

# **Support Services to Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in Hong Kong Tertiary Institutions: Proposed Guidelines and Current Situation**

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The Hong Kong Society of Child Neurology & Developmental Paediatrics  
Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities

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**Participating Institutions and Organizations of  
the Joint Meetings with Tertiary Institutions in Hong Kong**

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& Developmental Paediatrics

Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities

## **Support Services to Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in Tertiary Institutions in Hong Kong: An Overview**

The subject of specific learning disabilities (SLD), including specific reading and writing disorders (dyslexia), was little known in Hong Kong up to the early 1990s. Students with SLD were then brought to the attention of educators and doctors because of their behavioural problems and persistent underachievement, despite adequate general intelligence and due motivation and diligence. By the time the diagnosis for a reading and writing disorder was made, if at all, such a great gap has accumulated between achievement and personal potentials that students and their parents and teachers have mostly given up on their learning capacities. Post-secondary education was an impossible dream.

Much has been achieved across sectors since, in clinical medicine and neurosciences, in special education and in public policy. SLD has been a recognized cause of disability under Hong Kong's Disability Discrimination Ordinance and the related Code of Practice in Education since its inception. In the 2005-2007 Rehabilitation Programme Plan Review, SLD was added as a category of disability in Hong Kong's Rehabilitation Policy. Subsequently as a result, SLD was added as a disability category in JUPAS application sub-system. A few outstanding and resilient students with dyslexia have succeeded in the recent few years to enter tertiary institutions. Yet the recognition of their needs and readiness to support them in tertiary institutions in Hong Kong remain limited in many instances. With a local prevalence of SLD in reading and writing being 9.7-12.6% of the population (Chan D, Ho C, Tsang SM, Lee SH, Chung K 2007), and overseas data showing that SLD accounts for over 80% of students with disabilities in tertiary institutions of developed countries, further preparation within our local institutions was seen as an urgent task.

The Hong Kong Society of Child Neurology & Developmental Paediatrics (HKCNDP) and Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities (HKASLD) have been close partners in advocating for children and individuals with SLD. In 2009, these two bodies wrote to the Heads and the Directors of Student Affairs of local tertiary institutions, with the purpose of understanding systems of support for students with SLD in respective institutions. All tertiary institutions responded readily, and summaries of their replies were compiled. In

light of the shared perception that further work on this subject may be necessary, a series of joint meetings consisting of representatives from ten tertiary institutions of Hong Kong, together with representatives from HKCNDP and HKASLD, was formed in December 2009.

Four joint meetings were held over the ensuing year. Open exchanges were made at each meeting. Working groups were formed to respectively address the specific areas, and to prepare suggested guidelines for all to consider. These working groups were designated to address:

- (1) administrative support systems for processing needs of newly admitted students with SLD, and those identified during their study years,
- (2) assessment process and criteria for recognition of a diagnosis of SLD, and
- (3) reasonable accommodations to be made available for these students.

Conclusions and proposals of the working groups were presented to the joint meeting. After due discussions and revisions, proposals were agreed in principle for reference in their future management of students with SLD. Given the time required to test out these proposed working guidelines, the joint meeting resolved to come together again after one year's application at the institutions, to report on applicability, resources implications, and feedbacks from respective faculties, administrators, and students with SLD.

