DysVet

Lifelong Learning Programme
Leonardo da Vinci - Multilateral projects - Transfer of Innovations

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Best Practices

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Lifelong Learning Programme

Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide a brief overview of our Best Practices stated in the DysVet's modules and promote better understanding in the assessment and support for students and employee with characteristics of dyslexia. This guide is designed to help trainers, teachers, tutors in VET, managers, employers, Human Resources personnel.

1. Help identify the educational needs

In order to make a difference to the lives of dyslexic individuals, you need to identify what are the strengths and weaknesses, and suggest strategies how to overcome them. The "label" of dyslexia itself cannot do that. The label does not tell you what is required. It does not say, for example, what teaching or training is required, or what technology could support the individual.

2. Identifies what an individual can do or not

If you are in a position to assess the dyslexic individual, either formally or informally, you may like to consider alternative assessments that are not necessarily part of the conventional assessment process, but are part of everyday life.
Examples may include completion of an online recruitment form for a supermarket chain, or a paper-based bank form.
Remember that the definition of dyslexia is not a difficulty in reading and writing, but a difficulty in the acquisition of those skills. In the same way, it is not the final version of this form filling that is important, but the difficulties encountered along the way.

3. Using checklists for assessment

Many people see the checklist as a tool that has little real value. However, in the right hands it can be a very valuable tool, and in some ways may be even more informative that an apparently full assessment.
They can be used as a starting point for developing support. They do not need to be formal. They can be developed as an "interview", though some formal structure would be needed if the person was not familiar with the techniques.

DysVet

Information from an interview

Below are notes from an adult in employment who consider themselves to be dyslexic.

Driving illegally as could not pass the theory
Has a problem in decoding the questions in driving theory
Work includes telephone reception, which he finds difficult
In work, has creative ideas but lacks confidence to share.
Poor memory to recall recent facts or multiplication tables.
In writing, sentence construction was poor
In writing, vocabulary was simpler than spoken
Handwriting was CAPITALS, not cursive.
Reading: without fluency and making visual errors
Has to re-read paragraphs repeatedly for understanding
Difficulties in orientation
Confused when given several instructions at once
Trouble remembering numbers
Cannot organise thoughts on paper
Repeatedly told they are late with paperwork.

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4. Support of dyslectic employee, development of the confidential atmosphere at the work place

- Talk to the individual with dyslexia and ask him/her what they need so they can do the job effectively.
- Create an open atmosphere where an employee can feel confident in talking about problems and seeking solutions.
- Provide awareness and training to human resources personnel, managers and colleagues on how dyslexia impacts in the workplace. /It is very possible that more than one person on the staff has dyslexia./
- Educate yourself about dyslexia. This will help you not to miss the opportunity to hire a highly productive worker because of a difficulty which could be managed relatively easily.
- Provide individual training, so a dyslexic worker knows exactly what the job entails.

- Decrease the level of the stress whenever it is possible. Stress is often caused by supervisors trying to hurry a worker, or looking over their shoulder constantly.
- People with dyslexia may work better in a quiet area free from other distractions. Provide such an option whenever it is possible.

5. Giving instructions

- Give clear instructions. Verbal instructions should be given slowly and one at a time. It is useful to check back that they have been understood /dyslexia is an information processing difficulty, not just difficulty with reading/.
- Be patient with questions. Better to answer the same question a few times than to deal with a costly error.
- Written instructions should be easy to read, preferably typed in large font, in plain language and illustrated with pictures and diagrams if possible. It may help if printing is on coloured paper. /see Module 6/
- Dyslexics are not good at keeping deadlines, so give advance notice of tasks to be done. Pressure affects performance and workers with dyslexia may feel this more than others.
- Encourage good work practices such as pre-planning for projects, keeping work schedules and time tables, breaking jobs down into manageable units, frequent reviewing of goals and progress and mutual support from colleagues.
- Do not ask an employee with dyslexia to read aloud in public without checking that they are comfortable with this.
- Remember that taking notes at a meeting may be very difficult as many people with dyslexia find it hard to listen and write at the same time.
- Do not mistake difficulty with reading, writing or remembering for stupidity or laziness.
- Coping with dyslexia in the workplace may be difficult for an employer or supervisor, but just imagine what it is like for a dyslexic employee.
- Don't focus only on the difficulties. Reading may not be a strength but there may be many other skills and abilities which are untapped. People with dyslexia have many strengths, so do give praise and encouragement. Work can be allocated to suit the talents of the individual and you, as an employer get the best from every worker.

