

## Case Study: Increase the effectiveness of Harrogate College's initial screening process

*'Assessment and learning: involving the learner'. LSC funded project.*

---

**Context:** Harrogate College, now integrated into the Hull College Group, is a major



provider of Further and Higher Education in North Yorkshire, offering an extensive range of courses from Access through to BA (Hons) and Masters Degrees. Working with local partners ensures course content reflects the needs of industry and today's employers as well as the Examinations and Accreditation Authorities. Since its merger with the Hull College Group in August 2008, Harrogate College has enjoyed significant investments in its teaching and learning facilities to provide a first class learning experience

**The challenge:** Students enrolling on courses complete the Basic Skills Key Builder (BSKB) computer based assessment programme. This programme is designed to identify students who may have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia or dyscalculia or have poor literacy or numeracy skills. Students who score 3 or more in the Dyslexia test are identified as potentially having dyslexia (scores range from 0 to 5) and this initiates additional screening of these individuals to ensure that:

- Students' needs are correctly identified.
- Tutors are aware of the student's needs and teaching strategies identified and adopted.
- Appropriate support staff is put in place.
- Examination boards are notified if required.

There were a number of occasions when the initial screening process either failed to identify students with a specific learning difficulty or identified students as having dyslexic tendencies when they do not. Discussions with students revealed that a number were bored with the test and just selected any response thereby increasing the chance of being misdiagnosed. Tutors are now fully aware of this 'boredom' issue and learners now fully aware of why they are undertaking this assessment. Other students with learning difficulties had adopted strategies to hide their perceived weaknesses. For example: one student who returned to college to begin a new course had been diagnosed for dyslexia in 2008 and had received Learning Support. However, he scored 0 in the BSKB Dyslexia assessment which suggested that he had no difficulty in this area. Consequently, it could have been several weeks into his programme before his tutor identified a problem and referred him for further assessment. Fortunately a Learning Support Assistant identified this student and questioned the anomaly.

**What we did:** To help reduce the number of unnecessary follow-on assessments it was proposed that potential students complete a paper-based questionnaire<sup>1</sup> (Revised Adult Dyslexia Checklist) that would compliment the computer assessment. This Checklist would be completed either during the initial interview or when they sat the BSKB assessment. It

---

<sup>1</sup> Dyslexia Action: Revised Adult Dyslexia Checklist (The Vinegrad Checklist)

could also be used for those who enquire via telephone or apply via the Internet. Anyone who selects 8 or more 'Yes' responses in column 1 or 6 or more 'Yes' responses in the unshaded cells in column 3 on their Checklist has their BSKB score thoroughly scrutinised and tutors and Learning Support Staff are advised to closely monitor the student's progress. Furthermore, the College has recently acquired the diagnostic package 'Lucid LADS' as a possible replacement for BSKB. This is currently being trialled to ascertain whether it will provide the degree of accuracy needed and the reduction in student assessment time as claimed by the producers.

The time frame from initial proposal to acceptance was approximately three months with an in-service target date of January 2010 so that it could be used with the relatively small intake of FE students. Work during the three-month period consisted of:

- Getting the concept of questionnaire accepted into overall enrolment procedures.
- Test suitability of questionnaire.
- Train Staff on use of questionnaire and need for close monitoring of students undertaking the BSKB assessment.

**The Outcomes:** The planned outcomes are:

- Enhanced initial screening process
- Reduce the number of misdiagnosed students requiring in-depth assessment by specialist.
- Enable appropriate learner support to be put in place earlier in their programme.
- Allow specialist tutors to concentrate on their tutoring roll.

**The Impact:** For many students the move from school to college is a difficult transition, having to make new friends and study in different settings. Many with a learning difficulty wish to hide this for fear of being stigmatised and only ask for help later in the course when they are struggling with their work or when deadlines are approaching. Initiating learning support as early as possible will help reduce any barriers to learning, enhance their learning experience and increase their attendance and likelihood of achieving their learning goal. Furthermore, the specialist tutors can concentrate more on their tutoring roles, as there will be a reduction in the number of in-depth assessments they have to complete.

**Supporting Information:** The following tools as used in the initial assessments:

- Software: Basic Skills Key Builder (BSKB).
- BSKB Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Result Sheet.
- Potential Dyslexia Indicator Questionnaire.

Specialist tutors conduct the follow-on assessments and produce a detailed report on each learner. Once the student has seen his/her report and agreed to its release then tutors and Learning Support Assistance can access this information. Along with the detailed report the tutors and Support Assistants are given a short bullet point teaching strategy.

Attachments:

Annex A – BSKB Initial Assessment -Literacy / Numeracy

Annex B – Harrogate College Dyslexia Checklist.