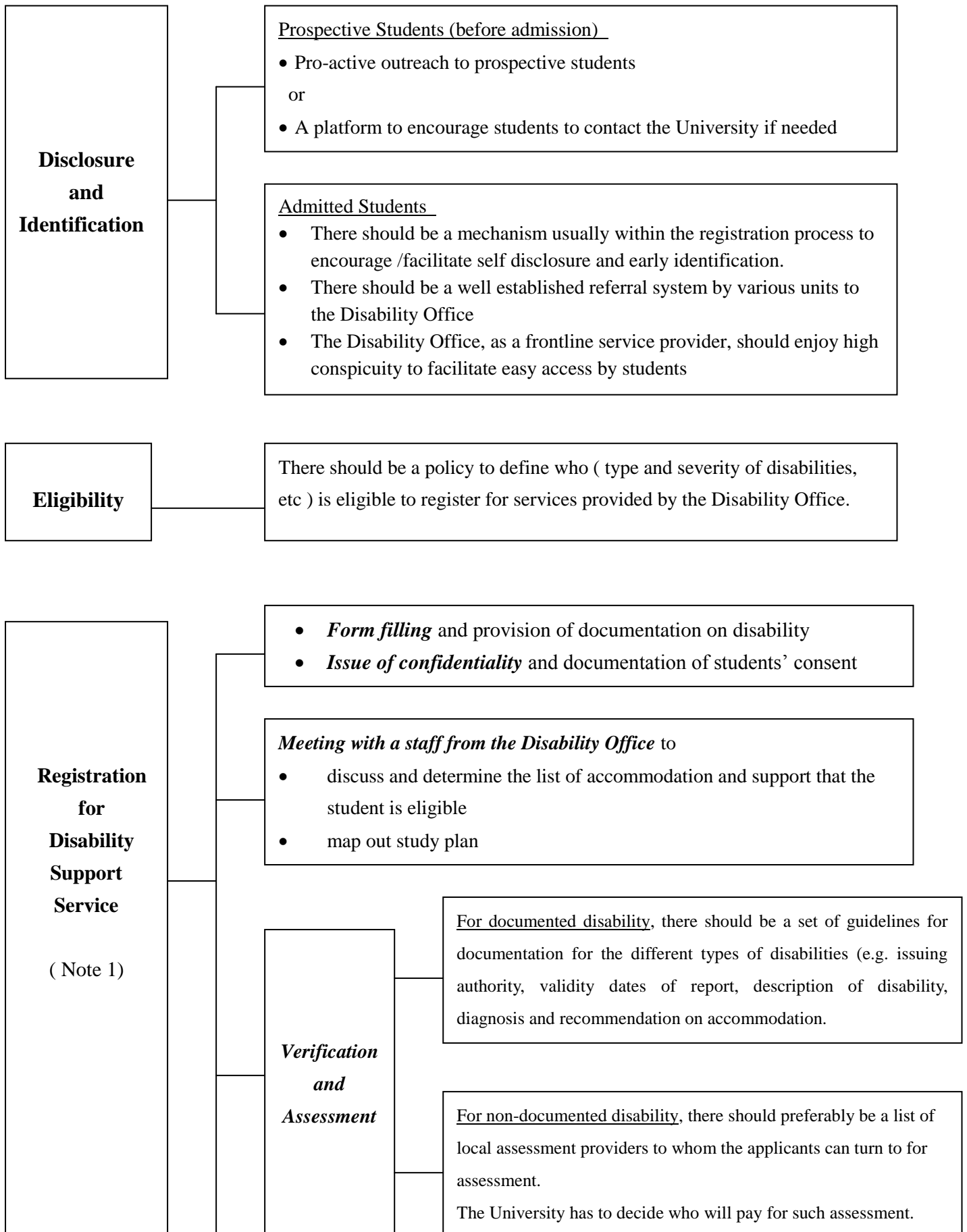
This paper presents the membership of the Joint Meetings and Working Groups, and the proposed guidelines in these three key areas.

We welcome comments from University/ Institution Heads, Directors of Student Affairs and Counseling Sections, related sections and students with SLD, such that improvement in professional and solid logistical measures to support these students may be made.

# Guidelines from the Working Groups

Guidelines on Support Systems  
for Students with a Disability  
& Disability Support Services

# Support Systems for Students with a Disability





**Registration**

**Accommodation**

With complete documentation, the student and staff from Disability office should be able to agree on a list of accommodation that the student required to support his/her studies. The list can be reviewed periodically. But as this normally involves consent and cooperation from the Faculty or other units in the University, the following issues may need to be addressed:

- How far will the Faculty be ready to accept the Disability Officer's recommendations for accommodation? This touches on the professional standing and recognition of the role of the Disability Office within the University community. A small working group comprising of representatives from various units to assess individual cases may enhance recognition.
- What will happen if there is disagreement between the DO and the Faculty? Will there be an external party to resolve the dispute? HKSSA may be a good platform for setting up an external committee comprising experts from various professions as arbiter or to recommend accommodation for controversial cases. Such resources can also be shared amongst all member institutions.
- The Disability Office should have clear guideline on confidentiality i.e. how far should the details of the students be revealed to the Faculty/individual faculty members in the process of seeking accommodation.
- There should be a mechanism to obtain funds to acquire the accommodation in a timely manner.

