

# The Educational Support Worker HANDBOOK



## **EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT WORKER HANDBOOK**

The Educational Support Worker Handbook has been funded by Disability Advisors Working Network (DAWN) and the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD).

### **DAWN (Disability Advisors Working Network):**

The Disability Advisors Working Network (DAWN) is the professional organisation for Disability Officers who are primarily responsible for supporting students with disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland. The organisation provides a forum for the sharing of expertise and the development of knowledge and skills in this area. DAWN works towards the development of professional standards, best practice and collaborates on the development of policies and procedures for the inclusion of students with disabilities in Higher Education.

DAWN plays an important role in influencing disability policies in Higher Education Institutions through the continuing development of disability related awareness and practice. DAWN has a national voice through members' participation on advisory committees and national forums. The network has initiated change in admission policy through the development of the National Supplementary Admissions Procedure for Students with Disabilities known as DARE (Disability Access Route to Education).

DAWN operates on the principle that people with disabilities should have equality of access to, and participation in, the academic activities of Higher Education Institutions and also in the social, cultural and sporting life on campus.



**The following institutions are members of DAWN:**

Athlone Institute of Technology  
Cork Institute of Technology  
Dublin City University  
Dublin Institute of Technology  
National College of Art & Design  
National College of Ireland  
NUI Galway  
NUI Maynooth  
Queens University  
Tallaght Institute of Technology  
Trinity College Dublin  
University College Cork  
University College Dublin  
University of Limerick  
University of Ulster  
Waterford Institute of Technology  
Limerick Institute of Technology

**AHEAD - Association for Higher Education and Disability**

AHEAD is an independent non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in further and higher education for students with disabilities and to enhance their employment prospects on graduation.

AHEAD provides information to students and graduates with disabilities, teachers, guidance counsellors and parents on disability issues in education. AHEAD works with graduates and employers through the GET AHEAD Graduate Forum and the WAM Mentored Work Placement Programme. AHEAD coordinates LINK an Erasmus funded network of organisations promoting the inclusion of students & graduates with disabilities within the EU.

Members of AHEAD include education providers in the further and higher education sectors, employers and voluntary organisations.

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## **SECTION ONE:**

### **1.1 What is an Educational Support Worker?**

An Educational Support Worker provides individual assistance to students with disabilities in order to enhance their learning experience and help them to fulfill their academic potential.

Examples of Educational Support Workers include: Notetakers, Academic Tutors, Sign Language Interpreters, Library Assistants, Educational / Academic Assistants, Exam Scribes and Reading Support for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students.

It is the policy of many Higher Education Institutions to maintain a register of Educational Support Workers which includes postgraduate students of the institution.

### **1.2 How to Register as an Educational Support Worker:**

With the exception of Sign Language Interpreters, Alternative Format/ Assistive Technology Facilitators and Specialist Tutors, applicants do not have to be fully trained in a particular area of support in order to apply for a position, as an Educational Support Worker.

The Disability Support Service will provide full training prior to the commencement of support duties.

Please complete the application form attached to this handbook and return it along with a copy of your CV to the Disability Support Office.

All persons who complete and return the attached application form will be interviewed by personnel from the Disability Support Office.

### **1.3 Induction Programme for Educational Support Workers:**

All successful applicants will be required to attend an induction programme which will address the following:

- Basic disability awareness training.
- Guidance on roles and responsibilities.
- Payment procedures.

## **1.4 Terms of Registration for Educational Support Workers:**

### **Educational Support Workers for students with disabilities must:**

- Be eligible to undertake paid employment in the European Union.
- Be aware of the needs of students with disabilities in Higher Education.
- Respect professional boundaries and maintain a professional relationship with the student.
- Be punctual and prepared for sessions with the student.
- Be discreet, respect the privacy of the person they are supporting and liaise with the Disability Support Service regarding any concerns or issues they may have in relation to the student or support service.
- Be aware that confidential information about the student may not be divulged to anyone outside of the Disability Support Service, without the agreement of the student, except in cases where there is justifiable concern regarding the personal safety of the student or others. Even then, only consult with the appropriate professional agencies.
- Maintain accurate signed records of the support provided to the student and submit these records to the Disability Support Service or relevant funding authority when requested.
- Be aware that a position on this register does not guarantee employment.

The Disability Support Service will provide advice and guidance to the registered Educational Support Worker on meeting the above criteria during induction and throughout the delivery of support.

**If an Educational Support Worker has any issues or queries, their first point of contact should be the Disability Support Service.**

**Failure to meet any of the above criteria may result in loss of registration with the Higher Education Institution as an Educational Support Worker.**





## 1.5 Claiming Payment:

In order to claim payment, the Educational Support Worker must complete all the necessary documentation, and return it to the Disability Support Service before the required date each month.

**We regret that all payments received after this date cannot be processed.**

The timesheet must contain the following:

- Signature of the Educational Support Worker.
- Signature of the student receiving support to confirm that the work has been completed.
- Name of the student for whom the work has been done.

## **SECTION TWO:**

### **2.1 Roles Of The Educational Support Worker:**

The role of an Educational Support Worker may include the following:

- Notetaking
- Academic / Educational Assistant
- Personal Assistant
- Laboratory / Classroom Assistant
- Library Assistant
- Academic Tutor
- Alternative Format [AF] Assistive Technology [AT] Facilitator
- Sign Language Interpreter
- Reading Support Worker
- Reader for Exams
- Exam Scribe

### **2.2 Role of a Notetaker:**

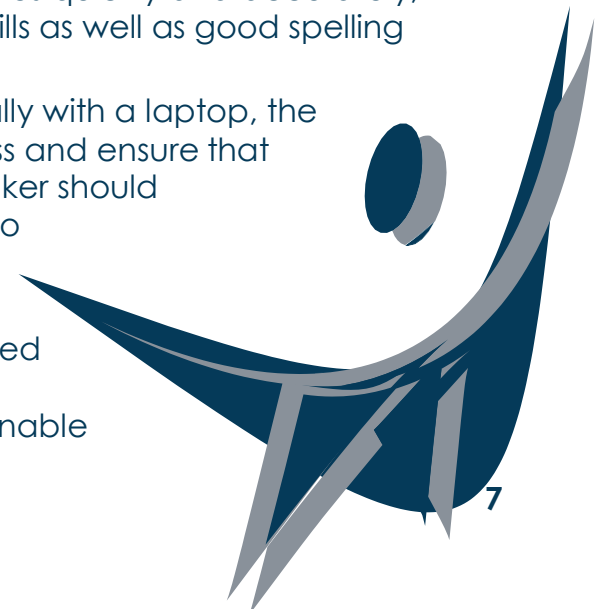
The role of a Notetaker is to record accurate and detailed notes on content delivered in lectures or other oral presentations for a student.

