Assessment of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties

The University of Cambridge and the Disability Resource Centre believe that the primary purpose of any assessment for a specific learning difficulty carried out with a student is to provide that student with a greater understanding of his / her profile of strengths and weaknesses and consider how this profile pattern might impact upon academic study.

The assessment report may be used not only to develop greater self-awareness and inform strategy development in managing key academic tasks whilst studying in a demanding, challenging and intensive academic environment, but also as evidence for an application for a Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSAs) and / or an application to the University of Cambridge’s Board of Examinations for examination access arrangements. Whilst it is likely that you have been asked to supply assessment evidence for examination arrangements, we would also like you to consider our position on the primary purpose of the assessment and the possibility of an application being made for a Disabled Students’ Allowance when carrying out the assessment and producing the report.

The University’s Board of Examinations requires full* diagnostic assessment reports from:
Practitioner Psychologists registered with the HCPC (Health and Care Professions Council)

Or

Specialist Teachers holding an approved qualification (as noted in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines) to include a Current Practising Certificate in SpLD Assessment giving the certificate number and issuing body

These reports should be post-16 and no more than five years old on entry to the University for undergraduate courses and no more than eight years old on entry to the University for postgraduate courses.

In addition, you should be aware that the University’s Board of Examinations is following the timetable set out in the DfES Guidelines regarding assessment report format and use of recommended tests, which for the academic year 2018 – 2019 is as follows:

- Diagnostic reports use report format recommended in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines and subsequent updates
- Diagnostic reports use tests recommended in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines and subsequent updates

*Please note that the University’s Board of Examinations does not accept top-up reports.
With reference to the recommended assessments we have found that the following assessments in particular provide us with significant information in understanding and supporting students and, therefore, would ask that you administer these assessments, or equivalents in line with the DfES Guidelines 2005 and subsequent updates.

- **Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, 4th Edition UK version** (WAIS–IVUK)

OR

- Wide Range Intelligence Test
- Plus – tests of working memory and processing speed as noted in the SpLD Working Party / DfES guidelines and updates

And

- Test of Phonological Processing
- Test of Word Reading Efficiency (including sight word and phonemic decoding efficiency)
- Test of Reading Comprehension
- Tests of Single word Reading & Spelling attainment

Plus

- An assessment of writing speed, preferably from a piece of free writing over a time frame of at least 20 minutes
- Analysis of examples of work produced for A-Levels, or equivalent, to include exploring strategies employed and time taken to complete component tasks, such as reading research, note taking, planning, writing, proofreading and editing etc
- Discussion on strategies used for handling academic texts

Recommendations for examination arrangements should be clearly and explicitly stated, e.g. 25 % extra time, use of word processor, rest breaks (please specify the recommended number of minutes rest break in each hour).

Information on courses at the University of Cambridge can be found at [http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/subjects.html](http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/subjects.html)

If you are not already aware, you may find it helpful to know that the University of Cambridge has 8-week terms and some students, especially those reading Natural Sciences and related subjects, would be expected to attend lectures on Saturdays.

Thank you very much for following our guidelines and thereby enabling the Disability Resource Centre, University academic and non-academic staff to provide the most appropriate support, advice and guidance to students with specific learning difficulties at the University of Cambridge.

Helen Duncan & Ken Ewing
Specific Learning Difficulties Advisers
Updated for the 2018 - 19 Academic Year