6. Concept mapping in the office and at college

There are many ways in which concept maps may be used. Here are a few ideas:

- Brainstorming
- Memorize for learning and exams
- Develop and plan essays and reports
- Projects planning
- Explain to others

7. Preferences in the office and at college

Documents are usually prepared in the style of the originator, which may not be the same as that of the reader. Fortunately in Word, it is possible to change most parameters to suit the reader. An example covering most of the options is given below. However, this you could also add line height, and font size.

However, if you only have an option to print in black and white, you may want to think carefully about your options. And the best option is usually to have a small supply of coloured paper (e.g. pale cream) available. Many dyslexic individuals find it easy for reading that the pure white commonly supplied.

Changes were:

- Background colour
- Font
- Font colour
- Line width

8. Using technology

Assistive technology is that which helps facilitate the learning, and may be used with many different learning content. Below is a table that helps show just some of the ways in which technology can support the dyslexic individual. This will help you understand the needs of the individual, and how diverse technologies can help.

HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP	Text to speech	Speech to text	Concept maps	Memory
Reading				
Reading reports and text books	✓			
Reading single words	✓			
Knowing the meaning of new words	✓			
Needing to re-read sentences for meaning	✓			
Difficulty in remembering long text			✓	
Writing				
Written work is worse than verbal work.		✓		
Longer than average to do written work.		✓		
Uses poor, sometimes bizarre, spelling.		✓		
Difficulty reading their writing.		✓		
Has problems explaining ideas and concepts			✓	
Memory				
Difficulty remembering deadline				✓
Has difficulty remembering new words.	✓			✓
Has difficulty following instructions.			✓	✓
Motor				
Poor handwriting.		✓		
Other				
Finds it difficult to organise themselves.			✓	✓
Has low self-confidence.	✓	✓	✓	✓

9. Keeping YOUR passwords

Most people have multiple passwords, and remembering which is used where is sometime highly problematic.

Solutions such as Keepass (offline) and Last Pass (online) can be of great use to the dyslexic individual, since their memory needs are reduce to just one password.

However, under pressure, the dyslexic individual may fail to remember that password.

Therefore it is always good to have a back-up, such as leaving it with a reliable person.

10. Prepare dyslexia friendly texts

Layout

- Left text justification is better than full justification.
- Start every new subject at new page wherever possible.
- Comprehension is usually assisted by using pictures, photos, tables presentation on paper. It is more comfortable to focus on the speech and in the margin just write personal notes.
- Line spacing of 1.5 is preferable.
- Try to avoid white background in printing. It is better to use pale yellow-coloured paper. Dyslexics have often problem with sensitivity to contrast.

Fonts

- Use non serif fonts (Arial, Verdana, Calibri, Tahoma, Century Gothic, and Trebuchet). They are more legible than serif (Times New Roman).
- Font size should be 12-14 point. Some dyslexic readers may request a larger font
- Try to avoid fonts smaller than 24 in presentations

Writing Style

- Be concise and write short sentences. They are easier to follow and understand. This is true for all learners. That does not mean that text cannot convey complex message.
- Do not start sentence at the end of the line
- Avoid hyphenations (i.e. cutting words into the pieces such as se-nte-nce)
- Avoid double negatives.

- The generally agreed maximum line length good for understanding should be not more than 80 characters.
- Average sentence length should be 15-20 words.

Headings and Emphasis

- Important piece of text should be highlighted. You can bold text, or insert it into frames.
- *Avoid underlining and italics:* these tend to make the text appear to run together. Use bold instead.
- AVOID TEXT IN BLOCK CAPITALS: this is much harder to read.

11.Making Presentations

- Use plain background, rather than very colourful and patterned
- Use legible fonts (sans, and size not less than 24)
- Use attractive fonts. It is recommended to use other sans fonts, like Lucida Console
- Prepare a slide which sets out the structure of your presentation
- Each slide should have a clear heading and make sure you answer the question in the body of the slide.
- Be very clear about your key message and ensure that everything in your presentation is consistent with, and supportive of that key message.
- Make appropriate use of pictures. It's a good idea to break up text with illustrations) and it is true that a picture is worth a thousand words). Do not overuse amount of pictures, they might be distractive factor for dyslexics.
- Explain abbreviations used in your presentation
- Make copies of your presentation available in paper. It is a matter of preference whether you do this at the beginning of your presentation or at the end.
- Send your presentation via emails (or Dropbox if they are too big for email)

12. Making Forms

- Start with a brief sentence to explaining the purpose of the questionnaire
- Use short sentences with comprehensive wording to minimize the factor of ambiguity

- Have a clear structure, and questions dealing with similar aspects should be grouped together.
- Use accessible language.
- use multiple choice wherever possible
- Be available online and offline.
- have the option to change the format (e.g. maximize text and/or use coloured background)
- Where online, there should be a spellchecker available.
- Have a warning if there is a time limit, with an option for more time if required.
- Clearly indicate where Help and Advice is available, with a contract phone number where possible.
- Leave plenty of room for writing in paper-based versions.
- Be clear which items are mandatory fields.
- Avoid scrolling wherever possible.
- try to avoid drop down boxes

