

Effective Pedagogy for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties

In the Autumn Term 2018, Global Studies colleagues were provided with information and advice on how to support students with specific learning difficulties, by Wendy Ashall and Lara Montesinos Coleman. I would like us to establish a baseline of teaching practice, including but not limited to use of learning technologies, in order to level the playing field for students with specific learning difficulties and learning differences. Beyond our legal obligations under equalities legislation, such a move will help create a learning environment in which *all* our students can flourish. Further work in future can focus on classroom activities and strategies. All teaching staff in Global Studies should:

- 1) Read the learning support notes for flagged students on our modules; be proactive about letting the students know we are aware of their needs e.g. by emailing them ahead of the start of the module and asking what specific forms of support would work best for them. We will not disclose any student's learning needs to other students on the module without their explicit permission. Module convenors are responsible for ensuring DTs/ ATs are enabled to provide support in accordance with support notes. Colleagues should contact the School DOSE if they need clarity or support regarding specific students.
- 2) Provide targeted reading lists in advance: specify which texts are required readings, and which ones students with SpLDs should focus on (not necessarily the "easiest" text) so they can take a deep approach to their reading.
- 3) Use Aspire reading lists: required readings must be available electronically in a digitised format. In particular, the Library will digitise book chapters: this allows students to run them through assistive technologies.
- 4) Supply lecture and seminar slides/materials 24 hours in advance via Canvas: this allows student annotation and use of assistive technology, as well as enabling students to prepare answers in advance. Supply these either as PPT slides (which enables students to use the 'note function'), PDFs saved as hand-outs (3 slides per page), or Word documents so that students can adapt for colours that work for them.
- 5) Ensure our PPT slides and any handouts are accessible: sans-serif font (e.g. Calibri or Arial); avoid white backgrounds; use dark text on a light background; avoid green and red/pink (bad for those with visual stress/colour blind); avoid underlining and italics (use bold/boxes for emphasis); use lower case not block capitals; avoid overlapping images and text; avoid moving images and text; use photos rather than drawings; include representations of diversity.
- 6) Use lecture capture *where appropriate to the content and module design* to provide back-up for written notes and so students can re-listen. Where lecture capture is not routinely provided, module convenors should liaise with students with flagged learning needs about how they can record lectures or access any recordings.
- 7) Make explicit to students with SpLDs that they can come to advice and feedback hours to seek support with lengthy assignments to ensure that work is developing along the right lines.
- 8) Be attentive to students' safety and practical needs e.g. familiarise ourselves with evacuation plans for wheelchair users; face the class when we speak so that students with hearing loss can lip-read; develop sign systems with students in case they need to leave seminars/lectures without warning due to e.g. panic attacks.
- 9) Ensure teaching and resources are differentiated: by what we teach (extension tasks), teaching strategies used (pair work/ group work), the levels of support we offer, the resources used and the questions asked.
- 10) Mark students' work in ways that level the playing field for students with SpLDs e.g. do not deduct marks for spelling and grammar mistakes if work is submitted with a dyslexia yellow sticker attached; give concrete, specific advice as to how to improve in future assessments.