**Students registered with Oxford Brookes Dyslexia/Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) Service**

**Oral Viva Assessment**

**The Difficulties Students May Experience**

There are common features of Dyslexia/SpLD which may be pronounced during timed oral tests. These features can be categorised under the headings of

* short attention and memory spans, and
* slow processing speeds.

Without the aid of notes to serve as a memory jogger (a mind map, for example), students with SpLDs may find vocabulary their biggest challenge. This can become evident in instances in their oral delivery where there is noticeable

* pausing: the student is clearly attempting to retrieve words that appear not to come readily
* 'falling over' words by the conflation of two words, or the missing out of syllables in words
* choosing the wrong word (a similar-sounding word)
* presenting incomplete utterances which appear to lack structure.

**Recommended Procedure**

The following awareness and approaches can help students with neuro-diversity (SpLD) meet the requirements of an oral viva.

* Students should be awarded extra time (as per their Dyslexia/SpLD memo) in their oral viva tests. Typically, students have a reasonable adjustment of 25% extra time.
* Students should be advised to bring their blue card to the oral viva to verify the allowance of extra time.
* When marking an oral viva, assessors will, as for any other type of exam, award marks for content, clarity and so on.

Where an oral viva is followed by a question and answer session, students with neuro-diversity (SpLD) respond well to questioning that takes into account difficulties with processing receptive oral information.

Below is guidance for assessors in the question-asking stage of the oral viva.

It is advisable for the questioner to

* slow down their rate of speaking, but not so that it is unnatural
* give short instructions, one at a time, delivered in sequential order (instructions delivered out of order can cause problems for students with sequencing difficulties)
* check that the student has understood any instructions and avoid saying: “Do you understand?”
* allow the student time to process what has been said (suggestion 3 seconds)
* repeat questions when asked. The student will have attempted to listen to everything said, but may have reached their working memory capacity and missed key points.