Dyspraxia and Developmental Coordinator Disorder (DCD) Fact Sheet

What is dyspraxia or Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)?

- Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), also know as dyspraxia, is a disorder which affects one's fine and/or gross motor coordination (Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland, 2019). People with DCD/dyspraxia can experience difficulty with planning, organizing and executing tasks.
- DCD is distinct from other motor disorders, for example, stroke or cerebral palsy.
- The difficulties experienced by people with DCD can change over time, particularly in response to their environment and life experiences.
- Fine motor coordination is concerned with smaller muscles (e.g. by hands, fingers, mouth, toes etc.), whereas gross motor coordination is concerned with larger muscles (e.g. arms, legs, torso etc.)

How can DCD/dyspraxia impact a student's college experience?

Difficulties	Possible impact in College
1. Managing academic workload and tasks	- Possible **difficulty with handwriting** and drawing diagrams and graphs. Students **may need to use a computer to** take notes and in exams. - Difficulty with **planning and organizing their workload**, particularly within the self-directed environment of university. Furthermore, **assignments with ambiguous instructions can be difficult** to manage. **Tasks which may require fine motor skills** may be more difficult (e.g. lab work, clinical skills, drawing). - Difficulty with **time management and planning** to arrive to lectures/appointments on time. - Difficulty **maintaining concentration** during lectures. - Difficulty with **organization of thoughts** for assignments, written expression and numeracy skills.
2. Orientation and communication	- Difficulty with **conveying thoughts clearly**, both during informal conversation and formal assessments (e.g. presentations). - Difficulty with **spatial awareness** (e.g. can trip easily).
3. Other	Difficulty with **sensory input** (e.g. can be highly sensitive to noise, light, touch, movement etc.).

How can you support a student who is blind or vision impaired?

1. **Student-Centred Approach:**
    *   If you are in doubt about how to support a student at any time, **ask the student** – they are the experts of their own needs!
    *   Create a space for students to **feel comfortable approaching you with any issues** (e.g. provide contact and student office hour details etc.).
    *   Implement any classroom and exam accommodations which were determined at the **student's Needs Assessment.**

2. **Teaching and Learning:**
    *   Be guided by Universal Design principles when designing coursework.
    *   **Provide lecture notes, in a suitable format, in advance of the class.**
    *   Give **clear and explicit instructions on what is expected of them for assignments** and assessments, possibly providing an example of good work.
    *   **Provide reading lists in advance** and assistance with prioritised readings.
    *   **Avoid to sole use of written tutorial or lab work** as some students with dyspraxia/DCD may only be able to write using a computer. Preferably, allow all students to submit tutorial worksheets via a Word document.
    *   **Permit the student to use Assistive Technology** in the classroom.
    *   Consider the **exam needs of the student for in-class or mid-semester exams** (e.g. does the student require a computer/assistive technology/scribe?).
    *   Support the student if they have **difficulties meeting deadlines.**
    *   Provide a **clear timeline** for the semester (e.g. when lectures are, assignment deadlines etc.). **Inform about any changes to timetables** as soon as possible.

To find out more information please visit:

*   https://www.ahead.ie/inclusiveteaching
*   https://www.dyspraxia.ie/