

City College Norwich Curriculum Services

'Developing skills, improving quality, providing support'

Principles for working with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities	Page 2
ADHD	Page 3
Dyslexia and Dyspraxia	Page 4
Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	Page 5
Deaf and Hearing Impaired	Page 6
Mental Health Conditions	Page 7
Physical Disabilities and Mobility considerations	Page 8
Visual Impairment	Page 9

A Guide to Working with Students with a Learning Difficulty and/or Disability (LDD)

Principles for Working with Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Access for All also has some useful guidelines, which we would wish to include.

When working with learners with a disability or learning difficulty, it is very important not just to focus on the specific disability but to follow certain generic principles. These are:

- Treat people as individuals, not conditions
- Don't assume you know what the implications of a difficulty are; ask the learners themselves, and listen to what they say - they are the experts on the effects of the learning difficulty
- Develop a learning environment that encourages all participants to respond to the range of learning needs, aspirations and difficulties in the group in positive, frank, supportive and creative ways
- Learn to have moments when you sit back and observe what works for a particular learner and what does not - and make sure this includes observing his or her strengths as well as the things he or she finds difficult; there may be emotional issues that create a barrier to learning and which you will need to address before learning can take place
- Ensure that the range of resources is appropriate and adequate to meet the needs of all learners

Not all problems can be pre-empted! As they commonly emerge please highlight them to the Curriculum Services team, to access support for the student and academic staff if required.

A Guide to Working with Students with ADHD

ADHD is a neurological difference, typically characterised by attention problems and hyperactivity. To be diagnosed with ADHD, characteristics must be observed in two different settings for six months or more, and to a degree that is greater than other people of the same age.

There are three sub-types:

- Predominantly inattentive
- Predominantly hyperactive-impulsive
- Combined hyperactive-impulsive and inattentive

Here are the characteristics for each area as laid out in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV):

Inattention

- Often does not give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities
- Often has trouble keeping attention on tasks or play activities
- Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
- Often does not follow instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (not due to oppositional behaviour or failure to understand instructions)
- Often has trouble organising activities
- Often avoids, dislikes, or doesn't want to do things that take a lot of mental effort for a long period of time (such as schoolwork or homework)
- Often loses things needed for tasks and activities (e.g. toys, school assignments, pencils, books, or tools)
- Is often easily distracted
- Is often forgetful in daily activities

Hyperactivity

- Often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat
- Often gets up from seat when remaining in seat is expected
- Often runs about or climbs when and where it is not appropriate (adolescents or adults may feel very restless)
- Often has trouble playing or enjoying leisure activities quietly
- Is often "on the go" or often acts as if "driven by a motor"
- Often talks excessively.

Impulsivity

- Often blurts out answers before questions have been finished
- Often has trouble waiting one's turn
- Often interrupts or intrudes on others (eg butts into conversations or games)

A Guide to Working with Students with Dyslexia and Dyspraxia (SpLD)

Students with Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) may have a range of underlying difficulties not immediately associated with reading and writing might include perceptual problems such as:

- Spatial orientation (knowing left from right, working out how a map relates to a picture)
- Sequencing and other organisational skills (how to put an assignment together logically and organise study time effectively)
- Fine motor control and co-ordination (legibility of handwriting).

Specific Learning Difficulty is an umbrella term for a number of recognised conditions which cause difficulties for many students. Dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia are examples of Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD). Other conditions such as ADD, ADHD and Autistic Spectrum Disorders such as Asperger Syndrome are increasingly grouped under the same 'umbrella'

It is not always appropriate to 'label' a student with one of these terms, as often their profile of difficulties may include several within the SpLD continuum

Recommendations for Best Practice:

- The curriculum should be flexible to allow and measure achievement in a variety of ways
- The guidance team should advise students with SpLD to ensure that they choose courses where the method of assessment will give them the best available opportunity to demonstrate their individual skills and knowledge
- There should be close liaison with subject tutors so that they can identify students' progress against goals and give support and encouragement when marking and in class
- Students' achievement should be measured against an initial assessment to show personal development

Ten useful multi-sensory strategies for working with students with Specific Learning Difficulties