**Three types of note-taking services are available:**

- A Notetaker may, document the presentation on a laptop during the lecture and e-mail the content to the student.
- A Notetaker may, record written notes during the lecture and give them to the student at the end of the presentation.
- A Notetaker can, record notes on a laptop during the lecture which appears simultaneously on the student's laptop screen.

**Responsibilities:**

- Notetakers should be able to record notes quickly and accurately, have legible writing, proficient typing skills as well as good spelling and grammar.
- When recording class-notes electronically with a laptop, the Notetaker should arrive early to the class and ensure that a power source is available. The Notetaker should ensure that the autosave feature is set to save at regular intervals.
- With electronic notetaking assistance, the Notetaker should forward all recorded notes to the student and the Disability Support Service within an agreed reasonable timeframe.







- The Notetaker should not edit content – only the content delivered in the presentation should be provided.
- The Notetaker should introduce themselves to lecturers at the beginning of the term in order to ensure receipt of copies of any notes provided by the lecturer. The Notetaker should refrain from participation in class discussions.
- A Notetaker must not give copies of the notes to any third party, unless directed to do so by the Disability Support Service.
- If a Notetaker is unable to attend a presentation, sufficient notice should be given to the Disability Support Service so that an alternative Notetaker can be assigned.
- In the event that a student does not require notetaking services for a particular lecture they are required to give 24 hours' notice.
- If adequate notice is not given, the Notetaker is entitled to be paid in full for the session.
- Note taking services are provided on the condition that students receiving the service attend all sessions for which they receive the service. Students should meet their Notetakers at the beginning of each class for which notes are being taken. If the student has not arrived within the first 20 minutes the notes should be forwarded to the Disability Support Service.
- In exceptional circumstances, such as absence due to illness, a student may receive lecture notes while absent – with the approval of the Disability Support Service.

**Prior to submitting the notes to the student, the Notetaker should:**

- Proof read and spell-check the notes.
- Record references, key names and terminologies as accurately as possible.
- Record the summaries at the beginning and end of the lecture.
- Not use abbreviations unless agreed with the student in advance.
- Not select 'relevant' or 'important' material. It is up to the student to decide this for themselves.
- Not attempt to summarise a point which is not understood by the Notetaker - clarification should be sought from the lecturer at the end of the session.

**Guidelines for Presentation of Notes:**

- Include the date, course title, name of lecturer and location of lecture on the first page of all notes.
- Notes should be in Arial black, font size 12, with 1.5 spacing. This can be agreed with the student but is the recommended default style.
- All pages should be numbered.
- If a lecture is cancelled record this at the beginning of the notes for the following lecture. This will help to avoid confusion around 'missing' notes.

## 2.3 Role of Academic / Educational Assistant:

### Person Specification:

- Excellent Interpersonal and communication skills are essential.
- Sensitivity, confidentiality and respect for the privacy of the student at all times are paramount for this role.

### Guidelines for Academic / Educational Assistant:

- The primary responsibility of an Academic / Educational Assistant is to assist a student with a disability with educational support requirements that the student cannot complete independently.
- An Academic / Educational Assistant may be required to assist with mobility and orientation around the college.
- An Academic / Educational Assistant may be required to assist with educational tasks, sourcing library books, photocopying, etc.
- An Academic / Educational Assistant will assist the student in identifying and overcoming issues related to submitting assignments. This type of support deals with essay techniques in general, paragraph structure, appropriate referencing and the use of grammar.
- An Academic / Educational assistant may be required to assist with carrying personal belongings, books, folders and materials for the student.
- An Academic / Educational Assistant will facilitate the student's participation in a course of study but will not assist with, or complete, any of the work associated with that course of study. For example, it is fine to be asked to retrieve books but it is not acceptable to be asked to research which articles or chapters should be chosen to fulfill an assignment.
- Ensure communication exists between the student you are supporting and peers and staff. Do not speak on behalf of the student.
- Assisting the student when with friends requires particular skill and sensitivity. It is important that you keep a low profile.
- Arrive punctually at agreed times ready for work.
- Communicate and discuss any problems that arise as soon as possible.





## 2.4 Role of a Personal Assistant:

The role of a Personal Assistant is to address the personal needs specific to the student. The duties and responsibilities of the Personal Assistant should be discussed with the student and the Disability Support Service.

### Responsibilities:

- The student may require assistance with personal needs.
- A Personal Assistant may be required to assist the student during meal times at college.

## 2.5 Role of a Laboratory Assistant:

The role of a Laboratory/Classroom Assistant is to provide support to the student in the performance of duties within a laboratory/classroom/studio environment, whilst always respecting health and safety procedures.

### Person Specification:

- Laboratory/Classroom Assistants are expected to work in accordance with the 'Terms of Registration for Educational Support Workers.'
- Must have sound understanding of the use of relevant classroom and laboratory equipment.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills are essential.

### Responsibilities:

- The Laboratory Assistant must attend the safety lecture at the beginning of the year with the student you work with. The Lab Assistant should accompany the student when meeting the Laboratory supervisor to discuss safety issues.
- The Laboratory Assistant should pay attention to any Health and Safety hazards or risks which may potentially arise in the session. Identify hazards in the laboratory – flammable, toxic, electrical or dangerous moving parts. They should also become familiar with the alarms, evacuation procedures, location of eye wash etc.
- The Laboratory Assistant should consult with the Disability Support Officer and Course Supervisor regarding personal protection for the student, including choice of lab coat, glasses, gloves etc.
- Laboratory Assistants should assist the student with general mobility around the laboratory if required.

## 2.6 Role of a Library Assistant:

The role of a library assistant is to help the student to have unrestricted access to all of the services available in the library.