**Awareness**

Promote disability awareness on campus

Resource support for Faculty staff  
e.g. guidelines on preparing teaching materials for students with disabilities; tips on how to communicate with persons with disabilities

**Rights and Advocacy**

There should be a body within the University to ensure compliance with equal opportunity and related legal ordinances. The body should also monitor and advise the University on issues such as free access, web accessibility.

**Handling Grievances**

There should be a set of grievance procedures to tackle complaints and grievances relating to equal opportunity. The procedures should be well publicized and easily accessible.

# Disability Support Services

## Note 1

### Admission of New Students

During the registration process, students who have registered their disabilities will be contacted and referral made to a disability office for follow up support. The Disability Office in many cases is a virtual office usually within student service.



### Interview with New Students who have disabilities

The responsible/contact person in the Disability Office will interview the new students with disabilities. They should identify which type of disabilities the students have, such as physical, visual or learning disabilities. The disabled students are requested to submit the relevant and updated assessment report. During the interview, the responsible/contact person should discuss with the students about their needs, and tell them what service/facilities could be provided by campus to support their university life. After the interview, the responsible/contact person should mobilize the campus resources in order to meet students' needs.

Study Aid	Financial Aid	Counselling Service	Other Campus Facilities
Identify their needs for learning and facilitate their study, for example: Enlarged version of handouts, notes and examination papers; Extra time for examination. If the above adjustments involved academic departments, the responsible/contact person should contact relevant faculty staff to explain the cases & recommended accommodations, with prior consent of the students.	If the recommended accommodations incur resources that are not covered by the institutions, and if the student have financial difficulties to support the special accommodations recommended for his/her study, the responsible/contact person should provide the information of dedicated scholarship or financial assistance to students.	The responsible/contact person should introduce the counselling service to students with disabilities. With the student's consent, the responsible/contact person should contact the student counselor for making a referral. The student counselor will follow up these students' adjustment.	The responsible/contact person should identify other campus facilities which are suitable to facilitate students' adjustment, such as libraries, IT department, etc., and if necessary, contact these facilities to explain the cases and recommended accommodations, with prior consent of the students.
Prepared by the Working Group on Support Systems, Joint Meetings with Tertiary Institutions in Hong Kong on Support Services to Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)			

# Guidelines on Assessment for Student with SLD

# **Assessment Guidelines for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Tertiary Institutions**

## **1. Introduction**

In recent two decades, special learning difficulties in reading and writing or dyslexia, have caught increasing attention in Hong Kong. Even though the peculiar learning behaviors and poor academic performance of students with dyslexia had long been noted by some school teachers and official, there was no formal assessment provided to these students before the late 80's in Hong Kong and that had caused the underdeveloped establishment of special services and arrangements for them at the time. Formal assessment battery, based on theory and research evidence on dyslexia, for primary and junior secondary students with suspected dyslexia was not available until 2000. However, for those studying in higher secondary forms or finally getting into tertiary institutions, we do not have formal assessment battery both for diagnostic confirmation and for accommodations planning. That is, there is still lack of a formal assessment battery for university students with possibilities of having dyslexia.

This paper will provide a review on the development of assessment tools in Hong Kong. With reference to the overseas practice, we propose some possible and practical ways on how to assess and identify young adults with suspected dyslexia in Hong Kong. It is hoped that these suggestions would facilitate our local professionals and university personnel to do assessment to confirm the diagnosis of dyslexia for university students at the time of admission, support their choice of subjects and plan for accommodations in class, doing assignment and examinations.

## **2. Background for Development of Assessment Tools in Hong Kong**

### **2.1 Before the late 80's**

In Hong Kong, as in other countries, the problem of dyslexia had existed well before it could be identified or assessed. Although some children were found to have difficulties in word learning despite their normal or even superior intelligence, no formal assessment could be provided to them before the late 80's. In view of their "backwardness" in academic attainment, they were usually offered remedial services in schools. However, as these services were not specific

to their specific learning difficulties, most of the children with dyslexia continued to fail in academic performance and leave school before completion of secondary school.

