

Frequently Asked Questions for Staff

1. A student has disclosed to me that they have a special need and I have been told that I need to send them to the Educational Support Office to **register**, what exactly does this entail for the student?

All this means is that the student needs to book an appointment to see the Senior Educational Support Officer (SESO) and have a chat about their condition or difficulty and how we can help them. It takes between 10 and 15 mins and entails the SESO taking their contact details, the student filling out a Support Questionnaire and discussing any extra funding available to them. When the student has submitted evidence of the special need (e.g. recent letter from their GP, an Educational Psychologist Assessment carried out when they were 16 years old or older), the information they have disclosed on the questionnaire will be put into a Support Memo and sent to the departmental special needs co-ordinator; 'ESO Network Member' who then cascades the information to the relevant staff.

2. If a student needs **special examination arrangements**, what do I need to advise them to do?

They will need to have registered with the Educational Support Office (ESO) and have provided documentation with explicit recommendations for exams from a qualified professional (e.g. GP, Psychiatrist, Educational Psychologist). They will need to fill in a Special Examination Arrangements Application Form and return it to the ESO. The ESO then checks the supporting evidence and communicates their needs to the department, the Exams Office and the Senior Assistant Registrar. Once the College Board of Examiners Executive Committee has authorised the arrangements, the Exams Office will officially inform the student a couple of months before the end-of-year exam period. If the student has what would be considered a 'stable' condition (e.g. dyslexia) they will not have to reapply again, they will be automatically entered for the same arrangements as the year before (unless their needs have changed). If they have what would be considered a 'fluctuating' condition (e.g. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or panic attacks) they will need to reapply every year, submitting recent evidence.

3. What can I do if I think a student may have **dyslexia**?

Please refer them to the ESO as in question one. The ESO has a piece of software called Quicksan that consists of a series of questions and lasts between 10 and 20 minutes. The report that is printed out after the assessment will identify their preferred learning style i.e. they learn better through visual, auditory or kinaesthetic input. The report also tells the student whether their answers give indicators associated with dyslexia. The student will discuss the findings with one of the ESO team and, depending on the number of 'indicators associated with dyslexia' they may be referred on to an Educational Psychologist for a formal assessment or they may simply need additional study skills support, both of which the ESO will co-ordinate.

Frequently Asked Questions for Staff

4. What is **SENDA**?

SENDA stands for Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and is Part 4 of the main Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It requires educational institutions to ensure they are not treating disabled students less favourably and to make reasonable adjustments to their teaching practices, institutional policies and physical access to enable students with disabilities to fulfil their potential.

5. I have a prospective student who is blind who needs **course material in Braille**, what do I do?

If the student is a UK-resident, it is likely they will have funding from their LEA via the Disabled Students' Allowance; part of this will fund extra equipment such as a scanner and Braille embosser and specialist software. You can then send the course material electronically to the student via e-mail and they can access it via their screen-reading software or they can translate it into Braille on their own machine. However, non-UK residents may not have access to this type of funding and students with Braille equipment cannot print off every type of course material (e.g. their own exam papers) so there is a Braille embosser and software to translate from most European languages in the ESO and the International Building. Please contact the ESO for more details on how your material can be translated into Braille.

6. I have heard different rumours about our legal responsibility with regards to **confidentiality and disclosure**, please can you clear any confusion up?

If a student has disclosed their special need to any Royal Holloway employee (including temporary and cleaning staff), the University is deemed to know and make reasonable adjustments for that student. The blue 'Disability and SENDA - What You Need to Know' booklets have been distributed to all staff and continue to be given out at every College Staff Induction session. This outlines some disability issues and the need for any member of staff to encourage students who have disclosed to register with the ESO (if they have not already!). If the student does not want to register their disability, the staff member needs to strongly encourage them by saying that very few specific adjustments can be made if they do not disclose 'officially'. If the student refuses to go to the ESO, we encourage the staff member to ask the student to sign a Disclosure Agreement Form (ask ESO for a copy) that the student can sign and date to indicate that they realise few specific adjustments can be made without disclosing their special need. If you are in any doubt about a specific student, please do not hesitate to contact the ESO; you do not need to disclose the student's name to the ESO.