### **The duties of a Library Assistant can include:**

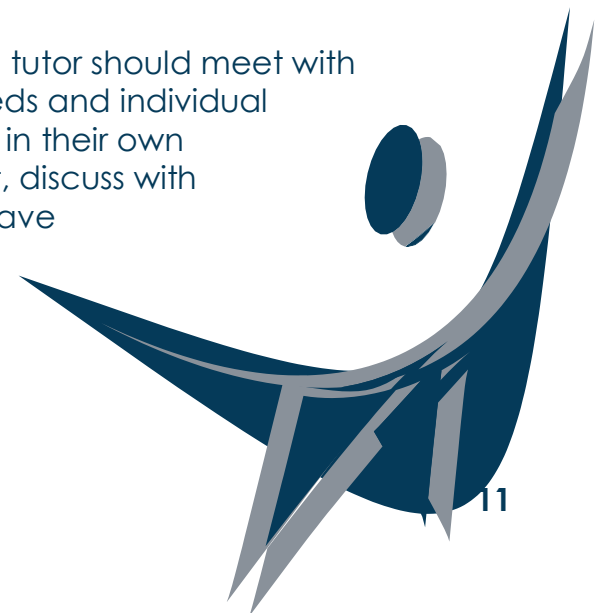
- Searching for books and journals, borrowing and returning books, photocopying material from the library etc. Some students may find the library disconcertingly large and may not be at ease using it.
- The student and Library Assistant should meet at the beginning of the academic term to agree times when library assistance takes place. This allows the student to plan their study regime in relation to their routine of accessing the library.
- A library assistant for a student with a visual impairment may be required to record chapter summaries and introductions so that the student can then decide on the material to be scanned and stored electronically.

## 2.7 Role of an Academic Tutor:

Academic Tutors instruct students on a one-to-one basis in order to enhance the student's understanding of material covered in a specific class or course. Academic Tutors typically work with a student through the progression of a course and dedicate time each week to meet the student and explain any course material with which the student is having difficulty.

### **Responsibilities:**

- The tutor should have knowledge of the subject area, including module content, assessment procedures and other subject specific information.
- The tutor should have previous experience in tuition. Preference is given to individuals with a history of postgraduate study or currently in postgraduate study who have advanced knowledge in the subject for which tuition is provided.
- Prior to commencement of support, the tutor should meet with the student to identify the student's needs and individual requirements. Each student is an expert in their own disability, so on first meeting the student, discuss with the student what difficulties they may have and what learning / teaching methods suit them best.





- Work towards having an open rapport with the student so that communication is twofold and student is comfortable to indicate if they do not understand something. The key to effective one-to-one tutoring is to be adaptable and to respond to a student's individual needs.
- Academic Tutors should prepare a tutorial plan with objectives for each semester and the number of hours of tuition should be approved by the Disability Support Service prior to commencement. A tutor evaluation form should be completed by the tutor and the student at the end of each semester.
- The Academic Tutor should prepare for each session by engaging in appropriate research for the subject and assessment criteria.
- Where necessary, prepare material, pre-read, photocopy or retrieve books before the tutorial. This saves time and allows you to focus on the substantive issues at hand.
- During a tutorial session, the Academic Tutor should attempt to create a stimulating and interactive learning environment which enhances the student's understanding of the module content.
- During a tutorial session, prompt the student for responses, present questions and help the student to answer the questions in a structured and academic manner. Verbalisation can be a key to rapid progress and the student should be encouraged to 'explore' as much as is usefully possible.
- At the end of each session, ask the student for feedback and what they would like to cover in the next session.
- The tutor is expected to facilitate the student's learning but is not responsible for the student's performance – the student is responsible for his/her own learning and academic development.
- The tutor should liaise with the Disability Support Service and nominated staff (e.g. Dyslexia Advisor) for information and guidance on the educational impacts of the student's specific disability.
- The tutor should liaise with the staff of the relevant Academic Department for clarification and direction on subject requirements.
- The tutor is expected to observe and adhere to departmental rules.
- The Academic Tutor should consult with the Disability Support Officer and/or Disability Support Service if issues arise which are beyond the expertise/training of the Academic Tutor.
- Any interventions on behalf of the student should go through the Disability Support Service in the first instance.
- The tutor is expected to respect the student's right to confidentiality. However, in the case of perceived acute stress, or where it is felt that there is potential risk to the student, the tutor should bring this to the attention of the Disability Support Officer immediately.
- The Tutor should give adequate notice to the student if he/she is unable to fulfill an appointment.

## **2.8 Role of an Alternative Media Format (AMF)/ Assistive Technology (AT) Facilitator:**

The role of an AMF/AT facilitator is to assist students, who have difficulties accessing written information, to obtain relevant documents from the Library, Departments, or from other sources and convert them to an appropriate format (Braille, enlarged print, machine-readable format).

An AMF/AT facilitator can assist the student in accessing audio and vocal presentations (lectures, seminars, films and videos) by providing typed transcriptions of audio or video recordings. The AMF/AT facilitator can also assist the student through training with specialist equipment for accessing print and audio sources.

### **Responsibilities:**

- The AMF/AT facilitator should have an in-depth understanding of the techniques, software and I.T. equipment used in assistive technology and in training others to use it.
- The AMF/AT facilitator should have specialist skills such as Grade II English Braille and competence in typing.

In some colleges some of the above work is done by an Assistive Technology Officer. Where this exists, training in the above areas will be given by the Officer.

### **Scanning:**

If a student cannot access printed material, an alternative format may be required. The most common formats used by visually impaired people are large print, Braille, machine-readable formats (such as a word document) and audio, such as digital recording.

The first step in rendering printed material accessible to visually impaired students usually involves scanning. Scanning text ensures that it is available electronically, that it can be made available in a variety of formats and can be read using assistive technology, such as audio screen readers, magnified or converted to Braille.

Before commencing the scanning process the AMF/AT Facilitator should request the student to prioritise the content. In addition, the AMF/AT Facilitator will meet with individual student to discuss and agree on the most suitable format and standard of editing required.





The guidelines below are designed to ensure that the scanning process is as accurate as possible and that it can be formatted easily. In practice, the specific format and standard of editing will vary, designed to match the requirements of the individual student. However, if care is taken, a common text may only need to be scanned once and then accessed by several different people, using a variety of different formats.

