

Real-life story - Heather Beebe

Read about the support Heather received while at university.



Heather Beebe Physiotherapy student

Employer or university St George's University of London

Salary range Unknown

What happened?

It was my husband who suspected I might have dyslexia, because I wrote numbers the wrong way round or repeated words in a sentence. While studying for a previous degree I was able to take an initial diagnostic test which suggested I had dyslexia. However, because I was an international student, I was unable to access a full assessment free of charge. Without a full assessment from an educational psychologist I struggled to get the help I needed.

When I started my physiotherapy degree at St George's, I was reluctant to disclose my dyslexia because of the stigma of being labelled as different. It was a talk by the university disability adviser that spurred me on to seek help from the university, because he made it sound as if it was ok to have a problem and that support was available.

What support did you receive?

Now as a home student I was able to access a full dyslexia assessment free of charge and found out that as well as dyslexia I have the additional complication of a short working memory. The educational psychologist wrote a report of recommendation for support. A needs assessment was then done to identify specific equipment the university could provide to help me. This included a printer and software packages for my laptop, including a spell checker and a programme to create mind maps. I was also able to arrange to

have prescription tinted glasses which help with visual stress.

As I go through the course I will also be able to access one-to-one help with essay technique.

I benefit from a disabled students allowance, and use this to cover extra costs, such as using coloured paper for printing.

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Who helped you?

The disability adviser because his talk encouraged me to seek some help. The tutor for disability and dyslexia from my course has also helped me. They both give me ongoing support and also arranged for me to attend a Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP) Dyslexia Day.

What are your tips for other students with a disability?

Most importantly, don't try to hide it. You may naturally want to keep it to yourself because you don't want to be seen as different but in doing this you won't get the help you need.

Having an awareness of the nature of your disability gives you the means to deal with it much more effectively.

Once you have disclosed that you need help with a problem it feels much better to be in an environment where people can help you – you don't feel so much on your own and you can benefit from mutual support from like-minded people.

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