13. Making Tests

- Ensure the test is fair and equal to all, and no test taker is disadvantaged by their disability.
- If the individual has been using assistive technology in their studies, consider that removing their technology for exams could be detrimental to their results and contravene equality legislation
- Where appropriate, use multiple choice questions.
- If multiple choice questions are used, do not make them so long and complex that they are difficult to remember, compare and contrast.
- Ensure that electronic versions are available wherever feasible, to allow background colours to be changed and as well as font size and style.
- Avoid use of vocabulary that is designed to trick the reader.
- Ensure that the examinee can at all times see the question when preparing the answer.

14. Making Reports

Well designed Reports should:

- Have a clear structure with list of milestones
- Consist diagrams, pictures
- Has list of references, attachments

15. Making Minutes

Well designed Minutes should:

- Show clearly what was accomplished
- Have agreed action points
- Have agreed areas of and who has responsibility

16.Supporting the dyslexic employee

Reading

- Mark priority texts
- Plain reading in advance
- Do not push to read out loud

Writing

- Organisation of workshops how to write (c-maps)

Organisation

- Time
- Space

17. Reading difficulty solutions

Difficulties in READING

Service		Technology
Education	**Work**	
- Help identify text priority to read - Give an extra time for deadline for reading books - Use fonts 12 in paper based documents and 24 in presentations - Print texts on coloured papers - Permit longer exam - Use plain language - Recommend TTS programme, - Recommend coloured overlays (paper version and electronic version) - Be familiar with the idea of concept maps. They can be a tool to mark and memorizing what was read. - Do not ask for out loud reading unless student wants it.	- Help identify text priority to read - Give an extra time for reading documents, or prepare documents to read in advance - Use fonts 12 in paper based documents and 24 in presentations - Print texts on coloured papers - Use plain language - Ask HR personnel to familiarize with TTS and ask them to teach employers to use it.	- Concept maps (notes from reading) - Text-to-speech (reading e-mails and other electronic documents) - Coloured overlays (to decrease sensitivity) - Changing settings of the screen - Spellchecker - Electronic post-it notes

Individual at school:
- Try different types of reading: skim reading, scan reading and full text reading
- Use post-in notes for books
- Highlight important issues in books
- Use concept maps to highlight ideas
- Use technology – make your own audiobooks using TTS programme.

Individual in a workplace:
- Try different types of reading: skim reading, scan reading and full text reading
- Print your own copies of documents and keep it
- Try different options (backgrounds, fonts) when you use computer
- Use concept maps to highlight ideas
- Use technology – make your own audiobooks using TTS programme.

18.Handwriting difficulty solutions

Difficulties in HANDWRITING		
Human		**Technology**
Education	**Work**	
- Allow using computer during any work (tests, exams, writing reports, filling forms) - Be familiar with speech-to-text software. - Build buddy system (exchanging notes).	- Allow using computer during any work (tests, exams, writing reports, filling forms) - Let workers to fill in forms electronically.	- Programs teaching typing. - Speech-to-text.
Individual at school: - Learn to type proficiently - If your capital letters are more legible than small letters, write using only capital letters - Use electronic concept mapping programme, your handmade concept map may be not legible - Find out who has good notes and borrow it. Do not resign from making your own notes - Ask for using computer at the exams - Use recorder (e.g. in your phone) to make short audio notes.	**Individual in a workplace:** - Use electronic concept mapping programme - Type your text, send it rather than give handwritten text - Use recorder (e.g. at phone) to make short audio notes.	

19. Organization difficulty solutions

Difficulties in GETTING ORGANIZED		
Human		**Technology**
Education	**Work**	
- Inform at the beginning of the school/academic year about requirements: dates of exams, books, organizational issues - Keep reminding of the approaching exams - Allow to have exam in a separate room if it is necessary.	- Give the employee a written job description. - Give employees a year/month/week calendar. It helps to ensure that they know what their work priorities are - Have clear reporting procedures - Hold meetings to see where your employees are - Develop a filing system that is as paperless as possible. - Offer seminars. Hire an expert to teach your employees how to become better organized.	- Concept maps (to plan activities) - Smartphone (to plan events, record and write notes) - Digital recorder (to record ideas).

Individual at school:
- Design place for everything
- Make checklist the day before what to take with you when you leave house in the morning
- Make To do list in the day before
- Use technology (e.g. recorder)
- Explain and outline timetables, dates and instructions
- Always have with you notepad or smartphone to make notes.