The AMF/AT Facilitator should ensure that each page of the document is scanned in order and that it is edited correctly.

Before editing and formatting the document the AMF/AT Facilitator should scan the entire document and save the unedited document before beginning the editing process. The editing process can be undertaken using a scanning programme or a third party word processing software such as Word.

When scanning a book, each chapter should be saved as an individual document, with a title that refers to the main title of the publication. The saved documents should be given to the student and copied to the appropriate Disability Support Service folder to be archived for future use.

#### **General Formatting Guidelines:**

- The standard font format is Arial 14point.
- There should be no more than one column of text per page.
- The text should always justify to the left.
- The paragraph widths and indentations should be standard throughout the document.
- There should be a blank line between each paragraph.

#### **Bibliographic Information:**

- Each document should begin with the complete bibliographic Information.
- If the document is sourced from a book the following should be included:
  - » The name of the author, initial (year), title of the publication in italics, place of publication, publisher, page numbers.
  - » In the case of a journal article; Name1, Initial1, Name2, Initial2, (year) Title of the article, title of The Journal Vol (no) pp.
  - » If the library code or ISBN numbers are available, these should also be included at the beginning of the document.
  - » Full reference details should be included with the document.



### **Page numbers:**

It is not essential that page numbers are included in the scanned document; however the page numbers from the original document are required.

Insert p. and the number at the beginning of the text (after the reference), and each subsequent page should be numbered – even if this means breaking up a paragraph mid-sentence.

Leave one line, then write p. and the number, leave another line, and continue with the text. This is necessary because if a student is quoting directly from the work of an author, page numbers must be cited in the references.

### **Italics and Bold text:**

During the scanning process, most Optical Character Recognition software packages recognise bold and italicised text, and retain this formatting. Square brackets [ ] must always be used to denote comments added by the AMF/AT facilitator.

### **Quotations:**

Quotation marks must be recorded accurately and must be checked by the facilitator.

The most appropriate method for denoting block quotations is to use [block quote] and [end of block quote] at the beginning and end of the quote.

### **References:**

Academic references should be fully cited at the end of the scanned document and these must be checked carefully.

### **Footnotes:**

When formatting footnotes, a blank line should be inserted, then [footnote 1] followed by another blank line, the text of the footnote, followed by another blank line, followed by [end of footnote 1].

The accuracy of footnotes should be verified before the document is submitted.

### **Tables:**

Tables that are properly formatted in a Word document are usually accessible to visually impaired persons. Therefore it is essential that tables are correctly represented, and that tables are used rather than columns of text. This may require that the facilitator inserts a table manually and copies the text into the table.







### **Diagrams and images:**

Diagrams and images can be difficult to describe to a visually impaired person. The importance of the diagram or image and the essential information presented by it, must be assessed by the facilitator. The information presented will obviously vary but, in general, it is less likely that a visually impaired student will need information about the colour of arrows or the artistic details of the image. It is likely that they will need to know the information desired to be conveyed.

Many Optical Character Recognition programmes delete diagrams and pictures automatically and if this occurs, a description of the image is still necessary.

### **Descriptions should be typed within square brackets [ ]:**

- A general description, e.g. [figure 1: flow chart illustrating the process of photosynthesis...] or [a photograph of children playing...]
- In the case of flow charts, it can be useful to give an overall general description of the layout of the chart before giving the precise details contained within boxes. It can be difficult for a visually impaired student to create a mental image of the diagram and consequently make sense of the comments unless a clear description of the overall appearance is provided.
- Useful descriptions might include [there are three boxes in a row, interconnected with arrows. An arrow from the centre text box points down to a box below it. The left box from the row contains...]
- When working with a graph, type a general description first, e.g. [figure 2 pie chart...]
- State the names of the axes, the units, range and increments used as well as a general description of the graph shape.

It is possible to produce graphs and other visual information in tactile format in order to overcome the problems associated with describing visual information. This however can be difficult to produce and can also be very time consuming.

### **Headers and Footers:**

Headers and footers from the original document should be deleted as there should be no need for further information and it can distract from the content.

Once the editing process is complete the document should be saved to disk for the student's use or emailed to the student, as an attachment. A copy should be stored to the Disability Support Service's central archive for scanned material.

### **Assistive Technology:**

A wide range of AT is available to assist students with disabilities. The AT Facilitator can provide training in the following packages.

**Vision Impairment:** Jaws, Zoomtext, Tiger Braille embosser, high speed scanner, book courier, Braille note and voice note.

**Dyslexic:** Read and Write, Dragon Naturally Speaking, Kurzweil 3000 and Dictaphone

**Physical:** Alpha -Smart, adaptive keyboards, adaptive mice, and voice recognition software

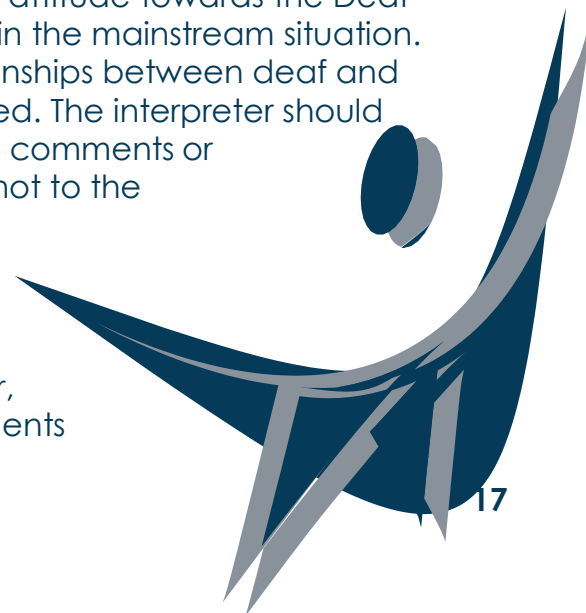
**Hearing impaired:** Conversors and Loop Systems

## **2.9 Role of a Sign Language Interpreter:**

The primary function of a sign language interpreter is to facilitate communication among Deaf students, their peers and staff.

