

Disability Resource Centre

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Aims

- Have an understanding of what specific learning difficulties are
- be aware of the barriers and challenges that students with Specific Learning Difficulties experience in Higher Education & on vocational courses
- be aware of solutions to those barriers

Models of disability

Medical model

- Disability is a condition that reduces the quality of life
- The medical diagnosis defines the person
- The impairment is the problem

Social model

- Problem is in society not in the person
- Barriers caused by society's attitudes disable the individual
- Model distinguishes between impairment (loss of function) and disability (discrimination)
- Disability prevented by removing barriers in society

What is a Specific Learning Difficulty?

Dyslexia

- A learning difficulty that affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent reading and spelling. It is characterised by difficulties with verbal processing speed, verbal memory and phonological awareness.

Dyspraxia

- Difficulties with motor co-ordination skills

Dyscalculia

- Difficulty with calculations and rapid processing of maths

Dysgraphia

- A problem affecting handwriting, caused by fine motor control and/or processing difficulties

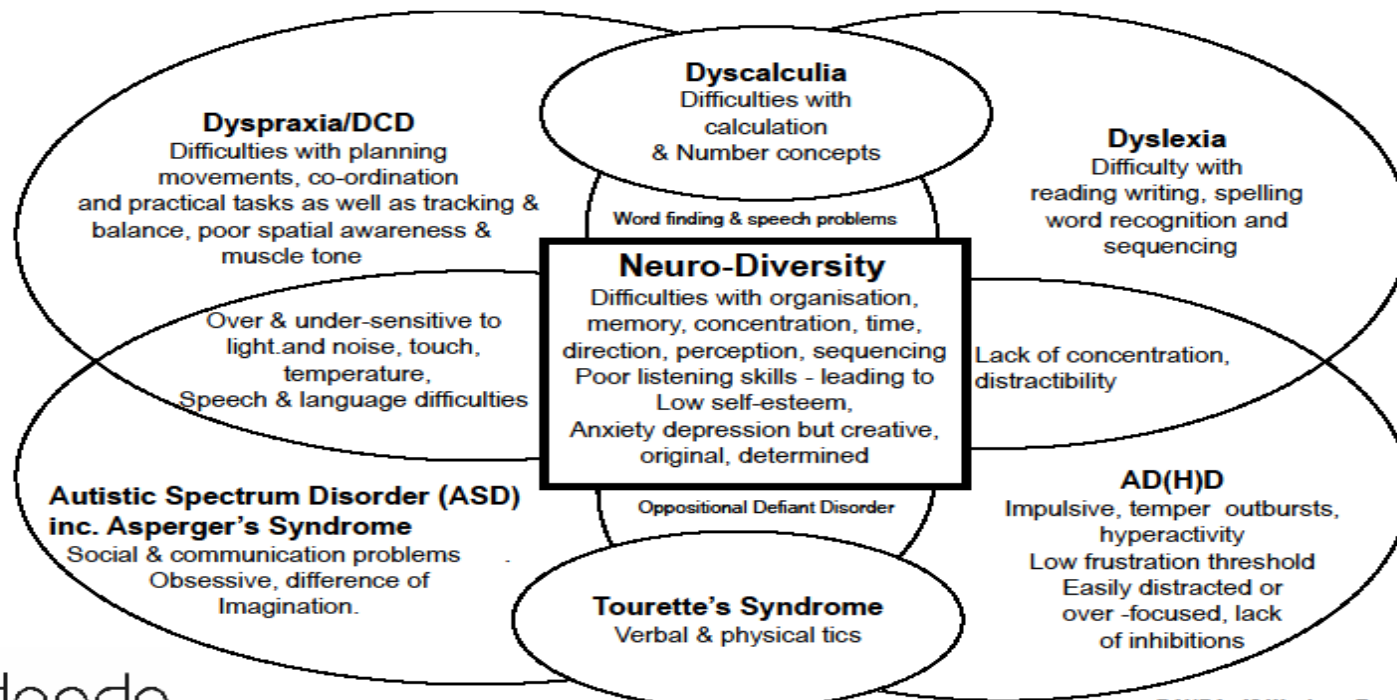
AD(H)D

- A difficulty characterised by inattentiveness, (hyperactivity) and impulsivity.

Specific Learning Difficulties/Neuro-diverse profiles

The Make-up of Neuro-Diversity

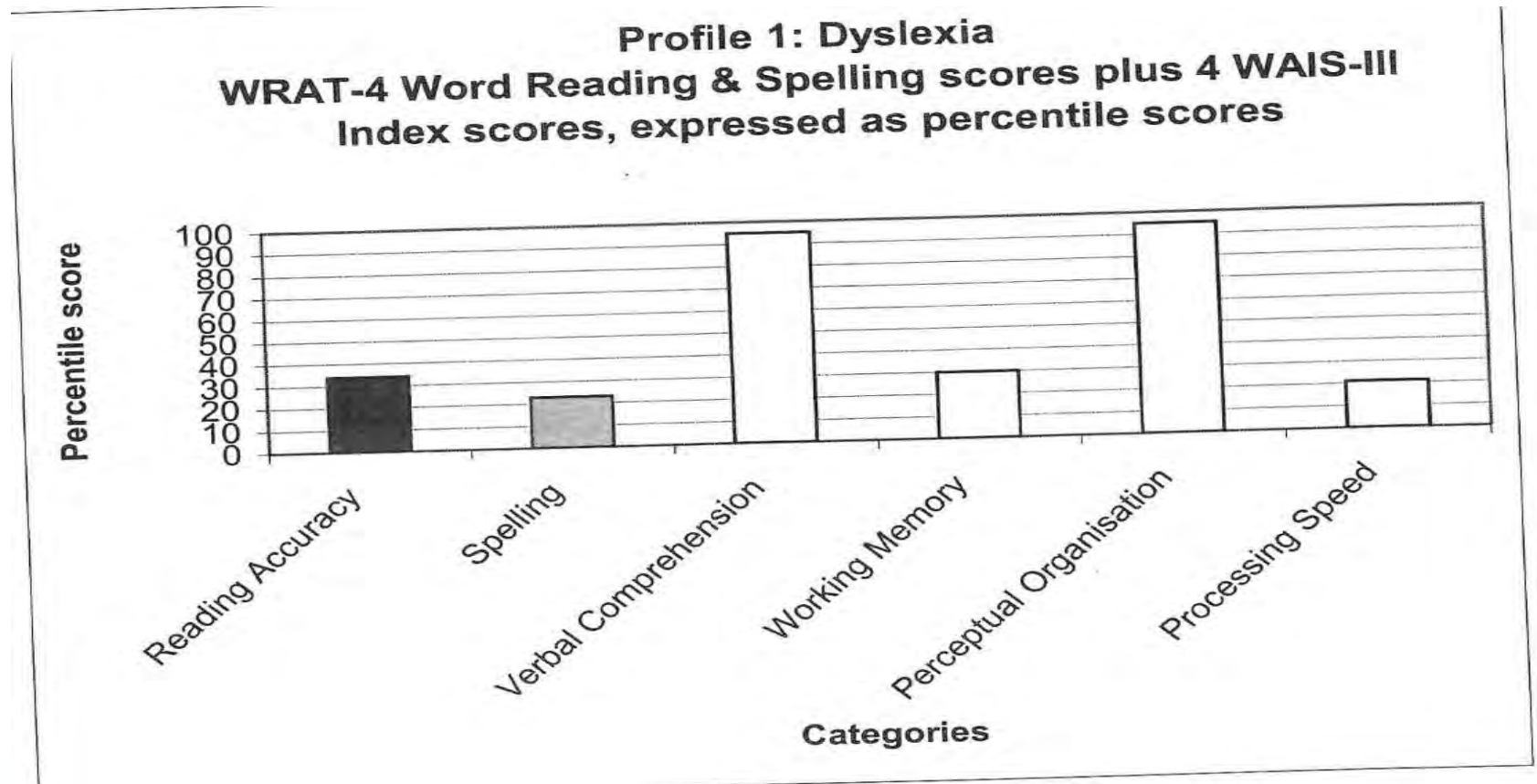
This is a document for discussion. Concentrating mainly on the difficulties of those with neuro-diversity. It must however, be pointed out that many people with neuro-diversity are excellent at maths, co-ordination, reading etc . We are people of extremes.



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SpLD profiles - dyslexia



Dyslexia – Core symptoms

Areas of weakness include:

- processing speed (both visual and phonological processing speed),
- visual and auditory working memory
- phonological awareness.

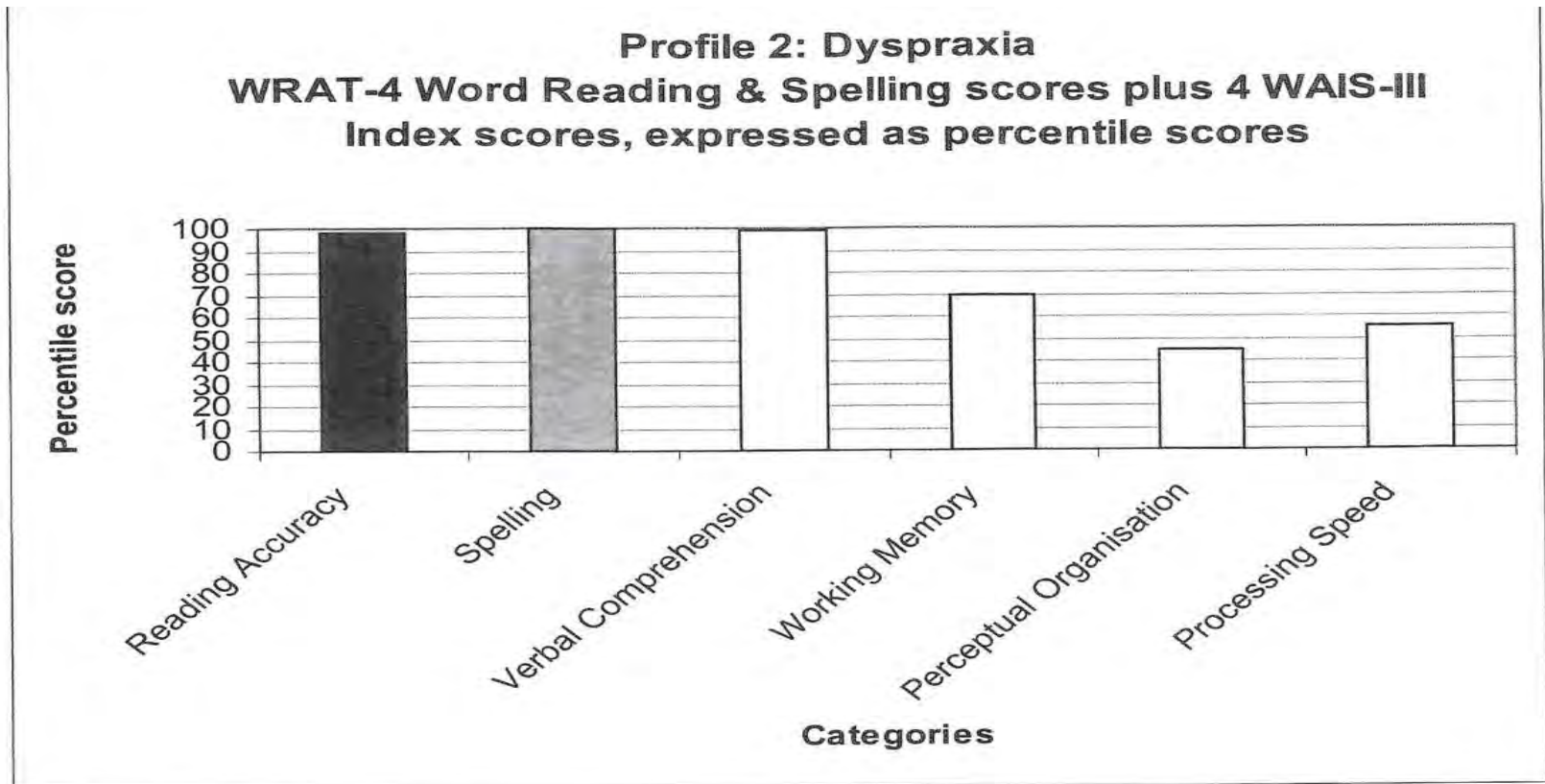
These underlying difficulties frequently manifest themselves in lower than expected accuracy with reading and spelling and slower reading and writing speeds.

Dyslexia – coping academically

Challenges in HE

- Reading accuracy (under pressure)
- Speed of reading
- Need to re-read text
- Persistent spelling errors
- Grammatical structure
- Sequencing in words and ideas
- Planning and organisation of written work
- Meeting deadlines
- Memorising fact/ formulae
- Following a number of instructions given at the same time
- Understanding the brief
- Taking notes (lectures & from texts)
- Determining what is important from what is not
- planning study and general study skills
- Proof reading

SpLD profiles - dyspraxia



Dyspraxia – Core symptoms

Areas of weakness include:

- processing speed
- working memory
- perceptual organisation
- Motor co-ordination.

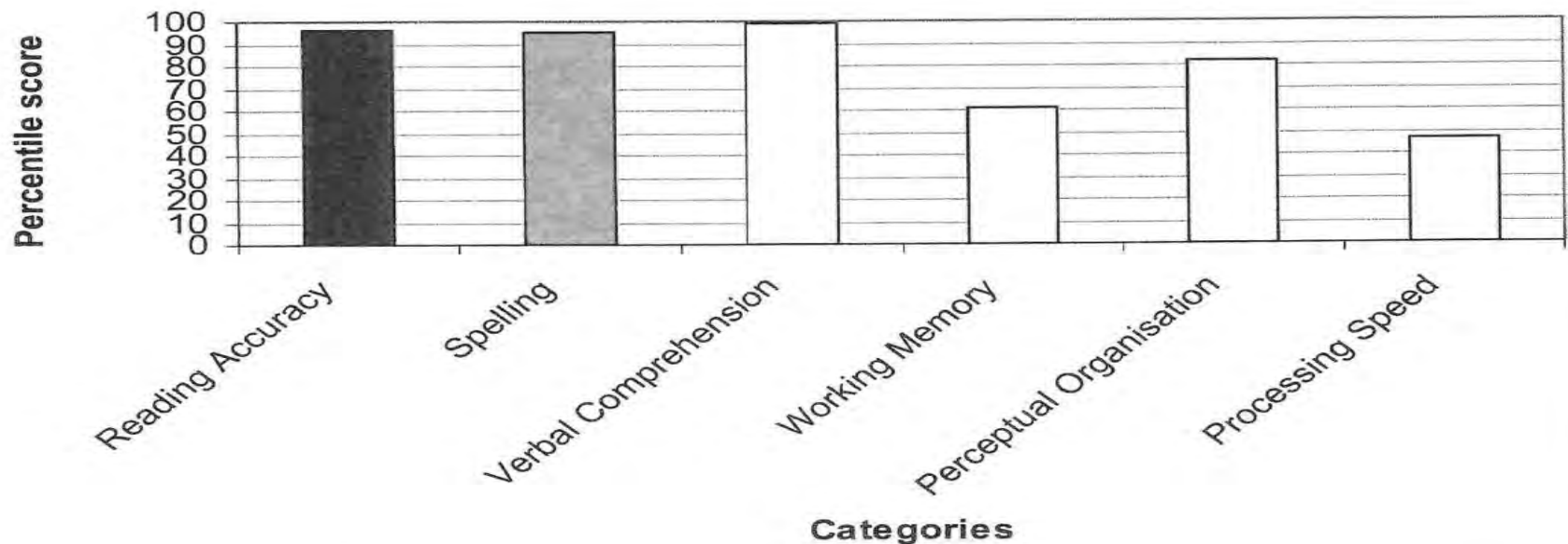
Dyspraxia - Coping academically

Challenges

- Time management
- organisation
- Deciding what is important from not important (reading everything)
- Taking longer to do assignments and complete work
- Focus / concentration (proofreading work)
- Working to deadlines (assignments not in on time)
- coping in a group setting (answering out of turn)
- Manual dexterity/ manipulative skills

Profiles – AD(H)D

Profile 3: ADHD
WRAT-4 Word Reading & Spelling scores plus 4 WAIS-III
Index scores, expressed as percentile scores



AD(H)D Core symptoms

Core symptoms are impairments in:

- Attention
- Inhibition
- Self regulation

What challenges do these core symptoms create in the HE environment?

ADHD - Coping academically

Challenges

- Initial settling in (rules)
- Coping in a group setting (answering out of turn)
- Coping in a lecture (rules/ sitting still/ quiet)
- Deciding what is important from not important (reading everything)
- Taking longer to do assignments and complete work
- Understanding form (what is expected, not knowing the ingredients of an assignment)
- Focus (proofreading work)
- Working to deadlines (assignments not in on time)

Dyslexia – Signs & Symptoms

Strengths

- Good comprehension skills
 - Good problem-solving skills
 - Good visual skills (occasionally)
 - Ability to process information holistically
 - Good oral skills
 - Good communication skills
 - Divergent thinking
 - Acute awareness of their difficulties and can quite readily utilise compensatory strategies
- Reid and Kirk, dyslexia in Adults: Education and Employment (2001)

Solutions- reasonable adjustments and support

Students with SpLD benefit from reasonable adjustments in the following areas :

- Course based adjustments (inclusive learning).
- Exam access arrangements
- Assistive technology
- Human support

Solutions – Course based adjustments

Supervisions

- flexibility over deadlines / providing assignment deadlines well in advance .
- additional supervisions
- guidance with reading lists, directed reading tasks or modified reading lists
- adequate time to assimilate information and prepare answers before being required to respond to questions
- group discussion materials e-mailed in advance to be read and assimilated prior to the session. Where discussion material need to be read during a supervision adequate processing time should be allowed
- use concise, clear and explicit language & avoid linguistically ambiguous messages. rephrasing or repetition of information may be necessary.
- ‘Signposting’ essential information will assist this student in determining salient information from non-essential details.
- Tasks should be modelled as this will make expectations concrete (e.g. an example of a 1st class essay, a 2:1, a 2:2, etc, answers provided for "examples sheets).

Solutions – Course based adjustments

Lectures

- a synopsis of the relevant points of a lecture at the beginning.
- Reserved seating near front
- recording lectures
- Taking notes using a laptop computer.
- Information left on the board to allow adequate copying time.
- Copies of handouts in advance by electronic mail
- Handouts on yellow or off/white paper
- Powerpoint slides should be numbered to assist with referencing during note taking.

Solutions - exam access arrangements

Exam access arrangements could include:

- 25% extra time
- Use of a word processor
- Rest breaks
- Separate, distraction free, room
- Transcription of exam script

Solutions – Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology:

- Laptop/ netbook
- printer/scanner
- Text to Speech Software (Read & Write Gold)
- Voice Activated Software (Dragon)
- PDA (Personal Digital Assistant)
- Live scribe pen
- Digital Voice recorder
- Note Taking Software (Audio Note taker)
- Mindmapping Software (Inspiration)
- Coloured overlays

Solutions – Human Support

- Human support can include:
- 1:1 specialist study skills tutor (non-subject specific)
- Mentor
- proof-reader

SpLD in vocational courses

Competence standards

- Competence standards determine if a person has the level of ability (essentially competence standards are entry and assessment criteria)
- Reasonable adjustments do not have to be made to competence standards
- Reasonable adjustments have to be made to the way in which the standards are assessed or performed

SpLD in vocational courses

What do we need to do?

- Identify students who will require support in advance
- Agree reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers presented by the course & ensure that disabled students can study on an equal basis with their no-disabled peers

Who is involved?

- Student
- Course leader
- Occupational health physician
- Disability officer

SpLD in vocational courses- examples of reasonable adjustments

- Increased supervisory support
- Use of Assistive technology
- mentor

SpLD in vocational courses - nursing

Challenges

Medication

- Reading/ spelling accuracy
- Recall
- Handwriting
- Calculations
- Following sequences
- Learning formulae

Solutions

- Note pad to write & calculate
- Crib sheet for medications
- Medication dictionary
- Memory aids & colour coding
- Check spelling with drug chart
- Demonstrations and repetition
- Use of calculator and drug calculation formulae

Useful references

- Gateways to the professions. Advising medical schools: encouraging disabled students. General Medical Council
- ADSHE Guidelines to Support Nursing Learners with Dyslexia in Practice
- <http://www.workingstrategies4u.co.uk/index.htm>
- Time toTake Stock. Disability and Professional Competence. Anne Tynan
- Disabled students, disabled doctors – time for change? A study of different societal views of disabled people's inclusion to the study and practice of medicine, Roberts, TE, Butler,A. Boursicot, KAM,