

# Teaching and learning issues

## Creating an Inclusive Classroom

*Supporting students with particular needs and requirements*

City Lit has a very diverse student body and the inclusive nature of our provision is one of our strengths.

About 8% of our 30,000 students identify as having a learning difficulty, disability or hearing impairment at enrolment. The Access and Inclusion team contact them all by email or letter - 2,400 students a year - explaining the support available. If students respond, they discuss their support needs.

The team can't offer in-class or one to one support to everyone — they have to decide according to need, staff availability and budget. For example, 10% of the population identify as dyslexic. So 1 to 1 dyslexia support is prioritised for students on accredited courses and other courses with substantial reading and writing. For most students, it is key that tutors make reasonable adjustments.

Tutors will receive a support plan from Access and Inclusion for students who have responded to their emails and been assessed. But there will also be students who haven't replied, or didn't disclose a support need at enrolment.

Some students want their tutor to be informed about their difficulty or disability, but don't feel they need support. Your department will email

### Top Tips for Materials

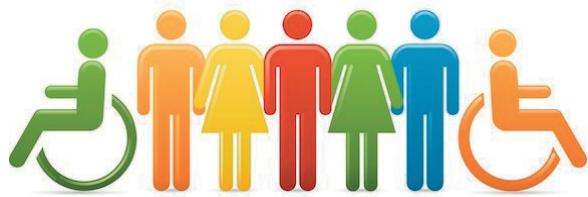


- Have an example handout available in different size fonts and different (pale) colour backgrounds at the back of the class. Ask people to look and let you know individually which they prefer. Give the same handouts to everyone.
- Use a non serif face such as Arial 12pt+ Leave lots of space and use images if you can
- Make your handouts available on computer so students can then adjust the size and background in a way that suits them.
- Don't use handouts that have been reproduced so many times that they are faded and difficult to read!

you their details. You can decide whether to talk to them after your first class, or whether you can offer something simple to the whole group such as larger print materials.

If you think a student may have a support need, disability, or learning difficulty, it is important to give them an opportunity to share and request support. You could ask a simple question, such as "How are things going?". This may be all that is needed to give a student the confidence to disclose needs.

Overleaf are some strategies for students with particular needs. But there is no one right approach. The key thing is to consult the learner about how they best learn, and do so without exposing them, or treating them as special.



## **Classroom strategies to consider**

### **Students who are dyslexic**

Dyslexic students bring many strengths to learning, such as creativity, lateral thinking and making meaning by seeing patterns and relationships



Leonardo Da Vinci—dyslexic.

They can experience persistent challenges with working memory, organisation, reading (e.g. slow speed), organising writing, notetaking and/or spelling. Assignments may take longer to complete.

Dyslexic students vary both in the severity of their challenges and in the particular pattern of challenges they have. They will need you to understand and respond on an individual basis. The following are some strategies :

- Show an appreciation of students' strengths and an understanding of their difficulties.
- Give students any reading material in advance (for some students this is essential)
- Let students record your class and/or provide them with clearly written hand-outs from the class. Use images where you can.
- Write key terminology on the board and recommend a personal vocabulary book for new specialist terminology.
- Introduce tasks in relation to their purpose – so that tasks are meaningful.
- Relate tasks/activities to the big picture of the lesson so that learners can see how the lesson hangs together
- Be very clear in giving instructions. Make sure students have fully understood—particularly sequences of information

- Give practical/concrete examples of theoretical concepts and check understanding.
- Consider multi-sensory approaches. Can your lesson involve visual, aural, oral and kinaesthetic learning?
- Make sure students know how words are pronounced as well as written.

#### *For writing tasks:*

- Make sure the student is clear on the purpose of any assignment (e.g. essay title).
- Give them an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the conventions and style of the genre. E.g. give an example, or a writing frame.

#### *When setting reading:*

- provide a meaningful task (e.g. questions) so that students can read purposefully.
- Help students select key sections from any reading lists.

Ask students who know they are dyslexic for any recommendations they have, e.g. in a diagnostic assessment report.

### **Students who stammer**

- Give the person time to speak.
- Keep natural eye contact.
- Try to avoid finishing off words and sentences.
- Avoid giving simplistic advice such as "take your time", "take a deep breath", "don't worry about it".
- and most importantly, remember that the hearing and understanding of a person who stammers is usually unimpaired, so you do not need to change the way in which you are speaking.

### **Students with communication difficulties following stroke or head injury**

- Try to reduce background noise and distractions.
- Make sure you have the student's attention before speaking to them.
- Avoid sudden topic change.
- Allow the student time to talk.
- Try to avoid using long or complex sentences; it may be helpful to break things up into shorter, more manageable phrases.
- Pick up on student's use of non verbal

communication. It sometimes helps to use natural gesture when you speak.

- It may be helpful to offer a pen and paper so the student can write or draw to assist communication.
- It does not usually help to raise your voice, but slowing down a bit may help.
- Remember that the person may lack confidence in their ability to communicate and is likely to experience more difficulty if anxious.

## Students with hidden disabilities



Teachers should be aware that students may have hidden disabilities. This means that it is not visible or audible to others. Some common hidden disabilities are Epilepsy, Diabetes, Asthma, Hearing Loss, Tinnitus and heart conditions. Ask the Access and Inclusion team for more help.