### **Responsibilities:**

- Interpreters should hold a recognised professional accreditation and/or a diploma in ISL / English interpreting from Centre for Deaf Students / Bristol University.
- Interpreters must adhere to the Irish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (IASLI) code of ethics and the Irish Association of Translators and Interpreters (ITIA) code of ethics.
- The interpreter should work towards developing a professional relationship with the student's faculty and should inform staff as to the role of the interpreter.
- Interpreters should introduce themselves to lecturers at the beginning of each term as this is both courteous and facilitates the receipt of copies of overheads used by the lecturer. Interpreters must refrain from class discussion at all times.
- The interpreter should seek to ensure complete and effective communication between all parties.
- The interpreter should present a positive attitude towards the Deaf community and towards Deaf students in the mainstream situation. He / She are the means whereby relationships between deaf and hearing students and staff are established. The interpreter should encourage the Deaf student to address comments or questions to the lecturer or others, and not to the interpreter.
- The interpreter should interpret all that is said within the class / lecture room including comments to and by hearing students or staff to each other. However, care should be taken not to disrupt students engaged on a given task.





- The interpreter will ensure that deaf students are watching him / her when they start signing. The student must take responsibility to attend lectures and tutorials and to watch the interpreter as they sign. When the student is engaged on a task, it can be agreed with the student whether to leave them working or to interrupt with vital information.
- The interpreter, as one of the few, or even the only, other adult with whom the student can freely express him / herself may be treated by the student as a counselor, advocate or advisor. The interpreter should then refer the student to the designated person and, if the student wishes, support them as interpreter in that context.
- Interpreters should maintain confidentiality at all times by treating any information which may arise in the course of their work as privileged information. If an interpreter has any concerns regarding a student then the first point of contact should be the Disability Support Service.
- The interpreter may discuss information relating to an assignment with other members of the team who are directly responsible for the educational programmes for the Deaf student.
- The interpreter may provide input for – or may attend – educational team meetings to answer questions and address concerns related to the student's communication abilities and needs.
- The interpreter should obtain and study all necessary materials to prepare for interpreting responsibilities.
- The interpreter should arrive punctually for all lectures / interpreting assignments.
- The interpreter should contact the student if unable to attend an appointment.

## **2.10 Role of a Reading Support Worker:**

The role of a Reading Support Worker is to assist students who have a difficulty accessing print material by either reading directly to the student and/or recording the content in audio format onto audiotape or other media.

### **Responsibilities:**

- A Reader should be able to present written material in a clear and accurate vocal format, at a rate which does not interfere with the intelligibility of the content.
- A Reading Support Worker should have a working knowledge of the language associated with the subject they are supporting. This is particularly important in the case of a subject where specialized terms or pronunciation are used, for example a foreign language, a scientific, mathematical or technical discipline.
- The Reading Support Worker must be proficient in English.
- The Reading Support Worker assisting Deaf students must be proficient in both English and Irish Sign Language [ISL].

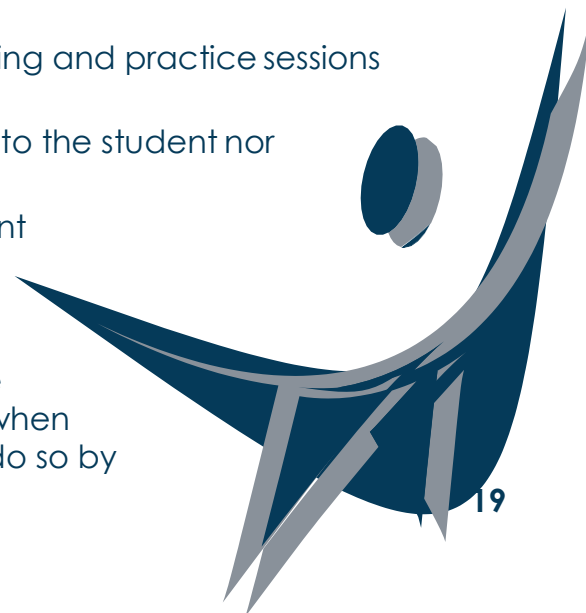
- The Reading Support Worker should arrive promptly and at the agreed location for sessions and be adequately prepared for the session.
- Students may want to record the session with the Reading Support worker for note-taking purposes. It is the student's responsibility to provide the necessary equipment. Some students may prefer to take written notes.
- Where possible, students should forward a copy of the text to be discussed in advance of the meeting.
- The student should be specific as to their requirements and prioritise material with which they need assistance.
- Complete the session to the satisfaction of the student within the pre-agreed time. Students will have different ways of accessing information and some students will want to work the sessions in different ways. Ask the student for feedback and specific instructions.
- Do not divulge any confidential information about the student to anyone outside of the Disability Support Service, without the agreement of the student, except in cases where there is justifiable concern regarding the personal safety of the student or others. Even then, only consult with the appropriate professional agencies.

## 2.11 Role of a Reader for Examinations:

The role of an Exam Reader is to assist the student by reading the examination paper and/or the student's answers to ensure that the student is clear as to what is required of them and the answer they have completed. In some instances, the Reader may also act as the invigilator for the examination.

### Responsibilities:

- A Reader should be able to read accurately and at a reasonable rate. In the case of a foreign language, scientific, mathematical or technical subject, the Reader should ideally have a working knowledge of that subject/language.
- The Reader should be an independent person and not known to the student.
- The Reader should have access to training and practice sessions before the examination.
- The Reader should not provide content to the student nor offer any suggestions.
- The Reader should not advise the student regarding which questions to attempt, when to move on to the next question, nor the order in which questions should be completed. Instructions given on the question paper can be repeated only when the Reader is specifically requested to do so by the student.





- The Reader should make no other comment or use any intonation which emphasises any part of the examination questions, nor make any interpretation of the examination question(s).
- The Reader should not discuss any matter with the student, during the examination, unless it relates to the re-reading of an examination question (e.g. if the student asks the Reader to repeat the examination question).
- Students using the services of an Exam Reader should be assessed in a separate location in order to avoid disturbing other students.

**When working with Visually Impaired Students, Readers should:**

- Read the questions and the answers already recorded as often as requested.
- Provide information regarding time elapsed and time remaining.
- Help a student using tactile maps, diagrams, graphs and tables to extract the information which the print/amended print copy would provide to a sighted student.
- Give the spelling of a word only if requested.
- Report any problems related to communication during the examination to the invigilator

## **2.12 Role of an Exam Scribe:**

The role of an Exam Scribe is to record the student's dictated answers in an examination. In such situations, additional time, a separate exam venue and appropriate invigilation is required. In some instances the exam scribe may also act as the invigilator for the exam. The student should ensure that they have adequate practice of working with an exam scribe before undertaking an examination by this method.