## 2.2 Assessment Tools for Primary School Students in Hong Kong

In the late 80's and 90's, educational psychologists from Education Department developed a battery of three tests for assessment of primary school-aged children with normal intelligence and suspected to have specific difficulties in word reading and dictation. These tests are: "Chinese Word Recognition Test", "Chinese Word Matching Test" and "Chinese Copying Test". Although this battery developed by the educational psychologists was rather simple and crude, it represents the first attempt in the formal identification and assessment of children with dyslexia in local context. Appropriate remedial service could then be planned for these children.

Formal assessment battery based on theory and research evidence was not available until 2000. The Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing (HKT-SpLD) was developed by the Hong Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Research Team in 2000 for assessing primary school children up to ages 10.5 years. This battery, which has been used to assess children with dyslexia in Hong Kong from Grade 1 to Grade 4 primary school level. This HKT-P (Primary school) battery consisted of 12 tests including three literacy tests, one rapid naming test, two phonological awareness tests and three phonological memory tests and three orthographic knowledge tests. These 12 tests were combined to yield five composite scores in the domains of literacy, rapid naming, phonological awareness, phonological memory, and orthographic knowledge. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of HKT-P (HKT-P-II) published in 2007, the norms of the three literacy subtests and digit rapid naming subtest from Grade 5 and Grade 6 were extended to children aged 12.5 years. Also, in both editions, the Gardner's (1996) Test of Visual-Perceptual Skills (Non-motor) Revised (TVPS-R) was used to test the children's visual perceptual and visual memory skills.

### 2.3 Assessment Tools for Secondary School Students in Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Junior Secondary students (HKT-JS) published in 2007 was developed by the Hong Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Research Team for assessment of secondary 1 to 3 students suspected to have dyslexia. The test comprises of five domains including literacy, speeded processing, morphological awareness, phonological memory and orthographic knowledge. The test facilitates the decision on special arrangements in internal and public exams for secondary students.

The Hong Kong Chinese Language Abilities Assessment for Secondary School Students developed by Professor Man Koon HO was published in 2008. The test consists of 9 papers – morphology, errors correction, segmentation of text, copying, dictation, reading aloud, essay writing, reading comprehension and fluency in reading text. This test was developed for helping teachers to identify junior secondary school students at risk of having dyslexia. It also facilitates the consideration of whether senior secondary students previously diagnosed to have dyslexia are in need of special arrangements in public examinations.

### 2.4 Screening Tools for students in Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Research Team also developed the Hong Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Behavior Checklist (For Primary 1 to 4 students) in 2001. It aims to enable educators to identify primary school students suspected to have specific learning difficulties at an early stage. This checklist has 65 items of student reading-related behavioural characteristics that can be observed in the classroom. It covers 12 areas that include general performance, reading, dictation, writing, mathematics, language, memory, concentration, sequencing ability, motor co-ordination, spatial orientation, and social/emotional adjustment. Teachers have to complete the Checklist with reference to daily observations of the student's behavior.

The Hong Kong Behavior Checklist of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Junior Secondary School Students (BCL-JS) was published in 2009. It helps teachers to screen junior secondary students (aged 11yr. 7 months to 15 yr. 6 months) who are suspected having specific learning difficulties in reading and writing. It should be completed by a Chinese teacher of the students who have taught him or her for at least two months. The screening tool includes

25 items concerning 3 domains: Chinese reading (word reading, reading comprehension and reading fluency), Chinese handwriting (copying and dictation) ability and Chinese written composition. For those students who are found to be weak in these literacy skills by the tool, referral will then be made by the school to an educational psychologist for formal assessment.

## 2.5 Screening Tool for Adults in Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Reading and Writing Behavior Checklist for Adults was published by the Hong Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Research Team in 2007. It provides screening for Hong Kong adults with suspected reading and writing problems. It has norms covering age 21 to 60. It is comprised of six domains, including reading abilities, writing abilities, verbal expression, memory, and arithmetic abilities. The usage of this test is not known. Since it was developed from adults of general education background in local context, it may not be the best checklist for screening university students suspected to have specific learning difficulties.

