

At Harper Adams University College, we screen all undergraduates during induction using a dyslexia self assessment questionnaire.

## Why do we screen all 1<sup>st</sup> year students?

Data<sup>1</sup> indicates that there are higher levels of students with dyslexia studying for 'agriculture and related' courses so it increases awareness amongst students.

If students feel that they have been underachieving then screening can help to explore a possible explanation.

Early support can improve confidence and help students to fulfil their potential.

It can help to retain students by ensuring that they can access support at the start of their course.

## How do we screen?

Following the learner support presentation at induction, students complete a dyslexia self assessment questionnaire (The Vinegrad Checklist<sup>2</sup>) under the guidance of qualified dyslexia staff.

The questionnaire is user friendly and if answered honestly can be an accurate indicator of dyslexia.

The questionnaires are marked by dyslexia tutors and students with high indicators are invited to attend the second part of the screening which is made up of:

- The Lucid Adult Dyslexia Screening (LADS) computer programme
- A short piece of writing and a spelling test



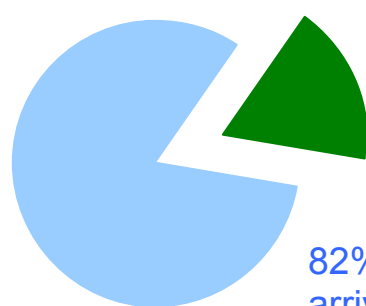
The student then has an individual feedback session to discuss the results and relevant information.

It is then the student's decision if he/she wishes to progress with a dyslexia diagnostic assessment.

Sometimes a student may not progress at this stage but may do so in subsequent years if he/she is not achieving as anticipated.

## Effectiveness of the screening

Of the 80 first year undergraduates (2007/8) who are registered with dyslexia:



18% were identified as a result of this screening

82% were already registered with dyslexia on arrival at Harper Adams

## Student Profiles

“Becoming a vet has been my lifelong ambition, but at school I was told I would not get good enough A-Level results for veterinary school because my English was very poor. I had struggled with English from a young age and never understood why, but at Harper I was screened for dyslexia. It showed I was severely dyslexic, which was a shock but explained a lot.

The staff at Harper Adams were so supportive, giving me advice and support whenever I needed it. I noticed the difference when I took my first exams - in the past I always ran out of time and never completed all the questions, but here I was given extra time and used a computer to type my answers. The impact was great: my grades in the first half of the year, prior to dyslexia being diagnosed, were Cs and Ds. In the second half of the year, with Harper's support, I reached my full potential, getting mainly As and Bs. I graduated with a 2:1 and earned a place at vet school.”

**Kirsty (recent graduate)**  
BSc Agriculture with Animal Science

“The screening provided me with the opportunity to find out that I was dyslexic and receive support. I had thought that I may be dyslexic at school but didn't do anything about it because I could manage with the work.

Gaining good marks in my assignments in 2<sup>nd</sup> year is important because the marks count towards my degree award. I have therefore, used Texthelp Read & Write to help proof read my assignment work and I have also used 1:1 study skill sessions to improve my written English.”

**2<sup>nd</sup> year student**  
BSc Rural Enterprise & Land Management

## Conclusion

High levels of resources are required to undertake this screening. This is outweighed by the benefits of early identification for both the student and Harper Adams, and therefore this investment will continue to be funded.

If resources were not available to screen all new students then one option could be to target certain courses where high levels of dyslexia may prevail.

**Jane Hill, Learner Support Co-ordinator**

1 Source: The Higher Education Statistics Agency Ltd (HESA) Student Record 2003/4  
2 The Vinegrad Checklist, Dyslexia Action