**Responsibilities:**

- An Exam Scribe is required to produce an accurate record of the student's answers, write legibly and at an appropriate speed.
- An Exam Scribe must have proficient typing skills if typing a student's dictated answers.
- The Exam Scribe should have a good working knowledge of the subject matter being examined.
- The Exam Scribe should arrive before the commencement of the examination, allowing sufficient time to establish a rapport with the student, to make seating arrangements and to agree guidelines for:
  - » Presentation
  - » Spelling
  - » Punctuation
  - » New paragraphs, etc

- The Exam Scribe should be relaxed. This may help to alleviate any anxieties the student may have in relation to the exam.
- The Exam Scribe should advise students as to the duration of the examination, the number of questions to be answered and any additional instructions.
- The starting time and finish time of the examination should be clearly stated by the Exam Scribe and/or the invigilator.
- An institution may require that the examination script is submitted in electronic format and that the examination material is recorded on an official computer located in the institution, not on a laptop belonging to the student or Exam Scribe.
- If using a computer, the Exam Scribe should ensure that the computer is set to Autosave work regularly (every 3 to 5 minutes). If using Microsoft Word on a PC, go to Tools/Options/Save and select the preferred time.
- If the student needs a rest or toilet break the scribe/invigilator should accompany them.
- A student may elect to write sections of the paper themselves.
- If the student writes notes, essay plans or illustrations, these should be included with the exam script. For example, the student might draw rough diagrams from which the exam scribe will draw a final version of the diagram and include both copies with the exam script submission.





## **SECTION THREE:**

### **3.1 Student Responsibilities to the Educational Support Worker:**

At the outset the Educational Support Worker is given contact details (mobile and email) for the student whom they will support. An introductory meeting should be held to familiarise the Educational Support Worker and the student and to discuss the protocol involved.

- Students should inform the Disability Support Service and the Educational Support Worker of any changes in contact details, courses or availability.
- The Educational Support Worker and the student should negotiate mutually convenient times for delivery of support. (Note: Educational Support Workers will not be paid for additional support hours which have not been pre-approved by Disability Support Services).
- The student should provide 24 hours notice to the Educational Support Worker if he/she is unable to attend an assigned session or if there is a change or cancellation to lectures or tutorials. Educational Support Workers will be paid for support sessions unless 24 hours cancellation notice is given.
- If a student fails to avail of the support offered then the service may be withdrawn.
- Students are required to attend all lectures/tutorials to which an Educational Support Worker is assigned. Should the student not arrive within the first 20 minutes of a lecture/tutorial the Educational Support Worker is requested to forward any work undertaken in the lecture/tutorial to Disability Support Services and not directly to the student.
- In exceptional circumstances, the Educational Support Worker may be permitted to attend lectures on the student's behalf, only with the pre-approval of the Disability Support Officer.
- The student should advise the Educational Support Worker if they are not satisfied with the support being delivered. If the issue remains unresolved, the Disability Support Service should be contacted.
- Students are required to sign and verify the accuracy of Educational Support Worker timesheets to confirm that the agreed support has been delivered.
- The student is responsible for research and for the creation of all written work and content. He/she should provide relevant departmental guidelines (handbook) for referencing and style.



- In relation to assisting students with assignments; the student should allow sufficient time prior to submission dates to facilitate consultation with the Educational Support Worker (two working days prior to submission date for every ten pages of text).
- In relation to Notetaking, Notetaking services are provided on the condition that students attend all classes. Attendance is defined as being present for the entire session. In exceptional circumstances, such as absence from a course due to serious illness, a student may be permitted to receive lecture notes while absent – but only with the pre-approval of the Disability Support Officer.







## **SECTION FOUR: Supporting Students with Disabilities.**

### **4.1 Supporting Students with Vision Impairment.**

The effect of Vision Impairment varies widely, depending on the condition, its progress and the person's coping skills. Examples of conditions causing Vision Impairment are Glaucoma, Retinitis Pigmentosa, Diabetic Retinopathy and Cataracts.

#### **The Educational Support Worker:**

- Should greet the person by saying your name, as he or she may not recognise your voice.
- Indicate verbally when you are entering or leaving the person's presence.
- Should offer to seat the student in appropriately lighted areas.
- When guiding a person who is blind or vision impaired, walk slightly ahead of them, allowing them to take your arm, just above the elbow. Mention any stairs (saying whether they are up or down), or obstacles in advance.
- When walking with a person who uses a cane or a guide dog, should adjust your pace to match theirs.
- Should offer assistance with carrying belongings and opening doors.
- Should keep pathways clear of obstructions and ensure that the student is made aware of any organisational changes.
- NEVER make a fuss of, or feed a guide dog – he or she is working and should not be distracted when in harness. Always ask the owner's permission first.
- Make sure that printed material is readable, avoiding poor quality copies and illegible inks.
- Provision of material in electronic format allows the student to alter the font size or to access the document using audio software.

### **4.2 Supporting Students with Physical Disabilities**

Students with physical disabilities include those who have mobility difficulties, those with congenital disabilities, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, spinal injuries, and injury through accidents. It can demand considerable energy for the student merely to negotiate their environment and this can reduce their concentration and ability to engage in course activities, to study and to meet assignment deadlines. In addition many students with physical disabilities are taking pain relief medication and their concentration may be affected by this.

