**Disability and Academic Support Team: Dyslexia/ SpLDs Screening and Assessment Student Agreement**

**Principles**

Our screening and assessment agreement is based on the principle of providing all students at Aston University with the opportunities needed to fulfil their academic potential. We believe that early identification and carefully monitored learning support provision for any student who might have a specific learning difficulty (SpLD) is important. We recognise that dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD can make aspects of academic study extremely challenging for those individuals affected.

The University is guided by the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that individuals with recognised disabilities are not treated unfavourably and are offered reasonable adjustments. There are a range of adjustments that can be made to enable students with SpLDs to fulfil their potential, including: study skills support, assistive technology and examination support. Any adjustments and provisions made by the Disability and Academic Support Team are based on individual need, so students who make support requests are asked to provide valid supporting evidence i.e., an assessment report by an appropriately qualified professional.

An assessment can be undertaken or arranged by the Disability Academic Support Team if a student does not have the required evidence. However, due to the popularity of the screening and assessment service and limited resources, waiting times and the extent of testing are based on priority of need. Students with a well-documented history of a SpLD who require an intensive, personalised programme of support that is tailored to their specific, often severe, difficulties will be prioritised for a full post 16 diagnostic assessment to ensure they can apply for a Disabled Student Allowance (DSA). The University will part-fund the cost of a diagnostic assessment for this group of students and for those students who do not have a diagnosis but who have been identified through the Disability and Academic Support Team’s screening process as being at the highest risk of having a SpLD.

Students should appreciate that assessments are not simply a labelling exercise but rather a process of explanation in which specific areas of cognitive weakness that undermine the acquisition of some skills are highlighted. Recommendations made by the assessor explain what the individual can do, based on the assessment findings, to enhance their academic performance and progress. It is the responsibility of each individual to take appropriate action to address their areas of learning difficulty.

**Types of Assessment Evidence accepted**

**I have already been assessed and have a diagnosis...**

If you had a full diagnostic assessment carried out, before or after the age of 16, this will usually provide enough evidence for the Disability and Academic Support Team to make support recommendations for your whole course and, if you are a home student, to apply for a Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA).

If you have not already given the Disability and Academic Support Team a copy of your diagnostic assessment report, please email this to the studentwelfare@aston.ac.uk or bring your report to a Disability Advice drop-in (held daily at the Student Services Reception in The Hub, on the ground floor of the main building).

**\*Please Note:** do not wait until days before a class test or an examination period to submit a support request, as it will take time for the Disability and Academic Support Team to review evidence, make recommendations, and organise and provide support.

**I have a childhood diagnosis, pre-16 years of age**

If you had a dyslexia diagnosis by an educational psychologist while at primary school (e.g., age 8 or 9), you might need an updated assessment if you want to apply for a DSA. The Dyslexia Specialist will review your assessment report and advise accordingly. If you have a childhood diagnosis of dyspraxia, your report or medical evidence will have been written by a health professional (e.g., a consultant or occupational therapist). Likewise, the Disability and Academic Support Team will review your medical evidence and advise.

**I have an exam access arrangements report from GCSE or A Level – also known as a Form 8**

If you had an assessment undertaken solely for the purpose of examination support during GCSE, A level or equivalent examinations (e.g., BTEC diploma, International Baccalaureate, Access to HE), the Dyslexia Specialist will review your assessment evidence and make recommendations accordingly (e.g., 25% extra time, a smaller shared room). Any previous assessment evidence must meet the University’s standards and thresholds for examination support (e.g., online dyslexia screening tests will not be accepted). If your school or college assessment is not accepted, you can ask to be reassessed.

**\*Please note:** the Disability and Academic Support Team cannot guarantee that the examination access arrangement agreement you had at school or college will continue at University, therefore it is advisable you submit your assessment evidence for review early in semester 1. The cut-off for timetabling support for the January examination period is the first week of December, any late evidence will be processed at the discretion of the Team and Central Exams.

**Students seeking assessment for the first time**

You may meet unexpected difficulties at University, or academic staff may point out problems with your work, of which you have been previously unaware. This is not unusual, as educational demands change as students’ progress through their education.Whatever your situation, if you think you might be experiencing dyslexia type difficulties you are welcome to make an appointment with the Dyslexia Specialist to discuss your concerns. Afterwards you may decide to go forward for further screening or an assessment option.