- Use no smaller than a 12 point font (Arial or similar Sans Serif recommended) and enlarge photocopies or articles that are to be read by students
- Students often benefit from pre-reading materials to allow them to gain an 'overview' of any topic to be covered in a lecture
- Consider printing on buff or pale green paper
- Consider trying a colour filter over OHTs (ask students for preference)
- Consider using coloured board markers (anything but black)
- Allow students enough time to copy board notes, or provide photocopies of session notes
- Consider presenting session notes in bullet form, or as mind maps
- Allow students to tape lectures
- Provide a glossary of useful, course-related vocabulary

A Guide to Working with Students with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD)

Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD/EBDs) may have difficulty:

- Forming friendships
- Keeping on task
- Taking part in group activities and discussion
- Conforming to classroom rules and routines
- Sticking to boundaries

Other possible manifestations of emotional and behavioural difficulties include:

- Extreme withdrawal from social involvement, leading to social isolation within the learning environment, and associated consequences
- Pre-occupation with concerns to the extent that this interferes with the learning process
- Involvement in bullying, either as victim and/or perpetrator
- Engagement in behaviours that may be seen as excessively seeking to attract the positive or negative attention of others
- Becoming tearful or angry for no apparent reason
- Aggressive and disruptive behaviour
- Unauthorised student talk
- Hindrance of other pupils from working
- Behaviour that directly challenges the authority of the class leader
- Extreme inattentiveness
- Phobic and obsessive patterns of behaviour
- Underachievement in many areas of the curriculum
- Hyperactivity
- Problem sexual behaviour
- Damage to property

‘Emotional and behavioural difficulties’ is a way of describing a broad range of difficulties that may be experienced as of an emotional nature and that may or may not seem to involve behaviour that is experienced as problematic either by the individual or by others. These types of issues may affect the person’s study, relationships, or personal wellbeing.

EBD is best seen as a loose set of characteristics rather than a single condition with very particular manifestations. In the college setting these can interfere with the learning process and as such they present special challenges to teachers and other professionals in the college environment.

A Guide to Working with Students who are Deaf and Hearing Impaired (HI)

Deaf and Hearing Impaired students could range from British Sign Language users to those who have become deaf and use speech and lip-reading, - from profoundly Deaf students who do not use hearing aids, to those that have had a cochlear implant. For any condition there is a spectrum of need and different people will be affected in different ways.

Students who are Deaf/Hearing Impaired will have difficulty:

- Hearing the verbal input of the lecture
- Accessing information/instructions correctly
- To take notes while also listening to/watching other information
- Working in a room with background noise (for example the 'hum' of a computer, machinery)
- Working in a poorly lit room
- Participating in group discussions
- Acquiring subject specific vocabulary
- Difficulties with written English
- English metaphors, jokes, etc.
- Lip-reading
- Mixing with their peer group

Specialist Support Workers will:

- Will be the communication for student, lecturer, and peers, to enable the student to access their course
- Work in partnership with lecturing staff to get course information/vocabulary
- Provide communication appropriate to the student's need. (this may be using their qualified skills with BSL and Voice Over, SSE, Note-taking, Lip Speaking)
- Be the voice of the lecturer
- Voice over what contribution the student is making to the session
- Enable communication between student and their group peers

Lecturers can:

- Use plenty of visual aids. Showing something rather than taking a long time explaining it is far more effective
- Make sure you mark changes of topics clearly
- Give the student time to read and look at things before proceeding. They cannot look in two places at the same time!
- Give advance copies of all resources used in the session - lesson plans hand-outs, power points, to the support staff, so they can prepare.
- Do remember lip-reading and/or watching the interpreter is very tiring. Make sure you give adequate breaks, to enable the deaf student to learn at their best ability.

A Guide to Working with Students with Common Mental Health Conditions (MH)

Students with common Mental Health condition presentations:

- Prolonged absence
- Heightened Emotions; Tearfulness and Hopefulness or Anger and Frustration
- Withdrawn and non-communicative
- Lack of self-belief & therefore ambition
- Poor focus & time management
- Poor memory
- Poor reasoning skills
- Destructive behaviours

Mental Health conditions often coexist with other difficulties such as:

- Specific Learning Difficulties.
- Asperger's Syndrome
- Substance Misuse

These difficulties are often complex and entwined with family life and very low self-esteem, but they can always be overcome with time and support or at least safely managed.

