

Northumbria University Disability and Dyslexia Support Team (DDST)

Statement of Service 2021/22

Introduction

DDST is part of the University's Student, Library and Academic Services Directorate. DDST is made up of

- Head of Accessibility and Inclusion
- Five Disabilities Advisers
- Two permanent Dyslexia Support Tutors and a number of Dyslexia Tutors who work on a variable hours basis
- Two Student Support Coordinators
- A Student Support Administrator

We also have a Support Worker Service (SWS) delivered in partnership with an external agency called Randstad. The SWS provides Educational Support Workers (ESWs) for disabled students who require them

The purpose of DDST is to provide information, advice, guidance and support to disabled students at all stages of their university career and also to provide this to other staff working with disabled students.

The Service is a member of NADP (National Association of Disability Practitioners).

Who can use DDST?

It is available to all the University's disabled and dyslexic students whether full time, part time, distance learners, undergraduate, postgraduate, current or prospective. Disabled students may include those with a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) such as dyslexia or dyspraxia, a physical or sensory impairment, Autistic Spectrum condition, a long term medical condition or diagnosed mental health issue. It is also available to students who acquire a disability/medical condition or who suspect that they may have an undiagnosed SpLD. There are no geographical or other boundaries.

The service is also available to University staff involved in working with disabled students and can offer training on disability issues; information on specialist equipment for disabled students' use; ongoing advice and guidance in supporting disabled students and assistance in developing inclusive policies and procedures.

DDST is available to all regardless of disability, age, gender, race/ethnic origin, religion/belief, sexual orientation or other irrelevant distinction.

What can we offer you as a student?

At pre-application/application stage:

- An early visit to the campus/accommodation to assess your support requirements
- Confidential discussion of individual support needs
- Advice on physical accessibility of premises
- Advice on accessible/adapted accommodation
- Information on Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA)
- Information on the Equality Act as it relates to disability

On acceptance:

- An in-depth information visit including discussion of individual requirements with regard to learning, teaching and assessment including any individual exam arrangements
- Formal notification of your study related needs to your tutors (with your permission) via a Disabled Student's Support Recommendations document which is agreed with you
- Support in applying for DSA if eligible
- Advice on specialist equipment
- Access to ESWs (eg. notetakers, transcribers, Educational Personal Assistants)

During your studies:

- Ongoing support and guidance on any study related issues
- Referral to other University departments for advice/support not available from our own team (eg. Careers and Employment, Counselling and Mental Health Support Team)
- Liaison with academic staff about your disability related requirements with regard to learning, teaching and assessment
- Support in managing your DSA
- Referral to contracted Educational Psychologists for full Dyslexia assessment if required (funded by the University)
- 1:1 dyslexia/SpLD support via specialist multi-sensory tutorials
- Access to a bank of loan equipment including laptops and digital voice recorders

Disability support during your studies is subject to you providing 'evidence of disability' which meets the University's requirements.

In the case of a physical or sensory impairment, medical condition, Autistic Spectrum condition or diagnosed mental health issue the University requires a letter or report from a suitably qualified medical professional such as a GP or consultant. It should be on letter headed paper and should be signed and dated. It should have been written within the last 6 – 12 months and should state the diagnosis and give details of the impact that the disability may have on academic studies.

In the case of dyslexia or other SpLD the University requires a full psychological report confirming a diagnosis of dyslexia or other SpLD. The report should refer to a diagnostic assessment carried out by an Educational Psychologist or other suitably qualified practitioner. The report should include the results of a range of age appropriate tests of underlying ability and current levels of achievement.

In very exceptional cases, where the medical evidence or psychological report provided appears to be comprehensive but does not fully meet the University's requirements, interim disability support may be provided. This will only be the case where, in the professional judgment of the DDST, not doing so would substantially disadvantage you and doing so would not compromise academic or other prescribed standards.

Any such interim disability support would be conditional on you agreeing to provide medical evidence or a psychological report which does meet University requirements within an agreed timescale. Where such medical evidence or psychological report is not provided within the agreed timescale interim disability support may be withdrawn until such medical evidence or psychological report is provided.

What can we offer you as a member of staff?

