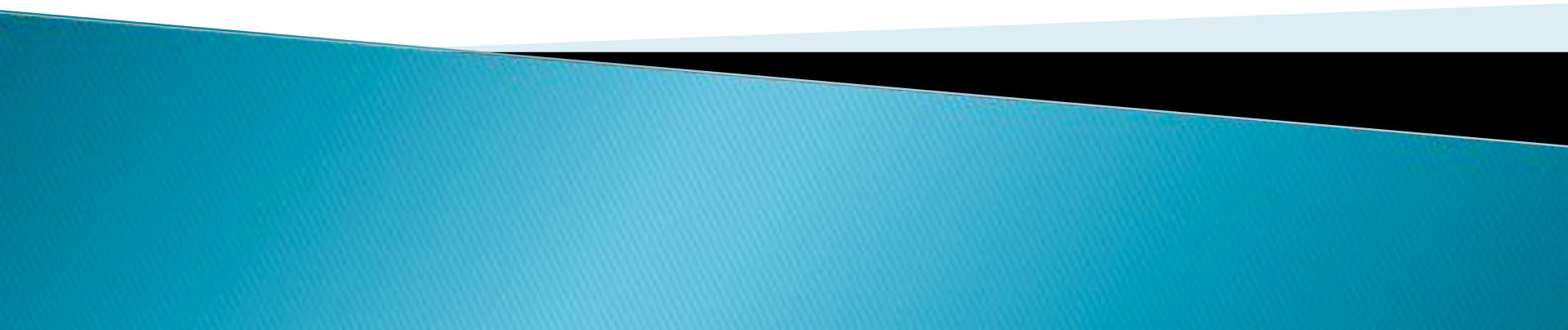


Written Feedback for EAP Students with Dyslexia




Dyslexia: a Working Definition

- ▶ 1, Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in fluent reading and spelling
- ▶ 2, characteristics of dyslexia include: difficulties with phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.
- ▶ 3, there is not thought to be a link between IQ and dyslexia and it can be found across the range of disabilities


Rose Report 2009



Co-occurring Difficulties

- ▶ Whilst not considered markers of dyslexia, there are often a number of co-occurring difficulties, these can include:
 - ▶ Motor co-ordination (often seen in dyspraxia)
 - ▶ Mental calculation
 - ▶ Concentration
 - ▶ Personal organisation
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Points to consider

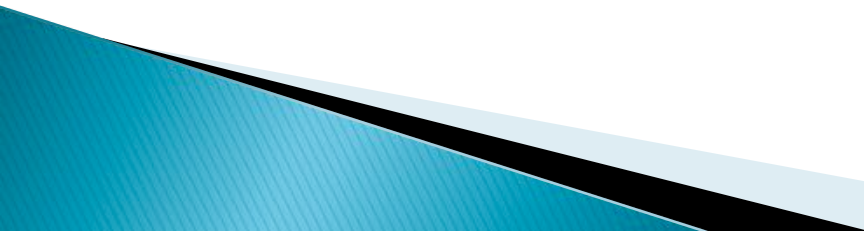
- ▶ Students with dyslexia will often have dramatically different learning profiles and will have different strengths and weakness, with regard to their learning.
 - ▶ Dyslexia is best thought of as a continuum, there are no clear cut off points
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Errors often seen in the Work of Students with Dyslexia


Spelling Errors

- ▶ Phonetic spelling (fonetic speling!) eny/any ordeanse/audience
- ▶ Inconsistent spelling, eg independent, indapendent, independant
- ▶ Not spotting spell checker has selected the wrong word, eg plant assassinations/ plant associations, grope work/group work
- ▶ Telescoping eg rembered/remembered
- ▶ mis-use of homophones, to/too, there/they're
- ▶ Transposing letters, does/dose

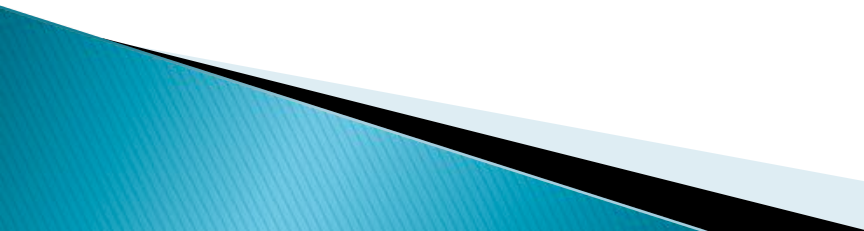
Punctuation and Grammar

- ▶ Misuse or omission of punctuation marks
 - ▶ Overuse of conjunctions and issues with sentence boundaries, eg comma splicing
 - ▶ Short, unsophisticated sentences, lacking in complexity
 - ▶ Inappropriate grammatical constructions
 - ▶ Inappropriate use of tense
 - ▶ Inconsistent or inappropriate narrative mode, eg first person to third person
- 


Structure

- ▶ Work may lack structure and clarity
 - ▶ Information may not be in the correct section
 - ▶ Repetition of ideas may be an issue
 - ▶ A lack of a topic sentence can make paragraphs confusing
 - ▶ There may be difficulties expressing ideas using an academic style of writing and use of colloquialisms may be evident
 - ▶ General presentation skills may be poor, even when work has been through a computer package
- 


Answering the Question

- ▶ Students may misunderstand the question
 - ▶ Students may not answer the whole question (especially multi stage questions)
 - ▶ Students may digress from the topic, either include irrelevant information or expanding on minor points
 - ▶ Students may fail to identify the main points, for example include every point they can think of!
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Overall

- ▶ Students with dyslexia often spend a great deal of their time on assignment production (often more than their peers)
 - ▶ This is not always reflected in the written work
 - ▶ There is often a marked difference between their performance in lectures, labs and seminars and that in their written work.
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Dyslexia and EAP

