

Factsheet: Inclusive teaching, learning and assessment

Learners who have a learning disability

clever • skilled • creative

July 2009

Definition

Learning disability

Learning disability is a general term used to describe a diverse group of neurological conditions, which may cause the learner to receive and process information differently. Some examples of a specific learning disability are dyslexia, dysgraphia or aphasia.

A common characteristic of **dyslexia** is that the learner may have difficulty with written language, particularly with reading and spelling. Learners may also have difficulties with phonological processing, auditory processing, visual processing or short-term memory. (Refer to Fact sheet 6 – Dyslexia for more information).

The term **dysgraphia** is used to identify difficulties with written expression (hand writing) regardless of the ability to read. Learners with dysgraphia may be able to read quite well however often lack coordination and may find other types of fine motor tasks difficult.

Aphasia is the term for loss of the ability to produce and/or comprehend language. This is usually as a result of an injury to the brain. Characteristics of aphasia can include difficulty with communicating spontaneously, reading and writing, and comprehending written or spoken language.

It is common for a learner to have more than one type of specific learning disability. **It is essential that the learner's specific area of learning disability is identified correctly to assist with support strategies.**

Impact on training and assessment

The training environment may increase the levels of anxiety which may impact on the learner's true abilities. Individuals may experience difficulty with:

- reading and comprehension
- organisational skills
- auditory processing
- written expression
- note taking
- memory and sequencing
- participation – possible reluctance to offer opinion, responses or read in front of groups.

Delivery strategies

These strategies are suggestions only. Customisation for individuals is necessary.

Consult with the student about strategies that work for them. Maintain confidentiality as required by the DET privacy standards.

Presenting and communicating information:

- give clear instructions on the learning material to be covered and the timelines for completion so that the learner can manage the workload
- use the Principles of Universal Design in all communications
- use visual aids to link concepts
- vary training methods – use videos, hand outs, diagrams
- check for learner understanding – try alternative words or phrases
- provide additional time to copy material from whiteboards and take notes
- provide learning materials before training commences if requested
- assist the learner to create a vocational vocabulary list and encourage the use of a dictionary or thesaurus.

Support personnel and technology in delivery:

- literacy software e.g. Texthelp Read and Write Gold or Freedom Scientific WYNN can assist with reading and writing. Spelling and grammar checkers that are part of word processing programs may also be of assistance
- voice recognition software e.g. Dragon Naturally Speaking can assist the learner to convert ideas to electronic text in real time. A small amount of time is required to 'train' the software to the user's voice
- a reader/scribe can assist learners who have difficulty completing reading and/or writing tasks
- audio recording of training delivery or note takers (a person or digital note taker such as the Neo Notetaker) may assist learners with handwriting or information processing difficulties.

Assessment strategies

These strategies are suggestions only. Customisation for individuals is necessary.

All the delivery strategies may be of assistance for assessment.

- Provide additional time to complete assessments, if required.
- Provide opportunities for continuous assessment throughout training.
- Use multiple choice and short answer questions in preference to long answer questions.
- Use a variety of assessment methods such as verbal assessment, taped interviews, slide presentations, handmade models or photographic essays.

References

- TAFE Queensland 'Making Assessment Work for Everyone' – the AQTF meeting diverse client needs
http://employeeportal.detir.qld.gov.au/detportalapp/appmanager/employee/portal_ips?nfpb=true&windowLabel=portlet_4_2&pqctw=/business_units/1020/1050/resources/diverse.html#4
- TAFE Queensland 'Guidelines for determining the educational support needs of learners with a disability' 2007
http://employeeportal/detportalapp/ShowDoc/BEA%20Repository/ep-preview/417/guidelines/1050/psgd_004.pdf
- Reasonable Adjustment Guidelines for TAFE Queensland March 2006
http://employeeportal/detportalapp/ShowDoc/BEA%20Repository/ep-preview/417/guidelines/1050/psgd_001.pdf

Further Resources

- Australian Disability Clearing House on Education and Training
<http://www.adcet.edu.au/acpet/>
- SPELD Specific Learning Difficulty Association School information series
<http://www.speld.org.au/>
- Australian Learning Disability Association
<http://www.adcet.edu.au/Oao/>
- Creating Accessible Teaching and Support - Learning Disabilities
http://www.adcet.edu.au/Cats/Specific_Impairments/Learning_Disabilities.chpx
- Australian Council for Private Education and Training, Learning Disability Resource
<http://www.adcet.edu.au/Ld/>