We offer both academic and non-academic members of staff the following:

- Information, advice, guidance and support relating to disability issues and to individual disabled students (with their permission)
- Formal and informal training sessions
- 'Solution-focused' training sessions (such as how to work effectively with a British Sign Language user and their interpreter)
- Information on equality legislation as it relates to disability

(Note: disabled staff members who require information, advice, guidance and support with regard to their own individual needs should contact their Human Resources Manager)

What can we offer the University?

- Information, advice and guidance on disability issues including sector, national and international developments
- Contribution to development of policies and procedures with regard to disability
- Contribution towards improved participation, retention and achievements for disabled students

How do we deliver our services?

- Written information (alternative formats available on request) including comprehensive web pages
- Email to all applicants who have indicated a disability to explain the services available and encouraging direct contact

- On-line Disability Questionnaire as part of the enrolment task for all students with an offer to make contact
- Email to all enrolled students who have indicated a disability but not yet registered with the DDST to explain the services available and encouraging direct contact
- Information, advice, guidance and support from a member of the team either in person, via the Student Portal (for current students), by telephone, Microsoft Teams, email or letter
- 1:1 discussion with a Disabilities Adviser by pre-arranged appointment (usually one hour per appointment but this can be extended if required)
- 1:1 discussion with a Student Support Coordinators by pre-arranged 15 minute appointment, bookable on the same day
- 1:1 dyslexia/SpLD support via specialist multi-sensory tutorials with a specialist tutor
- Attendance at Open Days/Evenings to give information and/or answer individual questions
- Attendance at and contribution to appropriate University Committees, Working Groups and other meetings
- Where we feel that there is another University Department or outside agency which could give you more specific help we will help you to contact them
- All our services are free

What can you expect from us?

- Courteous, helpful, appropriately trained staff who will focus on your needs, offer appropriate advice and guidance and treat you with respect
- A prompt response to any reasonable query
- Provision of information, advice, guidance and support on disability issues. If this cannot be offered immediately a timescale will be agreed which is acceptable to you
- Advance notification of any unavoidable changes to an appointment and an appropriate and acceptable alternative arrangement
- That any information, written or verbal, that you have given us about yourself is securely stored and, within legal limitations, is treated with complete confidentiality. You will be asked to give permission before any information is passed on to any third party. You can request access to any information held by DDST. The request should be made in writing, via the Student Portal or by email to the DDST manager
- An agreed course of action, with an understanding of timescale, of follow up activities to be undertaken by us

What do we expect of you?

- That you should make the best use of our service by spending some time in advance considering exactly what you want from us and providing any relevant information such as reports on your disability or details of your needs

- If you are unable to attend an appointment that you let us know as soon as possible so that another student may be able to be offered that appointment and yours can be rearranged
- To respond as promptly as possible to any requests that we may make for feedback/suggestions which may help to improve our service or for monitoring purposes
- To treat all staff and other users of the DDST with courtesy
- That you should take responsibility for any agreed course of action, with an understanding of timescale, of follow up activities to be undertaken by you

Where can you find us?

- DDST is available in Student Central on the Ground Floor of the University Library Building at City Campus. This is accessible for wheelchair users and students with mobility issues. DDST is staffed Monday – Friday. We offer face-to face, telephone or Microsoft Teams appointments.
- Appointments can be booked by calling in person to one of the Ask4Help desks in Student Central locations (Ground Floor, City Library; Ground Floor, Coach Lane Library; Law Practice Library on Floor 1 CCE1, City Campus East; Ground Floor 110 Middlesex Street, London Campus). Or you can call Ask4Help on 0191 227 4127. We will do our best to arrange an appointment for you at a time which is convenient to you, or will deal with your enquiry by other means.

How can you help us to improve the service?

In an effort to continuously improve the service we are able to offer we welcome comments and suggestions. Comments and suggestions can be made in person, via the Student Portal (for current students), in writing or by telephone as above.

Complaints

Should you have a complaint about our service it will be acted upon in accordance with the University's complaints procedure.

Third party involvement

DDST may occasionally be approached by individuals or organisations who request us to target particular student groups for research purposes. Where this applies we will ask students if they are willing to participate and will not release any information about you without your express consent. DDST may also be approached for student data and where this is provided it will be numerical and anonymous.

Alternative formats

This Statement of Service is available in hard copy and in alternative formats by contacting a member of DDST (all contact details/methods above)

Mark Lambert

Head of Accessibility and Inclusion

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