



Trinity College Dublin

Guidelines for diagnostic assessment of a specific learning difficulty (dyslexia or dyscalculia)

The following guidelines are provided in the interest of ensuring that documentation is complete and appropriate:

1. A specific learning disability must be stated within the documentation submitted. If another diagnosis is applicable, it should also be stated. A statement should be included indicating current status of the learning disability and the relevance of the learning disability to the institutional setting.
2. The evaluation must have been completed within the **last three years**^ for students just graduating from secondary school. It is preferred that individuals who are seventeen years of age or older be tested using diagnostic instruments normed for adults. For students who have been out of school for a number of years, documentation that is more than three years old will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The student may be required to submit more recent documentation.
3. For an assessment of dyslexia to be recognised by Trinity College, it must be carried out by a fully qualified Psychologist with recognised qualification. The recognised qualification is a relevant post-graduate qualification in psychology with further specialist training in psychological assessment including advanced training and current experience on the WAIS. (Advanced training is defined as the Psychology Society of Ireland professional development program on the WAIS or equivalent).

4. Preferred Tests to be used:

Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – Third Edition (WAIS III)
Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – Fourth Edition (WISC-IV)
Woodcock Reading Mastery Test Revised – (WRMT-R)
Wide Range Achievement Test 4 – (WRAT 4)
Dyslexia Adult Screening Test – (DAST)
The Adult Reading Test

5.* The core components of an assessment report should be:

- a) **Cover sheet**, including the student's name, date of birth, age at assessment, date of assessment, university attended, degree course and year of course.
- b) **Introduction**. Referral information; family, developmental and educational history; any relevant medical information and the student's perceptions of his/her difficulties. Any previous assessments should be summarised. Where English is spoken as a second or additional language, details of the student's language history and current levels of competence should be included.
- c) **Test behaviour**, i.e. behaviour during the assessment that may have affected the results.
- d) **General Level of Intellectual Ability**. Measures of verbal and non-verbal ability should be reported. Students' profiles of scores should be discussed, with particular reference to any significant discrepancies between verbal and non verbal ability.
- e) **Cognitive Processing**, including working memory, phonological processing and speed of processing. In some cases a full IQ test (WAIS III UK) will have been administered and reported in the previous section, so some of these aspects may have been covered. Performance in other tests, such as numeracy, motor control and/or attentional functioning, may be included. Scores should be reported as standard scores and percentile points, age equivalent scores are not sufficient.
- f) **Attainments in Literacy**, including single word reading, non-word reading, text reading and reading comprehension. Results should cover qualitative analysis of errors, evidence of strategies being used, fluency, reading speed and ability to extract information from text. Information about spelling will come from a graded spelling test and from a piece of free writing, which will also yield information about ability to write grammatically, the complexity of sentence structures, the coherence of writing, use of vocabulary, writing speed and legibility of handwriting. Scores should be reported as standard scores and percentile points, age equivalent scores are not sufficient.
- g) **Attainments in Arithmetic**, should be included if the student will have any mathematical content in their course of study. Scores should be reported as standard scores and percentile points, age equivalent scores are not sufficient.
- h) **Attainments in Language**, and if the student will have difficulty studying a modern continental language.
- i) **Conclusion**. It should be stated whether or not the student has an SpLD and whether their condition is disabling in the context of studying at Third level. The effects of SpLD on the students' literacy and study skills should be outlined, taking account of compensatory strengths.
- j) **Recommended Support**. As students are likely to have an Assessment of Need it is not necessary or appropriate to make

detailed recommendations about technical support. A brief statement about the type of support which might help the student should be made here, particularly in relation to study skills tuition.

- k) **Appendix**, including a list of tests used in the assessment (with references) and scores achieved in the tests.

l) Summary.

* Section five is based on the 'Report of the Department for Education and Science Working Group on New Guidelines for Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties for Disabled Student Allowance by Dr Chris Singleton, University of Hull, July 2004.

^ Only reports less than three years old can be considered, as a psycho-educational assessment is merely an estimate of a student's ability at the time of testing and cannot be relevant more than three years later.

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