**\*Please note:** if you are an undergraduate student in your final semester of study you will not be offered a full diagnostic assessment for SpLDs. Any learning support needs identified through a screening process or a shortened assessment will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The same applies if you are a postgraduate student with less than 12 weeks of your academic programme remaining. This is because there is insufficient time at this late stage to complete the DSA application process necessary for a government funded specialist support package to be put in place.

**The Screening Process**

We offer a preliminary screening interview to students who are wondering if their difficulties are associated with dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD or dyscalculia. The screening process aims to build up a picture to determine if there is enough evidence to suggest that you might have a specific learning difficulty. You will be invited to attend an initial meeting with the Dyslexia Specialist who will gather relevant background information about your educational and developmental history, the perceived impact of your reported difficulties on your studies, and the academic progress you have made on your course so far. The specialist may ask to see a sample of your academic work or conduct a task or some short tests. This information will help inform a decision about how ‘at risk’ you are of having a SpLD, and if you should be referred on for an assessment.

**\*Please note:** if you are considered to be at low risk, the Dyslexia Specialist will not refer you directly for more in-depth testing but will recommend support options and undertake a period of monitoring. If little progress is made despite the uptake of additional learning resources within the University, an assessment will be undertaken.

**Assessment options**

* **Full diagnostic assessment**

The Disability and Academic Support Team will refer a student for a full diagnostic assessment if the Dyslexia Specialist is convinced:

* there is strong evidence which suggests you have dyslexia and/ or dyspraxia, and
* that without a formal diagnosis, the University will be unable to put in place special accommodations and provision, and that this would result in you being placed at a significant disadvantage.

If you are referred on to an assessor, the cost of the diagnostic assessment will be met in part by the University.

* **Exam access arrangement assessment**

If the Dyslexia Specialist is not convinced of the need for a full diagnostic assessment, they may instead

* recommend an exam access arrangement assessment only, and
* refer you to the Learning Development Centre (LDC) and Maths Centre for academic study skills support, including workshops and group study skills drop-ins delivered by the Dyslexia Specialist.

**\*Please note:** if students wish to fast-track this system, the Disability and Academic Support Team will accept diagnostic assessment reports from private assessors: an educational psychologist, or a specialist teacher assessor with a current assessment practising certificate (APC); however, the University will not part-fund a privately arranged assessment without prior agreement by the Dyslexia Specialist confirmed in writing.

**Funding assessments and eligibility**

The cost of an educational diagnostic assessment can range from £450 - £700. From the 1st of August 2022, the University will contribute £200 towards the cost of an assessment for identified students. The Disability and Academic Support Team can direct students to suitably qualified assessors, who are used to working with Aston University students. It is expected that:

* the assessor will arrange a mutually convenient day/ time with the student for the assessment, to be conducted on the University premises where possible, and produce a report within 3-4 weeks of the assessment date
* the student will pay the assessment fee in full to the assessor prior to the assessment.

The Disability and Academic Support Team will reimburse the student after the assessment, on receiving a copy of an invoice.

Exam Access Arrangements are conducted in-house by the Dyslexia Specialist without charge.

**\*Please note:** once an assessment has been arranged and accepted by a student, failure to attend without good reason and prior notice may result in a lengthy delay in the assessment process.

**Assessments and types of reports provided**

* **Full diagnostic assessment**

A diagnostic assessment can take up to 5 hours to complete and involves testing in the following areas: verbal and non-verbal reasoning ability, cognitive processing skills, and attainments in literacy and numeracy.

Students wishing to apply for DSA who meet the threshold for a diagnostic assessment will be provided with a comprehensive assessment report that is written in accordance with current guidelines for the assessment of SpLDs in Higher Education. Students who undergo a diagnostic assessment, but who do not meet the necessary criteria for a diagnosis to be made will also be issued with a summary assessment report. Students are requested to submit completed assessment reports to the Disability and Academic Support Team, so that support recommendations can be made based on the assessment findings.

**\*Please note:** there is a possibility that the assessor may not make a diagnosis. In the rare event of a student wishing to contest assessment report findings, the University will not contribute funds towards a further diagnostic assessment.