**The Educational Support Worker should:**

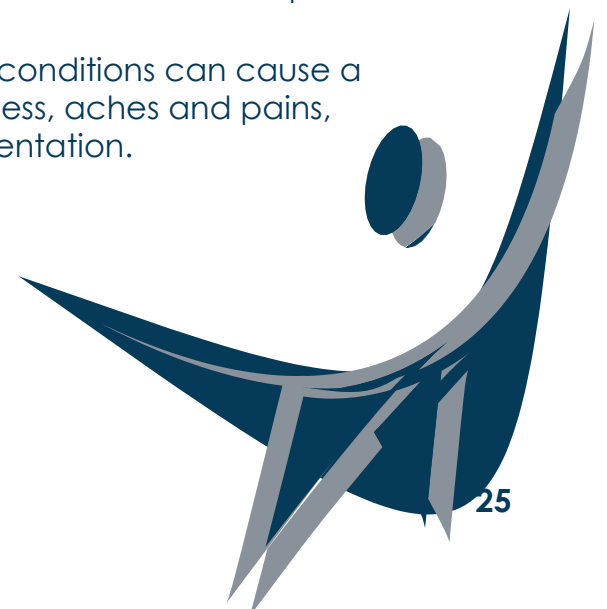
- Not provide assistance to a student who is a wheel-chair user unless assistance is requested.
- Avoid demeaning or patronising gestures.
- Never push a person's wheelchair without their permission.
- Not lean on the wheelchair as this is an invasion of personal space.
- Offer assistance opening doors and carrying belongings.
- Keep pathways free from obstructions.
- When walking with a person who uses crutches or a wheelchair, adjust your pace to match theirs.
- Allow for the time and fatigue factors that may arise as a student moves between lectures.
- Be conscious that the student may tire easily and may require rest periods.
- Sit down and speak to the student at eye level.

### **4.3 Supporting Students with Significant On-Going Illnesses**

Some students have on-going medical conditions which may impact on their studies. Examples of significant on-going illness include Diabetes, Epilepsy, M.E., Haemophilia, Cystic Fibrosis, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Crohn's Disease. Many conditions may be stable, others may be variable and some will be progressive. The impact on the student depends on the severity of the condition, but in most cases stamina is affected.

**Impact on Learning:**

- Student may have recurrent or long-term absences from college due to hospitalisation.
- Student may be unable to attend or complete lectures due to fatigue.
- Student may have difficulties with concentration and completion of tasks or assignments.
- The medication used to control various conditions can cause a variety of side effects, including drowsiness, aches and pains, restlessness, nausea, dizziness and disorientation.





### **The Educational Support Worker should:**

- Ensure the student's safety in tutorials / laboratories / library by discussing the student's needs relating to use of equipment etc.
- Encourage communication.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Allow for the time and fatigue factors that may arise as the student moves between lectures.
- Be conscious that the student may tire easily and may require rest periods.

### **Illnesses / Conditions:**

While it is not proposed to provide detailed information about each of the above conditions, the following may contain some useful guidelines.

#### **Epilepsy:**

Epilepsy is caused by abnormal electrical impulses in the brain, which results in recurring seizures. These seizures can vary from person to person and for most, Epilepsy will only affect them for a short period in their lives. For others, however, the consequences can be more lasting. Most seizures are controllable through medication. There are two categories of seizures – generalised or partial.

- A generalised seizure means that the whole brain is affected and the person invariably loses consciousness. The seizure usually ends naturally after a few minutes. On returning to consciousness, the person may feel confused and sleepy but many people are able to resume their normal activities after resting for a short while.
- A partial seizure means that only part of the brain is affected and the person may remain conscious throughout the seizure.

Only about 3 – 5% of people who have Epilepsy are photosensitive and may have a seizure in response to flickering lights e.g. strobe lights or even the flickering of sunlight through the trees. Most people can use computers safely provided some minor adjustments are made (such as a LCD screen).

#### **During the Seizure:**

- Remain calm.
- Remove any objects that may injure the student.
- Make the person comfortable (lying down) and put something soft under their head, if you can. Only move the person if they are in a dangerous place.
- Keep other people away.
- Do not put anything into their mouth.
- Do not attempt to rouse the person.

**At the end of an attack:**

- Twitching will stop. The person usually takes a deep breath, the blue colour goes from their face and they slowly wake up. The person may be disorientated for a short while.
- Do stay with the person. Talk to them quietly until you are certain that they are sure of their surroundings.
- Do not give them anything to drink until they are fully conscious.
- If at the end of the seizure, they remain blue or are struggling to breathe, call for medical attention.

**Diabetes:**

People with Diabetes do not produce enough of the hormone insulin to control their blood sugar level. This can be treated with diet, exercise and often insulin injections, allowing the person to lead a regular active life. However, some people with Diabetes are prone to variations in mood and concentration. The condition can lead to other complications such as visual impairment, and when it is not stabilised a student may require time to adjust to a changing lifestyle.

On rare occasions, someone with Diabetes can suffer from low blood sugar levels. The person becomes drowsy and confused and if left untreated can lose consciousness. If the person suffers from low blood sugar levels he/she should immediately take some sugar or glucose. If he/she becomes unconscious, emergency help is needed.

**Cystic Fibrosis:**

Cystic Fibrosis is an inherited genetic disease. The defective gene predominantly affects the lungs, pancreas and sweat glands. Modern treatment has increased expected life span and a much higher proportion of those with the condition survive into adulthood. Nevertheless, Cystic Fibrosis remains a progressive condition for which there is no cure.





## **4.4 Supporting Students with Mental Health Difficulties.**

Mental health difficulties include anxieties, obsessions, phobias, depression, bipolar disorder, eating disorders and schizophrenia. Many difficulties are temporary and may respond to rest, counselling or medication. Individuals may also experience long-term difficulties which are interspersed with periods of good and poor health. The most common symptoms of mental health difficulties are withdrawal and depression.

### **The Educational Support Worker should:**

- Be aware that a mental health difficulty may affect a student's performance, particularly under stressful conditions. Practice, reassurance and extensions on assignments may help the student to overcome this.
- Be aware that for many students, their condition may be variable and they may experience periods of particular difficulty. This may require some understanding and flexibility.
- Try to be sensitive when dealing with students who have a mental health difficulty.
- Take into consideration that students, who are taking prescription medication, may be affected by drowsiness, thirst, visual and/or manual difficulties and poor concentration.
- Respect confidentiality. If you do not feel equipped to help the student or have any concerns, an appointment should be arranged with the Disability Support Office.

## **4.5 Supporting Students with Dyslexia**

Dyslexia is a language-based learning disability and refers to difficulties with specific language skills. Although individual cases vary, many people with dyslexia experience difficulties in areas such as:

- Memory
- Reading
- Writing
- Spelling
- Mathematics
- Organisation
- Speech

Dyslexia can vary greatly in its symptoms and severity from person to person. Therefore, the Educational Support Worker must consult with the student as to their particular requirements.