- ▶ A diagnosis
 - ▶ History of previous additional support
 - ▶ Unable to spot patterns hoping, coping, eloping (lack of phonological awareness development)
 - ▶ Disparity between spoken and written ability
 - ▶ Working memory issues.
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Providing feedback, some general issues

- ▶ Some students can sometimes perceive criticism of their work as disparaging, even when they received a good mark
 - ▶ Students may not understand feedback or be unsure as to how to address areas for improvement, eg, 'more care needed proofreading'
 - ▶ Students may struggle to read cursive script
 - ▶ timeliness
- 


Strategies for providing feedback

- ▶ Provide a (jargon free) criteria, to support students in understanding expectations
 - ▶ Word process feedback, if possible
 - ▶ Ensure handwriting is legible
 - ▶ Consider use of symbols, students may not understand what is meant by an exclamation marks and question marks, for example.
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Model Answers

- ▶ Can enable students to understand what is expected of them
 - ▶ Annotations can be used for clarification
 - ▶ However, students can adhere to these too closely.
- 


Criterion Referencing

- ▶ explain in detail the purpose of the assignment and how it will be assessed
 - ▶ matching feedback to criteria can help students to identify how to improve their work.
 - ▶ Giving the students a copy of the criteria and mark scheme is helpful in helping them to determine what is required.
- 


consider clarity, specificity and tone:

- ▶ Clarity
 - ▶ improve clarity to ensure students interpret the feedback in the way the lecturer intended use straightforward vocabulary and sentence structure and ensure that the feedback matches the student's development level; a jargon free criteria and avoidance of the use of symbols can improve readability
- 

Specificity

- ▶ ensure the feedback contains concrete information, for example referring to lines of enquiry in the student's assignment; and providing specific targets for improvement. Be as specific as possible about areas for improvement. A summary paragraph at the end of the feedback can help give students an overview of their performance
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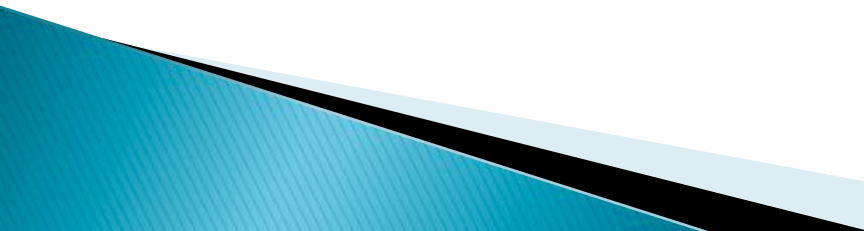
Tone

- ▶ be as explicit as possible, but ensure that there are some positives, to ensure the student doesn't get too downhearted.
 - ▶ focus on the main strengths and weaknesses of the assignment to avoid students become overwhelmed by the quantity of data.
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Sandwich technique

- ▶ Consider beginning with positive comments
- ▶ Provide constructive advice regarding improvements
- ▶ Consider rounding off with another positive comment

Example one

- ▶ This is a good effort, you have addressed the main topics and have organised your paper in a logical manner. In addition, you have identified some good references for Assignment 1, part d.
 - ▶ Your paragraph structure is a little problematic in places, remember to make it very clear where one ends and the next begins.
 - ▶ Overall, a competent report
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Example two

- ▶ It's obvious that you put a lot of effort to study and write the review in a rather limited time frame. I think you have done a very good job. The most important thing is that you clarified things for yourself! I, also, appreciate the constant effort you put to keep your blog up to date! I really enjoyed reading the sections and the transitions between the sections. They do make sense...and they do contain important questions.
- ▶ The only part that needs some attention is the definitions section. Consider to re-structure it, by adding definitions based on key 'terms', e.g. people who define asynchronous online discussions with an emphasis on the time issue (asynchronicity) or the communication mode (discussion), etc., and how do they define it.
- ▶ Also, try to understand a bit more or try to be more careful with references, it's pity to have marks taken out because of referencing style or convention


Specific suggestions

- ▶ Make formative comments as clear and specific as possible eg,
- ▶ *the last paragraph might have been modified and the words gained used to strengthen the conclusion. It would be good to know, for instance, the author's (defended) position, having worked through such an impressive range of points in the main body of the essay.*
- ▶ *There are some potential 'misunderstandings' about who is saying what, which could be easily rectified by putting the name of the chapter author at the start of a sentence and not just in brackets at the end.*

Examples of less helpful feedback

- ▶ ‘Please proof read your work’
 - ▶ ‘A bit sloppy at times’
 - ▶ ‘This isn’t good enough, Katie!’
 - ▶ ‘Take more care checking your work’
 - ▶ ‘not sufficiently nuanced’
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Examples of positive feedback

- ▶ ‘sometime grammatical inaccuracies meant it was difficult to understand your argument’
 - ▶ ‘The structure of the essay was sometimes confused, this made the argument difficult to follow at times’
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A Thought

- ▶ *As a tutor, you are obviously someone who has*
- ▶ *done very well academically – so well, perhaps, that*
- ▶ *it is easy to lose sight of what a typical*
- ▶ *undergraduate student can realistically achieve.*
- ▶ *You might therefore find it helpful at this point to*
- ▶ *try and think back to your early (and perhaps*
- ▶ *faltering and uncertain?) experiences of what*
- ▶ *writing an essay was like in your first year at*
- ▶ *university. And if you still have your first-year*
- ▶ *essays on file, why not take a look at them again*
- ▶ *with a fresh eye, to jog your memory?*

Dai Hounsell,

University of Edinburgh

Any Questions?