## 3. A proposed framework of assessment and identification of dyslexia among university students in Hong Kong

3.1 Based on literature review on the work done by some overseas professionals, followings are suggestions on assessment of learning disabilities among university students in Hong Kong:

1. Documentation for students with learning disability is a report of a diagnostic assessment should be **conducted by a qualified professionals** such as registered educational psychologists or registered clinical psychologists;
2. Preferably, the assessment is conducted **no more than 5 years** prior to the date it is presented.
3. The assessment battery should include a **diagnostic interview** with following information:
  - Developmental history and related psychosocial data
  - Family and social history
  - Previous and relevant medical history
  - Past academic experiences and performance
  - Screening for the possibility of having any co-existing mood, behavioral,

neurological and/or personality disorders along with any history of medication and/or drug use

- Presenting learning difficulties/problems and the effectiveness of any learning and coping strategies have been employed
- Clients' perceptions of his/her difficulties and motivation for assessment

### 3.2 Aspects of Assessment

A psychoeducational assessment is suggested to include the following domains:

#### 1. Cognitive Abilities

The assessment of the students' cognitive abilities is to rule out the possibility of intellectual disabilities. Moreover, the cognitive profile is useful for understanding the student's strength and weaknesses in different aspects of learning.

Suggested Assessment Tools:

- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III (WAIS III) (Chinese)
- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale IV (WAIS IV) (English)

#### 2. Reading

The assessment of reading ability has to include literacy skills in both Chinese, which is the basis of local assessment tools (HKT-PII, HKT-JS), and English which is the major medium of instruction in the tertiary institutions. Besides, assessment in reading should cover both word level and text level. Research suggested that accuracy and fluency of word and text (Swanson, H. L., 2003; Cutting, L. E. & Materek, A. & Carolyn A. S. Cole, A.S. & Levine, T. M. & E. Mahone, M. 2009) have unique contribution to reading comprehension.

##### a. Reading Accuracy

Suggested Assessment Tools:

For Chinese Language

- Hong Kong Chinese Language Abilities for Secondary School Students: Reading Aloud subtest

For English Language

- Woodcock-Johnson III: Tests of Achievement: Letter-Word Identification, Word Attack, Reading Vocabulary
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT II): Word Reading subtests



*b. Reading Comprehension*

Suggested Assessment Tools:

- Hong Kong Chinese Language Abilities for Secondary School Students: Reading Comprehension subtest)
- Woodcock-Johnson III: Tests of Achievement: Passage Comprehension
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT II): Reading Comprehension subtests

*c. Reading Speed*

Suggested Assessment Tools:

- Hong Kong Chinese Language Abilities for Secondary School Students: Fluency in Reading Text subtest
- Woodcock-Johnson III: Tests of Achievement: Reading Fluency
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test II (WIAT II): Reading Rate Measure

**3. Spelling and Written Language**

*a. Accuracy and Analysis of Spelling Errors*

Suggested Assessment Tools:

- Hong Kong Chinese Language Abilities for Secondary School Students: Dictation subtest
- Woodcock-Johnson III: Tests of Achievement: Spelling subtest

*b. Written Composition (assessment on Speed, Accuracy, and Organization)*

Suggested Assessment Tools:

- Hong Kong Chinese Language Abilities for Secondary School Students: Essay Writing subtest)
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test II (WIAT II): Written Expression subtests
- Test of Written Language IV (TOWL III)

**4. Information Processing Speed**

Suggested Assessment Tools:

- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III (Chinese): Subtests on processing speed including Symbol Search and Digit Symbol-Coding

- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale IV (English): Subtests on processing speed including Symbol Search, Coding, and Cancellation
- Woodcock-Johnson III: Tests of Cognitive Abilities: Visual Matching, Decision Speed, Rapid Picture Naming, Pair Cancellation

#### **4. Review Assessment for Known Cases of Dyslexia**

For students known to have dyslexia before university admission, it should be made sure that their last assessment was conducted within 5 years of their request for accommodation. Otherwise, a review assessment by qualified professionals is required. In view of their educational needs in university setting, the review assessment is suggested to include measures on the student's English literacy and processing speed.

#### **5. Recommendations for accommodations**

The assessment report should include comprehensive recommendations for accommodations that are appropriate at the university/postsecondary educational setting and are with special attention to individual needs. A clear explanation of why each accommodation is recommended and how it alleviates the impact of the disability on the student being assessed should also be made. **Specific recommendations for reduction of the impact of learning disability on academic performance** such as access to individualized support services, use of assistive equipment, materials, facilities, learning and academic assessment strategies, etc.; in other words, the means of accommodations to overcome the learning difficulties as well as facilitate learning should be stated clearly in the assessment report.