Individual in a workplace:
- Design place for everything
- Make daily and weekly To do lists
- Make checklist the day before what to take with you when you leave house in the morning
- Organize your daily activities according to Eisenhower matrix (see attachement)
- Establish separate folders for every event, conference, meeting. Organize them according to chosen key (e.g. date).
- Use technology (eg. calendars, recorders)
- Always have with you notepad or smartphone to make notes.

20. Note taking difficulty solutions

Difficulties in NOTETAKING		
Human		**Technology**
Education	**Work**	
- Allow recording your lecture - Inform that you may slow down when necessary - Give out presentation on paper - Send your presentation to the audience and inform them in advance you will do so - Write new terms on a blackboard, slow down pace of your talking when you introduce new terms - Use flipcharts; draw pictures whenever possible - Be familiar with idea of concept maps. They can be the picture to your speech and they can be a tool for notetaking.	- Allow recording your speech - Slow down during presentations - Give out paper where you introduce new words - Give out presentation on paper	- Concept maps (to highlight main issues) - Digital recorders

Individual at school:
- Use concept maps
- Find examples of essays
- Learn touch typing
- Use spellcheckers
- Ask somebody to read text
- Use technology (TTS)
- See your notes shortly after lecture finishes and rewrite your notes
- Find person with legible handwriting

Individual in a workplace:
- Use concept maps
- Find examples of written documents you must prepare
- Learn touch typing
- Use spellcheckers
- Use technology (TTS)
- See your notes shortly after meeting finish and rewrite your notes

21. Handwriting difficulty solutions

Difficulties in HANDWRITING		
Human		**Technology**
Education	**Work**	
- Allow using computer during any work (tests, exams, writing reports, filling forms) - Be familiar with speech-to-text software. - Build buddy system (exchanging notes).	- Allow using computer during any work (tests, exams, writing reports, filling forms) - Let workers to fill in forms electronically.	- Programs teaching typing. - Speech-to-text.
Individual at school: - Learn to type proficiently - If your capital letters are more legible than small letters, write using only capital letters - Use electronic concept mapping programme, your handmade concept map may be not legible - Find out who has good notes and borrow it. Do not resign from making your own notes - Ask for using computer at the exams - Use recorder (e.g. in your phone) to make short audio notes.	**Individual in a workplace:** - Use electronic concept mapping programme - Type your text, send it rather than give handwritten text - Use recorder (e.g. at phone) to make short audio notes.	

22. The DysVet Individual Support Plans

Name and surname of the INDIVIDUAL	
READING problems	
Reading aloud	
Understanding text	
Reading slowly	
Frequently re-reading	
Difficulties with sounding out new vocabulary	
Prioritizing texts	
What SUPPORT may be offered?	
Help identify priority texts	
Extended time for exams	
Enlarge fonts	
Print on coloured papers	
Buddy system	
What the INDIVIDUAL may do	
Learn different types of reading	
Highlight important conclusions, sentences	
Using concept maps	
Recommended TECHNOLOGY	
Text-to-speech	
Concept maps	
Coloured overlays	
Preferences (background, font etc.)	
Spellchecker	
Post-it-notes	

Name and surname of the INDIVIDUAL	
WRITING problems	
Writers block	
Organizing thoughts	
Two finger typist	
Spelling	
Handwriting	
No writing template	
What SUPPORT may be offered?	
Accept alternative reports (e.g. auditory bullet pointed and concept maps)	
Extended time for exams	
Using computer, dictionaries, spellcheckers etc	
Examples of essays	
What the INDIVIDUAL may do	
Use text-to-speech	
Use spellchecker	
Take a typing course	
Take a concept map course	
Recommended TECHNOLOGY	
Text-to-speech	
Concept map programme	
Spellchecker	

Name and surname of the INDIVIDUAL	
NOTETAKING problems	
Concentration	
Writing and listening in the same time	
Reading handwriting	
What SUPPORT may be offered?	
Presentation sent, given out	
Allowing recording	
Highlighting new terms	
Clear presenation with plain language and visible fonts	
What the INDIVIDUAL may do	
Use the computer	
Record lectures	
Borrowing notes from reliable resource	
Rewriting notes	
Recommended TECHNOLOGY	
Digital recorder	
Concept map programme	
Smart phone camera	

Name and surname of the INDIVIDUAL	
GETTING ORGANIZED problems	
Missing appointments	
Prioritizing activities	
Finding focus in writing reports	
What SUPPORT may be offered?	
Written instructions	
Shared calendars	
Holding regular meetings	
What the INDIVIDUAL may do	
Allocate place for everything	
Making checklist (e.g. things to take to work or college)	
Develop routines including reviewing calendars and To do list	
Recommended TECHNOLOGY	
Concept map	
Smartphones	
Calendars	
Notes	
Reminders	