Annex C – Tutor's Bullet Point Teaching Strategy



## HARROGATE COLLEGE DYSLEXIA CHECKLIST

Surname: _____ Forenames: _____			
Course: _____ Date: _____			
Please answer the following questions by placing an <b>X</b> in the columns marked <b>Yes</b> or <b>No</b> (ignore the last column):	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Office Use only</b>
1. Do you find difficulty in telling left from right?			
2. Is map reading, or finding your way to a strange place confusing?			
3. Do you dislike reading aloud?			
4. Do you take longer than you should to read a page of a book?			
5. Do you find it difficult to remember the sense of what you have read?			
6. Do you dislike reading long books?			
7. Is your spelling poor?			
8. Is your writing difficult to read?			
9. Do you get confused if you have to speak in public?			
10. Do you find it difficult to take messages on the telephone and pass them on correctly?			
11. When you have to say a very long word do you find it difficult to get all the sounds into the right order?			
12. Do you find it more difficult to do sums in your head without using your fingers or paper?			
13. When using the telephone, do you get the numbers mixed up when you dial?			
14. Do you find it difficult to say in order the months of the year forwards in a fluent manner?			
15. Do you find it difficult to say in order the months of the year backwards?			
16. Do you mix up dates and times and miss appointments?			
17. When writing cheques, do you frequently find yourself making mistakes?			
18. Do you find forms difficult and confusing?			
19. Do you mix up bus numbers like 95 and 59?			
20. When you were at school, did you find it hard to learn your multiplication tables?			
<b>Totals</b>			

## SCREENING FOR DYSLEXIC ADULTS INCLUDING STUDENTS

Guidance for administration of assessment:

1. Ask the students to fill out the questionnaire as honestly as possible, without any limit of time (10 minutes ought to suffice).
2. In the last column, (column 3) record in the **unshaded boxes** an **X** if the applicant has answered that question with a **Yes**.
3. Record the total number of **Yes** answers in columns 1 and 3 at the foot of the page.
4. Select all questionnaires with 8 or more **Yes** responses in column 1 or 6 or more **Yes** answers in column 3. (dyslexia-sensitive questions<sup>2</sup>).
5. Forward these questionnaires to the Additional Learning Support Office, B109.

---

<sup>2</sup> Vinegrad, M. A Revised Adult Dyslexia Checklist. *Educare* no. 48, pp. 21-23, March 1994

## Student Support Profile

<b>Student name:</b>			
<b>Group:</b>			
<b>Profile Date:</b>			
<b>Subject(s)/Staff: Tutors/ Learning Support Assistants/ Key Skills Tutors</b>			
<b>Identification of learning support needs</b>			
<b>Name/nature of condition:</b>			
<b>Specific details;</b>			
<b>Special Support provisions arranged:</b>			
<b>Recommended strategies (tick as appropriate)</b>			
	Give instructions in plain English		Provide deadline reminders and clear directions for tasks
	Use active sentences in handouts and instructions		Encourage use of highlighters and <i>post-it</i> notes
	Summarise key points at start and end of lesson		Display lists of new vocabulary
	Handouts should contain visual cues on a yellow background/ alternatively student to use overlay or flush cut folder.		Don't correct each spelling: target key words
	Break down large tasks		Provide 'ideal essays' and frameworks for writing
	Follow readability guidelines for use of texts		Do not ask student to read aloud
	Will enjoy group work and discussion		Do not ask the student to write to dictation
	Provide clear comments when marking, and focus on only a few spellings		Allow time to complete copying tasks from the board.
	Student should use a yellow overlay for reading		Take special exam provisions into account for major assessments
	Use sans serif fonts in written resources		He will require tasks to be explained to him more than once.
	Use font size 12-14 point		

Please read and comply with the recommendations overleaf. This intended to support the tutorial process where a student has support needs.

**Guidance for Tutors working with this Student with support needs**

**The suggestions on the previous page will help you to support this student on your course.**

- Please check that students are attending their one to one tuition or any workshop sessions that they are contracted to attend. Non-compliance will result in the facility being withdrawn.
- Please liaise with the Learning Support Assistant assigned to the student to draw up a Learning Agreement with the student and agree strategies based on this document and the recommendations that you have been sent.
- It is essential that you discuss this document with the student at the **first tutorial** with him/her to ensure that the correct support is being put in place to mitigate against his/her disability in line with the Disability Discrimination Act.
- At every successive tutorial ask if the support is effective and if there is anything else which might be supportive.
- Are there any other ways that would improve the learning experience of the student in your group?
- When planning a lesson build in multi-sensory support strategies as advised so that the lesson is inclusive and meets the student's learning style. The Learning Support Assistant should also be considered in the lesson planning and delivery process.

**EXAMS**

- An exam contract will have been sent to exams by the Assessor. Please familiarise yourself with the exam recommendations known as "Access arrangements" for your individual student and ensure that the Dyslexia Tutor's recommendations are carried out for any tests that are carried out informally and more formally with the exam board.
- Students sign to say that they have discussed and agree with the recommendations at their assessment interview, so tutors should not alter the exam arrangements at a later date even if the student suddenly announces that they do not want them.
- The Exams officer (Sarah Buckler) will arrange for scribes, readers, individual rooms and other arrangements where necessary so you should liaise with her.
- Read the exam arrangements well before any tests or exams. Edexcel for example need notice to add extra time on-line or make other provision.
- Please give your student opportunities to practise working with a scribe or a reader/amanuensis or other special provision under exam conditions prior to the real exam.

**Review Dates**

**Signed Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Tutor** \_\_\_\_\_