#### **6. Limitations and Recommendation for Future Improvements**

One of the biggest challenges for the assessment of Hong Kong dyslexic young adults is a lack of locally validated assessment tools. Some of assessment tools listed above have been developed and standardized on populations that are predominantly English-speaking and/or from mainstream Western culture, while those developed by local professionals were mainly for primary and secondary school students. In addition, even though most of Hong Kong psychologists have

been trained to administer those tests listed above, assessment tools without local norms may create difficulties in interpretation and the test results have to be read with cautions. It is recommended that the assessment tools suggested in this paper are for the temporary measure for the identification of students with specific learning difficulties and for recommendations of accommodations. In the future, we highly recommend to develop our local formal assessment battery based on theory and research evidence for dyslexic young adults.

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- Illinois State Board of Education (2002). Serving English Language Learners with Disabilities: A resource manual for Illinois Educators
- Special Learning Disorder Work Group 2005/DfES Guidelines:  
<http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/downloads/SpLD%20Working%20Group%202005%20-%20DfES%20Guidelines.pdf>
- Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties in Higher Education (Revised October 2009)  
<http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/downloads/STECDFESGuidelines20092010.pdf>
- Swanson, H.L. (2003). Reading Comprehension Skills of Young Adults with childhood diagnosis of dyslexia. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 36, 538-555.
- U.S. Department of Education; the Department of Health and Human Services (2003). Symposium Summary: National Symposium on Learning Disabilities in English Language Learners

## **Useful Links**

- <http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/SASC.html>
- <http://www.collegeboard.com/>
- <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/ssd/application/disabilities/learning>

Prepared by the Working Group on Assessment, Joint Meetings with Tertiary Institutions in Hong Kong on Support Services to Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) .

Guidelines on  
Reasonable Accommodations  
for Students with SLD

## **Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Tertiary Education in Hong Kong**

### **1 Preamble**

- 1.1 Specific learning disabilities (SLD) span across life. In other words, the challenges and difficulties confronting these individuals do not go away. This fact is recognized and addressed through legal entitlements and establishment of support systems at all levels of education in a number of countries.
- 1.2 An accommodation generally refers to any change in the way things are customarily done to enable an individual with a disability to enjoy equal opportunities for education and employment (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1997<sup>1</sup>). Introduced in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of the US, the concept of *reasonable accommodation* is widely adopted and guides colleges and universities around the world to meet learning needs of students with disabilities. The key principle of reasonable accommodation is to ensure students with disabilities have access to education on a par with their peers. This principle is significant in that it serves to ensure that students with SLD are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged.
- 1.3 Following the international trend, Hong Kong government began to acknowledge and address the learning needs of school-age children with SLD alongside the inclusion movement in the last decade. Even though Hong Kong has no policy to mandate accommodations at the post-secondary level at present, universities are encouraged to promote equity through reasonable accommodations. Students with SLD still need to meet entry requirements in the same way as non-disabled peers and it is expected that assessment for accommodations be completed prior to admission. University support services should begin with the acceptance letter for admission, stating contact information of those who are in charge of verifying eligibility and coordinating services. Flexibility with clear guidelines should be the key principle to service provisions.
- 1.4 Against this background, this paper will categorize areas of accommodation in line with international standards and practices in the sections below for reference and possible adoption by tertiary institutions in Hong Kong.

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<sup>1</sup> Americans with Disabilities Act. (1997). 29 C.F.R. pt. 1630 appropriate. Retrieved from [http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html#N\\_3](http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html#N_3)

## **2 Reasonable Accommodations / Adjustments for Students with SLD**

Accommodation starts at the application stage, either via the JUPAS or the non-JUPAS route. Reasonable accommodations are based on proper assessment/ documentation and do not put a student with SLD at an advantage or disadvantage (the principle of equal opportunity). Accommodation involves arrangements after admission, adjustments in day-to-day teaching and learning, special examination arrangements.

