

Information about Specific Learning Disabilities

- Students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) have average to above average intellectual abilities.
- A specific learning disability (SLD) is due to an underlying problem with information processing and working memory rather than lack of effort or motivation. It is not due to poor schooling, family tensions, emotional or behavioural problems, and social or cultural factors.
- A specific learning disability can impair cognitive functions such as reading (dyslexia), writing (dyslexia and dysgraphia) and mathematical calculation (dyscalculia).
- Common symptoms of a spelling disability (one form of SLD) include erratic spelling, particularly with reversed syllables, abbreviated-looking words, omission of vowels and reversed letters.

Impact of impairment:

- Students with specific learning disabilities tend to work harder and may take longer than other students to complete coursework.
- Academic achievement, as revealed by written work, frequently fails to reflect the student's ability and understanding of the topic.
- Legibility, writing speed, and spelling may be hampered when under time constraints.
- Students with SLD may have difficulty following verbal instructions.

Students with specific learning disabilities are able to develop specific strategies to organise, plan, and carry out academic study on a par with students of similar cognitive ability.

To assist these students you can use inclusive learning techniques such as:

- Read aloud material that is written on the board.
- Make information available online before the class, using Cecil or Moodle.
- Allow students to record lectures if they wish.
- Rephrase and repeat information.
- Use examples and templates to reiterate points.
- Provide prioritised reading lists.
- Prepare test and examination questions carefully to make sure they are clear.
- Give explicit guidance around expectations for assignments and exams.

The University of Auckland encourages partnerships between Faculties, student services and students, to support students achieve their academic potential.

Information has been sourced from:

Kia Ōrite Achieving Equity <http://www.achieve.org.nz/>

The Dyslexic Teachers Association <http://thedta.tripod.com/index.html>

Riddick, B. (2003). Experiences of teachers and trainee teachers who are dyslexic. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 7(4), 389-402.

Anderson, R.J., Karp, J.M., & Keller, C.E. (Eds.). (1998). *Enhancing diversity. Educators with disabilities*. Gallaudet University Press, Washington, D.C

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