



# DYSLEXIA POLICY

## 1. Policy Statement

The College acknowledges that the cluster of differences linked to processing language (both written and spoken) reading, memory and organisation associated with the terms dyslexia, dyspraxia and other related specific learning difficulties is prevalent within art and design education. Within this document the term 'dyslexia' will be used in a comprehensive way to refer to all of the above.

The College is committed to ensuring that students with dyslexia are selected and supported on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities and are given equal opportunities within the College, enabling them to perform to their full potential. The College will, as outlined in the Disability Statement, provide support for students and staff with dyslexia in accordance with the requirements of SENDA.

## Background Information

### What is Dyslexia?

*'Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which mainly affects the development of literacy and language related skills.*

*It is likely to be present at birth and to be lifelong in its effects.*

*It is characterised by difficulties with phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory, processing speed, and the automatic development of skills that may not match up to an individual's other cognitive abilities.*

*It tends to be resistant to conventional teaching methods, but its effects can be mitigated by appropriately specific intervention, including the application of information technology and supportive counselling.'*<sup>1</sup>

### What is dyspraxia?

*'Developmental dyspraxia is an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement. It is an immaturity in the way that the brain processes information, which results in messages not being properly or fully transmitted. The term dyspraxia comes from the word praxis, which means 'doing, acting'. Dyspraxia affects the planning of what to do and how to do it. It is associated with problems of perception, language and thought. Dyspraxia is thought to affect up to ten per cent of the population and up to two per cent severely. Males are four times more likely to be affected than females. Dyspraxia sometimes runs in families. There may be an overlap with related conditions.'*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> British Dyslexia Association <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/whatisdyslexia.html>

<sup>2</sup> Dyspraxia Foundation [http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/services/dys\\_dyspraxia.php](http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/services/dys_dyspraxia.php)

Although some students will have severe difficulties, others will have learnt strategies to manage these by the time they register at the College. This does not mean, however, that their underlying difficulty has disappeared. A good number of students will not have been diagnosed as dyslexic before their arrival at the College. For some the diagnosis of a specific learning difficulty may come as a relief; an explanation for previous poor performance. For others a diagnosis is less welcome, and may initially lower confidence.

All personal information about individual students is regarded as confidential and the student's permission must be obtained before information about their dyslexia is communicated to anyone else, including members of staff responsible for teaching them or providing support. The benefits of disclosing their dyslexia to the necessary members of staff are explained to students prior to inviting them to sign a consent form.

Some people with dyslexia will experience difficulties not exclusively associated with a disparity between ability in speaking and in reading and writing. These difficulties might include perceptual problems such as spatial orientation, sequencing and other organisational skills, hand-eye control (legibility of writing) and poor short-term memory. Even if the student has learnt to be relatively fluent in some skills, they may still have difficulty in other areas and, in stressful situations, may become less skilled than usual. The range of effects of these conditions means that dyslexic students at the College have difficulty with work in the studio not just with Humanities courses.

### **3. Dyslexia Support at the RCA**

In recognition of the high incidence of dyslexia among students of art and design, in 2001 the College commissioned an investigation by an external consultant. The consultant's report ('Report on Dyslexia: developing provision and support at the Royal College of Art' Katherine Kindersley, November 2001) identified a high incidence (approximately 25%) of dyslexia among RCA students and made a number of recommendations, including the appointment of a Dyslexia Co-ordinator and the formation of a Dyslexia Committee. The College formed a working party and produced an Action Plan (2002) in response.

#### **Dyslexia Co-ordinator**

In 2002 the College appointed a part-time Dyslexia Co-ordinator (three days per week) based in Information and Learning Services (ILS). The Dyslexia Co-ordinator provides a service which includes advice on dyslexia-related issues, individual dyslexia screening tests and assessment arrangements, academic support, strategy workshop sessions, support for organisational difficulties and individual tutorial help with dissertations, study skills, time management and presentation techniques.

#### **Dyslexia Committee**

A Dyslexia Committee, which meets once a term, oversees development of dyslexia support at the College, including the opportunities provided by emerging technology.

It is chaired by the Head of ILS and attended by the Dyslexia Co-ordinator, with departmental representation from studio areas, the Critical and Historical Studies department, Occupational Health and Student Support. The Dyslexia Committee reports to the Equality and Diversity Committee, which in turn reports to Senate.

### **Dyslexia screening and assessment**

The College undertakes to screen and to arrange dyslexia assessment and needs assessment for students, both of which are necessary in order to claim a DSA (Disabled Student's Allowance).

A diagnostic assessment for dyslexia includes

- a screening test.
- an exploration and assessment of cognitive or neurological strengths and weaknesses.

The College will guide the student through the process of assessment.

## **4. Financial Assistance**

The Disability Statement in the College Regulations details some of the financial assistance available. In addition students may apply for the following:

### **UK Students:**

#### **Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA)**

Postgraduate students from the UK (full-time or part-time) are eligible to apply to Local Authorities (LAs) for a DSA if they have been assessed as having a disability, such as dyslexia. The allowances are intended to cover extra costs or expenses that may arise whilst studying, which are a direct result of dyslexia.

For students who have not been previously assessed, the College will pay the major part of the assessment fee. Students will be required to make a contribution. Payment for assessments is administered by the Student Support Office.

### **International Students:**

International students, including EU students who do not qualify as UK students for statutory student support purposes, are not eligible for a DSA. However:

Students who have not previously been assessed may apply to the Student Support Office for help with the payment of the Assessment fee.

One-to-one support is provided by the Dyslexia Co-ordinator as required

Students can also apply to the International Student Disability Fund. The Student Support Officer will conduct a needs assessment before allocating funds.

## **5. Teaching Strategies**

Students with dyslexia should be able to rely on the positive attitudes and co-operation of College staff. Information and guidance on good practice is disseminated college-wide through departmental representation on the Dyslexia Committee. This guidance is passed on to academic staff through course forums, to departmental administrators and technicians and at inductions for new staff.

One of the responsibilities of the Dyslexia Committee is to identify specific guidelines for various teaching contexts within the College. These guidelines are made available on the College Intranet.

'Dyslexia: A student handbook' is also available on the College Intranet and VLE.

## **6. Support for staff with Dyslexia**

Members of College staff can undergo a screening test and if thought to be dyslexic will be referred to the Personnel Officer, who can advise them about going for an assessment and subsequently applying for 'Access to Work' funding.

## **7. Information and Learning Services**

There are various forms of support available within Information and Learning Services for students and staff with dyslexia. These include:

### **Library skills workshops**

The library offers a programme of workshops each term aimed at enhancing student learning by ensuring independent and effective use of information resources both within the library and externally. The workshops, which are designed to help students develop their research skills, focus on the use of electronic and external information resources, including a number of bibliographical databases.

### **Reading material – key texts in the Library**

The Library holds a collection of books on study skills, learning styles and more generally about dyslexia. A list of these is available on the College Intranet and VLE.

### **Technical support**

A number of College lectures are recorded and made available to view in the Library. AV services will provide copies of these to individual students on request. Digital

audio recorders are also available from AV Services for short term loan, to record course-based events, tutorials, etc.

## **8. Sources of Information**

Information for students and staff about dyslexia support at the RCA is made available in a number of ways:

- At registration
- At induction
- In the Prospectus
- In the Student Handbook
- On the College Intranet
- On the College VLE (RCADe)
- On the College website
- Through the Student Support Office
- Through the Dyslexia Support Office

In addition, a list of websites proving useful information about dyslexia is available on the College Intranet and VLE.

**March 2009**