* **Exam access arrangements assessment**

An exam access arrangements assessment will take about 1 hour to complete and involves testing cognitive skills: reading efficiency, auditory short term and working memory and speed of processing. The purpose is to identify if a student is experiencing information processing weaknesses and will require extra time to complete tests and examinations.

This assessment will be undertaken by the Dyslexia Specialist and a short summary style report released within 2 weeks of the assessment.

**Sharing information about your assessment**

All assessments and advice and guidance sessions are confidential. The Disability and Academic Support Team will ask your permission to share information with the academic School and Central Exams about your learning difficulty and the support recommendations you require. You will be asked to sign a Disclosure/ Data Protection Form and to approve your individual Summary of Need.

**\*Please note:** information about your specific learning difficulty or the specialist support you received will not be recorded on your degree transcript or certificate.

**Feedback following a full diagnostic assessment**

Once you have received your diagnostic assessment report you can make an appointment with the Dyslexia Specialist, who will help you to understand the report and what it means for you in terms of learning strategies and the reasonable adjustments the University can make to support you with your academic study.

You can book an appointment with a Disability Advisor for assistance with the DSA application process, also to discuss any disability-related issues within your academic School.

**\*Please note:** for advice on course and module related issues you should contact your personal tutor or a module leader.

**Individual Specialist Support**

* For home students taking eligible courses, specialist tutorials are funded by a Disabled Student’s Allowance.
* For students on degree apprenticeship courses, a study skills tutor or mentor can be funded through the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) or the Access to Work scheme.
* For EU and International students, specialist teaching will be funded by the University following an assessment of support needs by the Dyslexia Specialist.

**Additional learning resources provided by the University**

A formal diagnosis of dyslexia does not have to be made for a student to access additional learning support. The University provides a wide range of inclusive learning resources.

* **The Disability and Academic Support Team**

The Dyslexia Specialist offers academic study skills workshops and drop-in sessions in the Learning Development Centre (LDC) throughout the academic year to all students registered with a specific learning difficulty or information processing weaknesses. For information about workshops, you can visit the BlackBoard page or pick up a leaflet from the LDC Reception (library, 1st floor).

* **Learning Development Centre**

The LDC offers one-to-one general study skills tutorialsto all students. A tutorial usually lasts 30 minutes and needs to be booked in advance: there is no limit to the number of tutorials that you can book.

The LDC run a programme of Study Skills Workshops and the Maths Centre offers Maths Support drop-ins on a daily basis. Study guides can also be downloaded from the LDC web page.

Student Writing and Maths Mentorsare available to act as a supportive listener and to help you develop your academic approach whilst working on an assignment.

**\*Please note:** Skype and email tutorials are available for work based and online learners, and placement students.

Visit the LDC web page <https://www.aston.ac.uk/current-students/learning-development-centre>

* **CELCA (Centre for English Language and Communication at Aston)**

Offers free language and academic skills support to International Students whose first language is not English. Support is available through one-to one and small group tutorials.

For more information, see <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/clipp/english>

* **Library Services**

The library offers a programme of Information and Research Skills workshops. You can request a tutorial with an Information Specialist for additional guidance.

You can contact the Information Specialist for your academic School directly via <https://www.aston.ac.uk/library/subject-support/information-specialists>

* **Assistive Technology**

**Aston Replay**: Check BlackBoard for recorded lectures that you can replay to supplement your notes and assist with revision.

**Glean is an Audio Notetaker:** This tool can be operated by you to record lectures and to annotate and highlight notes in the moment. A request for a trial copy can be made to the Disability and Academic Support Team.

**Sensus Access**: This is a self-service tool that can be used to convert reading materials into alternative formats, e.g., an audio file/book. Go to SensusAcces.com <https://www.sensusaccess.com/> , select ‘Convert a file’ and use your Aston email address. More information is available from the library website, see video at the bottom of the page. <https://www.aston.ac.uk/library/services/additional-needs>

**Tools for Learning:** This bank of resources has been developed to support students with a range of study skills. The tools have been grouped into categories: **Note taking, Reading, Planning, Focusing, Writing, Editing, Presenting and Referencing.** <https://www.aston.ac.uk/current-students/support-services/disability-support/resources>

**Screening and Assessment Agreement**

I confirm I have read the terms within this document and agree to these

**Student signature Date**

Student name: Student number: