

Guidelines for Viva Examiners regarding students with Specific learning Difficulties

Institute of Dentistry

The following represents recommendations to circulate to examiners as and when requested by students:

Specific learning difficulties (Dyslexia, Dyspraxia AD(H)D) might impact auditory and visual information processing in working and short-term memory function.

Anxiety is also likely to impact any student in an exam situation but with the addition of decreased short-term memory performance, might have a greater impact than expected.

In order to ensure fairness and academic standards for all students, as well as to be in line with disability discrimination legislation, any viva board should consider whether the examination situation will inhibit the performance of any students with Specific Learning Difficulties and make appropriate reasonable adjustments.

A student with Specific Learning Difficulties in a viva exam might experience difficulties with:

- Remembering what is said
- Holding questions in their mind and then answering referring to information stored in the long term-memory
- Keeping track of ideas when listening and speaking
- Formulating full and coherent responses to questions under pressure

With this in mind *it is recommended* that any viva board consider that the candidate might request one or more of the following prior to and during the examination:

- To break down information in manageable chunks
- To request to repeat information/questions
- To use mind maps, diagrams, prompt cards/notes to formulate response to questions
- To keep question short
- To expand slightly on the question if necessary
- To use unambiguous language (where possible, remembering that students should be aware of technical terminology)

NB. Not all students with Specific Learning Difficulties experience all of the above difficulties with the same degree and not all students will require all of the above adjustments. The guidelines above represent a broad approach and level of awareness.

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