'Mental Health' encompasses a whole range of UNSEEN difficulties from mild anxiety, known to us all, to more serious and enduring conditions, managed by medication & therapy. Some are temporary, triggered by the external circumstances, including Stress, Anxiety & Depression. Others are Genetic such as Personality Disorder and Psychosis (which leads to a temporary altered perception of reality)

Others: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Paranoia, Phobias, Eating Disorders & Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. However, a lack of understanding leads to prejudice and fear, which is a huge hurdle, leading to isolation and rejection, compounding the problem.

Not all problems can be pre-empted, as they commonly emerge under stress, between 16-24. Please remember that if a student is well enough to enrol here, their condition can be managed by the support at CCN; if it is more severe there will be a clinical team behind the scenes with whom we have links, so there is no need for concern.

A Guide to Working with Students with Physical Disabilities and Mobility considerations (PD)

Some students may have a physical disability that affects their ability to process information in lectures – for example Cerebral Palsy or a stroke (Cerebral vascular accident). They may require a note taker or use a laptop or DVR in class to capture notes. They may:

- Require more time to answer questions or contribute in group debates
- Have speech which has been affected by their condition/disability. Always ask the student to repeat what they have said, or re-frame the question if you have not understood. Never pretend
- Wish to discuss extensions on assignment work if they need to take longer to process research material and type up written notes
- Prefer to do exams on computers or laptops
- Become more tired in the afternoons due to their condition, and need to be aware of how to 'pace' their days at college

Students with mobility support needs may use manual or power wheelchairs, crutches, walking frames or may just need extra time to move around the campus.

There are many reasons a student may have a mobility issue – a condition such as Muscular Dystrophy – a temporary illness such as a broken leg – or a medical condition such as a heart or respiratory illness.

- Always address the student and not the person with them if they are accompanied by a support worker
- Always position yourself in front of the student when speaking, and try not to have long conversations when pushing a manual wheelchair where you are behind the student
- Consider the access issues for your student – if you are not based on the ground floor – is there lift access. Can they safely evacuate the building in an emergency
- Consider the class environment – does the student require a height adjustable table
- If you are arranging visits and trips – do plan forward with your student to ensure they have the same opportunities and access as the rest of the class, and take advice on risk assessments if necessary

Most importantly do communicate with the student as they are the best judge of what they need.

A Guide to Working with Students with Visual Impairment (VI)

Students with a Visual Impairment may have difficulty with:

- Accessing information
- Mobility and Orientation
- Social interaction
- Practical Tasks
- Adapting to the physical environment

80% of what we learn thought to be gained through vision. Vision is the coordinating sense reinforcing information gained from other senses and provides us with a wealth of information instantaneously. It aids our motivation, memory, concentration, helps us anticipate & reinforces information gained from other senses.

Visual impairment refers to a continuum of eye sight difficulty that is uncorrectable by wearing glasses, contact lenses or surgery'.

Blind students will rely predominantly on tactile and/or aural methods and many will have some light, shape, shade and light perception.

Low vision students are likely to be taught mainly through methods which rely on sight. Some with low vision may have some residual vision but will still be unable e.g. to read ordinary newspaper print or recognize a friend on the other side of the road.

It can affect an individual's ability to see in different ways including fine detail perception, near/distance/peripheral/central vision/night vision & colour/contrast. They may have lack of clarity due to blurriness, patches of visual loss or an inability to adapt to different/ changing light conditions.

This can present challenges to varying degrees in:

- Carrying out Practical Tasks eg moving around college - may not be automatic and require more effort, time and concentration to undertake and may require specific intervention to learn the adaptive skills or carry out safely.
- Orientation and Mobilising eg campus/classroom due to difficulties with judging distance, speeds, depth perception, moving in crowds, not seeing things clearly or from the sides or lower levels increasing risk of falls, bumping into things or little or no useful sight requiring specialist adaptive skills eg cane skills
- Reduced or lack of access to incidental learning
- Group work participation and making friends due to difficulty re difficulty recognising non-verbal visual features, expressions & behaviours, knowing who is in the group, turn taking
- Reading/writing tasks eg via books, hand-outs, reading signs, locating library books & scanning & browsing, copying from the board etc.
- Adapting to the environment eg changing light conditions etc.