7. What is the **best font and paper** colour to use for students with dyslexia and those who are partially-sighted?

Due to the difficulties with the 'glare' from black ink on white paper, we recommend printing onto buff or ivory paper. We also recommend a clear, well-

Frequently Asked Questions for Staff

spaced font such as Century Gothic rather than the usual Times New Roman which has an unclear g and a. 1.5 spacing is clearer than single spacing and left-justifying (not fully justifying) so that all the words are evenly spaced out.

8. *I have been told by the special needs co-ordinator in our department that I need to be lenient with **deadlines** for a student due to their special need; am I supposed to go against usual departmental rules and let this student take as long as they like on every deadline?*

The ESO discourage students from extending deadlines because time management and organisation are key study skills and extending deadlines can be a double-edged sword whereby all the deadlines end up 'bunched-up' or overlapping the revision/exam period. However, there is still the possibility that some students will need extensions and this is a reasonable adjustment. Students who request extensions to deadlines are told by the ESO that they still need to negotiate with the relevant staff member in the department, in good time before the deadline if they are going to need extensions.

9. *How does the '**flagging of scripts**' operate?*

Students who have a Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia) need to have the marker of their work (assignments and exam scripts) alerted to the fact that they must not unduly penalise for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and presentation. The departmental administrator (or whomever the students submit their work to) and the exam invigilators need to attach a sticker to the work to 'flag' this to the marker. This 'flagging' also applies to exam scripts written by students with severe manual dexterity difficulties.

10. *I have a prospective student who has the required predicted grades but uses a wheelchair and I doubt will be able to come on any of the **field trips**. Field trips are a requirement of the course, am I right not to give them an offer?*

You need to view every applicant on academic merit so you need to offer him or her a place, as you would with anyone else with the required grades. However, this student needs to know that they may not be able to complete all the field trips and might have to do alternative work due to Health and Safety risks or unavoidable impracticalities. It is reasonable for departmental staff to:

- establish what exactly is 'core' to each field trip
- investigate which field trips can be changed to an alternative, wheelchair-accessible area
- carry out a risk assessment for every part of each field trip
- investigate any special travel and accommodation arrangements
- investigate what alternatives there are as close to the standard activities (close in activity skills and in proximity)
- discuss with the student about what adjustments can be made

Frequently Asked Questions for Staff

11. Does supporting students with special needs lead to **extra financial and time commitments** from staff and departmental budgets?

Most students who are UK-residents have extra funding from their LEA (for academic support, equipment, software, study helper etc) and some have extra funding from Social Services (for personal care support such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, laundry). This takes the time, effort and costs away from the departments for the majority of disabled students. Non-UK residents are able to apply to the College-based fund (International Students Disability Support Grant) for a Student Helper. These Student Helpers can not only be used to help and support the disabled student, they can also be available to help the department for tasks such as transcription of videos for a particular deaf student, translation of departmental handbooks etc into Braille for a particular blind student). However, often the disabled students will still need additional staff time and effort (e.g. extra tutorial time or more time taken to create their exam scripts in larger print etc) this is considered reasonable and is expected to a reasonable degree.

12. I have some ideas about **improving physical access** in my departmental buildings, who do I direct these to?

The College carried out an Access Audit a few years ago; this produced a 3-year plan for Disability Discrimination Act 1995 works and this work is due to be finished by September 2005. However, all staff and students are encouraged to contact the Educational Support Office to voice any concerns and ideas about improving disabled access around campus. The ESO will then contact the relevant departments within Facilities Management to lodge the concern.

13. As a staff member, I partly feel that allowing students to **record my lectures** is a breach of my intellectual property copyright; does the DDA take precedent over copyright law?

In essence, the DDA does take precedence over copyright law in that it would be considered a reasonable adjustment for a disabled student who would clearly benefit from such a recording. Having said that, there are many conditions that could be applied to this, including signing an agreement that the information taped would be used as part of their own study and not passed onto others and the student could return the tapes at the end of the unit.