Many students with Dyslexia develop compensatory strategies to limit their difficulties. This helps some students to cope well with their coursework. For some however, the demands of third level study may mean that previously successful compensatory strategies are less effective.

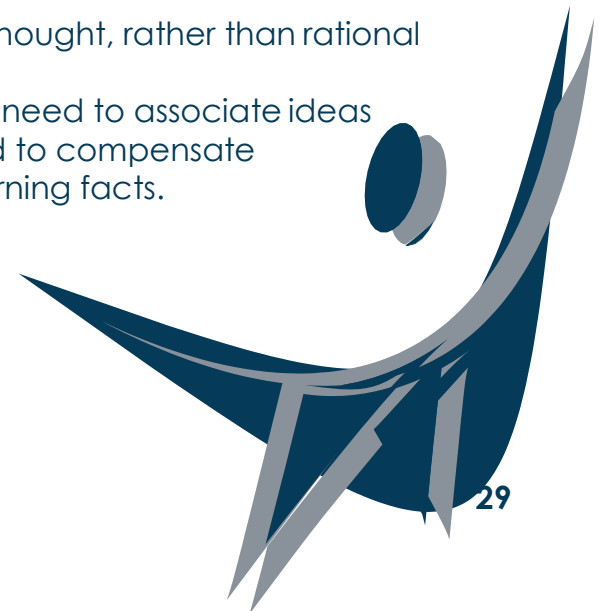
Educational Support Workers should consult with the relevant Disability Support Officer prior to the commencement of support to get a deeper understanding of Dyslexia and effective support techniques.

**The Impacts of Dyslexia on Learning at Third Level may include:**

- Limitations in short-term memory and cognitive processing causing difficulty in following sequences of complicated directions and with integrating material from a number of sources.
- Information overload, leading to confusion due to having more ideas than the student can translate into decipherable words or sentence structures.
- Difficulties with 'search and locate' strategies and also with independent learning generally.
- Slow reading rate and comprehension creates difficulties where students must deal with a large amount of material in a short space of time, and also when many new words or concepts must be learned and incorporated into understanding.
- Heightened anxiety levels can be common in examination or performance situations. Anxiety about performing in front of others can affect participation in tutorials.
- First year students, in particular, may find the unstructured freedom of third level uncomfortable in comparison to the structured, controlled environment of the secondary school system and may need assistance in managing their time effectively.

Despite their individual characteristics, students with Dyslexia often share a common learning style, which is characterised by:

- A tendency towards holistic thinking (looking for overall patterns and relationships and different sides to a situation or task).
- Difficulties with original and lateral problem-solving skills.
- Excellent visual or spatial skills.
- A preference for intuitive, non-rational thought, rather than rational explanations.
- A reliance on long-term memory and a need to associate ideas in order to fit them into memory. A need to compensate for poor short-term memory by over-learning facts.
- Difficulties with time and numeracy.





Being labeled with a specific learning difficulty has a considerable impact on emotions and confidence. Students may have years of negative attitudes behind them and dismissive feedback about their abilities. This will have a negative impact on their learning. Interacting with students with a learning disability should be characterised by respect for their rights to dignity, confidentiality and equity.

Dyslexia may or may not be present with other learning difficulties including Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD/ADD), Dyspraxia or Asperger Syndrome. These create additional difficulties for the student, for example with concentration, co-ordination and social skills. This emphasises the need to treat each student as an individual and requires that no assumptions should be made about their learning style.

## **4.6 Supporting Deaf / Hearing Impaired Students:**

Hearing loss is measured in decibels hearing level (dBHL). A person who can hear sounds across a range of frequencies at 0 to 20 dB is considered to have normal hearing. The thresholds for the various types of hearing loss are as follows:

- » Mild            25 – 39 dBHL
- » Moderate    40 – 69 dBHL
- » Severe        70 – 94 dBHL

Profoundly deaf people who cannot hear sounds quieter than 95 dB, often communicate using sign language and lip reading. Some deaf people use cochlear implants or hearing aids, which allows for some oral communication.

Some deaf individuals identify themselves as members of an Irish linguistic and cultural minority and not as individuals with a disability. Irish Sign Language (ISL) is the principal form of communication for deaf people in Ireland and is usually regarded as a deaf person's first language.

When working with hearing impaired students there are a number of issues which the Educational Support Worker should be aware of.

- If the student communicates through Irish Sign Language, a sign language interpreter should be present for all sessions. The Disability Support Service will arrange interpreters for these sessions.
- The speed of work is slower due to difficulties with reading comprehension and written expression. As a result the student may have difficulty meeting deadlines.
- Hearing impaired students may not have recorded the class notes themselves and may need to compensate through tutorials and extra study.



- English is a second language for many hearing impaired students and this can have consequences for written work. Errors found in Deaf students' work are often similar to those found in written work presented by other non-native speakers of a given language. Difficulties can become apparent in written work, where mistakes may be found with sentence structure, verb tenses, word omissions etc.
- The student may experience difficulties reading lecture notes, assignments and referencing texts. They may also experience difficulties discussing topics in depth, or with discursive elements of assignments, particularly where they depend upon abstract thinking rather practical observation. It is often the case that students are more confident communicating through Irish Sign Language than English.

**The student may have restricted vocabulary shown by:**

- a) Acceptance of particular words as having fixed meanings relating only to previous experiences.
- b) Understanding and use of a more limited range of words.
- c) Difficulty and/or delay in absorbing and using 'new' technical terminology or the application of everyday words in specific technical contexts.
- d) Misinterpretation of information presented, particularly where there is possible ambiguity in terminology or phraseology.
- e) Incorrect verb endings and spelling mistakes in written work.
- f) Errors in syntax.
- g) Inappropriate or what appears to be immature styles of writing.

**The Educational Support Worker should:**

- Face the student when speaking.
- Ask if it is helpful to speak in a louder voice.
- Speak with a clear and resonant voice.
- Avoid hand-to-face gestures which might obstruct a student's hearing path or prevent lip-reading.
- When using a sign language interpreter, speak to the student and not to the interpreter.
- Acknowledge when you do not understand the student's response and ask the student to try again.

