable adjustment for dyslexic students. However, using a dyslexia sticker may, in some circumstances, obviate the need for a scribe, for example. Again, student needs are central here. Care should of course be taken to ensure that no student is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged by their entitlement to use dyslexia stickers and other support arrangements.

Question 7 **Is the dyslexia sticker to be recommended in certain circumstances as the only support arrangement?**

Answer Dyslexia stickers are most likely to be used in conjunction with other resources, such as additional time, assistive technologies, etc. However, the use of a PC and/or assistive technologies does not guarantee the accuracy of written work, particularly if the student concerned has proof-reading difficulties. The particulars of a student's support plan will be negotiated between the student and member of support services staff at their Home Academic Partner.

Dyslexia Stickers

Question 8 What happens when a student submits their assessment electronically?

Answer Students can download the appropriate sticker as an HTML file.

Students are encouraged to copy the data from their sticker and insert it into the front page of their assessment. This is recommended for all submissions, including those made electronically (e.g. via Turnitin) to ensure the dyslexia sticker is clearly visible to academic staff.

The downloaded HTML file can also be submitted in hard copy or as a separate email attachment along with the student's assessment itself if required. Paper stickers are not required.

Question 9 Is a black-and-white version of the PDF sticker available? The colour sticker uses a lot of toner.

Answer UHI dyslexia stickers have been designed with this in mind. Staff can view further details on [SharePoint](#).

Question 10 What safeguards exist to ensure the sticker is not misused?

Answer Dyslexia stickers can only be downloaded by or for an eligible student if their entitlement has been recorded within UHI Records. Access to dyslexia stickers can only be authorised by Home Academic partner student services staff as part of the PLSP process.

All details on the HTML sticker are secure and unchangeable. If you are in any doubt about a student's entitlement to use the system, you can contact student services staff at your Academic Partner. Alternatively, you can contact the member of staff who approved the student's PLSP using the email address on the sticker.

Question 11 Should an eligible student be issued with one sticker for every assessment they submit?

Answer Eligible students should be encouraged to download the appropriate sticker via UHI Records. Instructions on how to do this are available from our [dyslexia guidance student web page](#).

The specific quantity of stickers available to the individual student will depend very much on the student's course of study and how their support plan permits them to use the sticker scheme. The decision to use a sticker lies with the student themselves and will be negotiated between the student and member of support services staff at the Home Academic Partner.

It is highly unlikely that an eligible student will attach a sticker to every assessment submitted. For example, it is feasible that stickers will more commonly be attached to exam scripts than coursework assessments. The

fact that the student has been able to complete a coursework assessment in their own time means that some dyslexic attributes, particularly those magnified under timed conditions, may be less prevalent.

Monitoring

Question 11 How does UHI monitor the uptake of the dyslexia sticker scheme?

Answer Dyslexia stickers are administered via UHI Records. This enables UHI to record the overall number of students with an agreed entitlement to use the sticker scheme, and the overall number of stickers downloaded in a given year. Data is captured for statistical purposes only.

Do you have a question that is not addressed by this guidance? Staff can contact Mark Ross for advice.