## Students with mental health difficulties

As a tutor you are not expected to be qualified to assess mental health problems, or be responsible for the treatment of students with mental health needs – or, indeed, for any other health needs. However, you may spot some behaviours in the classroom that may be cause for concern.

An individual on a mental health spectrum may have particular issues with trusting others, for example – and may be especially concerned with confidentiality. They may also have poor concentration or memory impairment, or they may seem lethargic, or have difficulty keeping appointments.

If you are concerned about a student and feel they need support, discuss this with them and suggest referral to the Access and Inclusion team.

Students with mental health needs need to comply with the student code of conduct in the

same way as any other student.

Some strategies:

- Establish ground rules. This goes for all students, but spell out the rules more clearly than usual.
- Communicate clearly and directly.
- Provide a safe environment for the individual to talk without being interrupted.
- Allow plenty of time for the individual to make decisions.
- Let the person set and modify their own goals as much as possible.
- Be clear about your own boundaries. This includes the time you have available to talk, and the limits to the support you personally are able to provide.
- If personal issues come up in conversation with a student, listen sympathetically without probing or trying to find a resolution. A helpful phrase to show empathy but without becoming overly involved is: "That sounds difficult for you."

## Students who have a learning disability or difficulty

- Create a safe learning environment where the student feels secure.
- Break down learning into smaller steps/stages.
- Work from the whole to parts.
- Provide opportunities for reinforcement and repetition or recap.
- Ensure early success in the subject as this builds confidence.
- Identify the learner's preferred learning style and adapt your methods
- Consider how you may need to differentiate learning outcomes in order for them to be achievable and realistic.

## Students who have a physical disability

- Ask the student what help is needed (carrying materials, setting up equipment etc.) and, if s/he is agreeable, ask other students to help.
- Consider classroom layout and where possible rearrange it so the student can function comfortably (e.g. move chairs so they have clear passage). Ensure there is enough space for wheelchair users to

- manoeuvre their chairs.
- If an ergonomic chair is booked for a student, please check other students are not using it. Or you may need to contact Access and Inclusion to book a chair.
- Open doors, especially one-way opening fire doors, for anyone who finds this difficult.
- Give priority to those who need the lift most, especially those with a mobility impairment
- Please don't use disabled toilets.
- Do not leave chairs or equipment in the corridors. If you notice a hazard of this sort, contact your department/Galliford Try.
- Make sure you know the fire and evacuation procedures for mobility impaired students.

## **Students who are deaf or hard of hearing**

### ***Communication tactics for lip readers***

- Look straight at the student when talking to them, be careful not to turn away or look down as the student needs to lip read you.
- Don't talk to the whiteboard.
- Speak clearly and at a normal pace – do not exaggerate your lip-patterns.
- Stand where there is good light and there is no window or light source behind you.
- Write key points on the board when possible and briefly repeat input from other students
- Avoid walking up and down while speaking. A lip-reader will find this both tiring and confusing.
- If one-to-one communication becomes confusing try writing. Try to sit opposite and not side by side.
- Give the student any additional written notes or information at the start of the class.

### ***For deaf students using communication support or sign language interpreters***



Look at the student when you are talking to them, do not direct your speech to the Support Worker or the interpreter.

In group discussion, ask your students to put up their hands when they speak so the Deaf student can tell who is contributing.

Interpreters are usually 5 seconds behind in their

translation, making it difficult for students to ask questions or contribute as the conversation has moved on. So watch out and encourage deaf students to participate.

Be aware that deaf students often have problems with written English; it may not be their first language and they are not exposed to it.

## **Students who are blind or visually impaired**

- Prepare hand-outs in advance. Many visually impaired students prefer digital materials in advance which can be accessed via computer
- Offer to describe the layout of the room.
- Describe any visual material.
- Read out any whiteboard notes/PowerPoint slides or texts.
- The student may wish to record the session.
- It can help if you use a strong colour contrast between marker and board and on PowerPoint slides. Avoid using red or orange markers on whiteboards.
- Remember a visually impaired student will not be aware of others' body language and not know when to join in the discussion or activity unless it is made explicit.

**Remember the student is always the best expert on how they learn.....**

**For further help, contact [access@citylit.ac.uk](mailto:access@citylit.ac.uk)  
0207 492 2607**

### **City Lit Dyslexic Staff Support Group**

This group discusses issues for dyslexic and dyspraxic staff at City Lit. If you consider yourself dyslexic/dyspraxic, you are very welcome.

**Next meeting: Wednesday 26th April 4—5.30 in Room 113.**

We will show a short film we made about our experience at City Lit, and discuss a policy on how City Lit can support dyslexic staff. Contact [wendy.moss@citylit.ac.uk](mailto:wendy.moss@citylit.ac.uk)—or just come along

This newsletter has been compiled by Orlane Russell (Access and Inclusion) and Wendy Moss. Digital copies of this and all back issues are on [www.citylit.ac.uk/Staff\\_resources/Teacher\\_resources](http://www.citylit.ac.uk/Staff_resources/Teacher_resources) or the staff development google site: <https://sites.google.com/a/citylit.ac.uk/spd/pd> .