



Further and Higher Education: Criteria for Training (ATS)

Criteria for Learning Support Training to meet the Needs of Dyslexic Learners.

Introduction

The target group with which this document is concerned is primarily those staff in further and higher education institutions who are involved in the identification and support of students with specific learning difficulties/dyslexia.

The BDA has considered several examples of 'best practice' in learning support and in consultation with experienced tutors, have formulated these criteria. Where training of learning support staff includes all the elements following, the BDA feels that training will efficiently equip staff to identify and support dyslexic learners at all stages of their lifelong learning.

Although in this document the word 'learner' is used broadly to refer to learners with Specific learning difficulties/dyslexia, many other students will benefit from the approaches to learning detailed here.

Learning support teams in further and higher education feel that there is a genuine need for specific training of staff supporting dyslexic learners. The BDA hopes that, by identifying criteria to be met by such training, courses will be established to meet these needs, upon successful completion of which participants will be recognised by the award of ATS (FE/HE). Such an award would identify those with specialist knowledge of dyslexia who could advise administrative and academic staff, examining bodies and training organisations on the special strengths and special needs of individual students as well as supporting and advising individual learners.

Specific courses of training to meet the needs of staff in further and higher education are rare and the BDA would hope to encourage the establishment of such courses to meet the increasing demand for individual guidance in the growing field of post-16 education and training.

Any training course that is developed to meet these criteria should include at every stage opportunities for the student to demonstrate practical application and practical ability. Assessment of such practical skills should be an essential part of any course.

The following criteria are designed in three sections but each section is intended to inform and support the other two.

Section 1: Basic Support

Students should:

- 1.1. Understand the theoretical bases for adult learning;
- 1.2. Conduct a practical exploration with adult learners of preferences in learning styles and strategies;
- 1.3. Analyse individual differences in learning styles and strategies. (Comparison of dyslexic and non-dyslexic styles);
- 1.4. Understand the current research into the biological bases of dyslexia (eg in neurology, genetics, etc).
- 1.5. Analyse the cognitive aspects of the above:
 - 1.5.1. information processing,
 - 1.5.2. memory,
 - 1.5.3. spatial skills, etc.
- 1.6. Understand how SpLD modifies learning, matching different teaching styles and learning environments in relation to individual learning goals.
- 1.7. Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of dyslexic learners.
- 1.8. Establish a profile of relative strengths and weaknesses including the impact on life choices; e.g. career choices, employment.
- 1.9. Understand the theory and application of counselling skills.
- 1.10. Understand the principles of stress management.
 - 1.10.1. Recognise the social, economic and educational contexts which define dyslexia SpLD as problematic.
 - 1.10.2. Recognise the different aims and outcomes of Further Education and Higher Education, and the implications for the style of support.

Section 2: Assessment and Analysis

- 2.1. Students should demonstrate the following:
- 2.2. Interview Techniques
 - 2.2.1. appropriate techniques of asking questions;
 - 2.2.2. informal discussion;
 - 2.2.3. informal assessment and analysis of options;
 - 2.2.4. a practical exploration with an individual student;
- 2.3. Analysis of interview and identifying learning goals demonstrating the ability to draw appropriate conclusions.
- 2.4. Choice of assessment procedures:
 - 2.4.1. to identify the most appropriate learning styles, learning environments and learning goals;
 - 2.4.2. to identify needs in relation to course and curriculum;
 - 2.4.3. to help the learner understand his needs.
- 2.5. Analytical, systematic and continuing assessment of progress toward learning goals:
 - 2.5.1. measuring progress in small steps;
 - 2.5.2. continuing revision of learning styles and teaching styles.

Section 3: Implementing strategies: Designing and implementing an individualised learning programme

- 3.1. Analysis of learner's course requirements including curriculum content, delivery and assessment.
- 3.2. Identifying assessment requirements of course.
- 3.3. Analysis of the needs of the learner for success, e.g.
 - 3.3.1. literacy, numeracy;
 - 3.3.2. training in organisation and memory skills;
 - 3.3.3. Information Technology;
 - 3.3.4. study skills;
 - 3.3.5. higher level reading and writing skills;
 - 3.3.6. problem solving;
 - 3.3.7. metacognition;
 - 3.3.8. thinking skills;
 - 3.3.9. self advocacy.
- 3.4. Demonstrate the ability to implement a range of teaching methods appropriate to dyslexic learners:
 - 3.4.1. trialling, delivery, monitoring of individual strategies appropriate to the learner's strengths and weaknesses;
 - 3.4.2. ongoing evaluation of methods;
 - 3.4.3. ongoing reviewing of progress;
 - 3.4.4. making appropriate adjustments to encourage independent learning.

N.B. Tutors will be expected to assess their students' grasp of the course as a whole, and of each section element. Adequate methods of assessment of individual student's practical ability must be specified. In addition, evidence must be provided, as appropriate, with the approval of the BDA, by means of essays, presentations, material design, record keeping.