### **2.1 After Admission**

- Accommodation starts before the formal semester. A list of most common behavioural characteristics of SLD and a checklist on university website to guide students with SLD is helpful. Specification of SLD and/or list of learning characteristics in the application form or appendix for students to check may help tertiary institutions in planning and tailor-making services for individual students. Provision of guide and contact information of relevant officer(s) and a list of potential documents required for seeking support on the acceptance notice facilitate the early arrangement of accommodations.
- The university can provide tailor-made university study preparation programme, library tours or workshops, information technology workshops for students with SLD.
- Students can approach the Disability Office for needs of assessment and advice on support and accommodation. Once the student's needs are ascertained, the Disability Office will follow up on their required support services and accommodations with the relevant university departments and service providers.
- Sometimes, accommodations or alterations to existing academic programmes, which are necessary for students to have the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities are deemed relevant. Such arrangement permits students to achieve the maximum potential within a framework of academic standards.

### **2.2 Day-to-day Teaching and Learning**

- The University can assign a counselor or learning skills lecturer or mentor to teach students with SLD learning strategies, study skills and to help them to cope with study and examination stress. The counselor can also advise on student's assignment outlines.
- Students can also be provided with other learning supports such as volunteers' help with note-taking and buddy system to monitor progress. University may also consider early availability of course notes, shorter reading lists, allowing audio-taping of lectures, accepting spelling and grammar mistakes for non-language assignments. Breaking a large assignment into smaller

components with opportunities for draft feedback, assistance in planning the workflow of assignment and extension of assignment deadlines are also helpful. Substitution for a subject needs to be judiciously applied, only when the subject is not essential to the degree/ qualification (e.g. studying a foreign language replaced by a course in literature or culture or intellectual history).

- The University can make use of assistive technology to facilitate the student's studies. These include providing audible books, audio taping the lecture, providing software such as screen readers (e.g. Claroread, TextHELP), mind-mapping (e.g. Inspiration), speech recognition software (e.g. Dragon Naturally Speak), contextual spell and grammar checkers for English (e.g. Ginger software).

### 2.3 Accommodations for Examination

Brief descriptions of accommodations	Eligibility criteria and basis of judgment	References
Extra time	<p>The test should be a measure of their knowledge - not of the speed of their reading or writing.</p> <p>Consider speed of processing (in reading/ writing/ spelling/ comprehension/ cognitive processes as appropriate), eligibility for reader/ scribe.</p>	<p>Reference 1: P.4-6, sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3</p> <p>Reference 7</p>
Use of word processor with/ without spell check	<p>This is particularly important where this is the usual classroom practice.</p> <p>Consider handwriting speed/ legibility/ comprehensibility, spelling errors, free writing speed, and normal way of working. Need to demonstrate the benefit of word processor over handwriting.</p> <p>Spell check is not allowed if spelling accuracy is a primary purpose of the exam paper.</p> <p>(Reference 1 indicates a recent change in UK. The use of word processor now only requires that it is the student's normal way of working. No supportive evidence or online application is</p>	<p>Reference 5;</p> <p>Reference 9 : P.13, Section 2.8</p> <p>Reference 1 : P.15, Section 2.8</p>

	required. Such practice may be considered if sufficient resource is available.)	
Reading out questions by a responsible adult <sup>2</sup> or a computer (e.g. Claroread, TextHELP)	Tests on math, science, etc. should test the respective subject matters and not the student's ability to read. Consider reading accuracy, speed and comprehension. Reader is not allowed in sections of a paper which test reading primarily. Extra time or reading aloud to oneself may be granted instead, if reader is not provided (though eligible).	Reference 1: P.8-10, section 2.5; P.53, section 9.5.1; P.79, Appendix 3; P.11, section 2.6
Use of scribe <sup>3</sup> or amanuensis / recording-to-tape/ speech recognition technology	Scribe is not allowed for sections of a paper testing writing with spelling accuracy, unless the candidate dictates spellings letter by letter.  Consider advantage of oral expression over handwritten expression, in terms of comprehensibility (due to spelling or written expression difficulties) and speed.  Consider scribe/ recording-to-tape/ speech recognition technology if such advantage cannot be achieved by the use of word processor.	References 4, 8;  Reference 1: P.12-14, Section 2.7; P.53, Section 9.5.2; P.80, Appendix 4
Transcripts	For students with illegible handwriting or spelling problems (e.g. phonetical writing) but unable to use a word processor, a copy of the student's script is made after the exam by a staff/ tutor familiar with the student's handwriting. This facilitates the work of the marking staff.	Reference 1: P.16-17, section 2.9

<sup>2</sup> A reader is required to read upon request, all or part of the question paper or any part of the candidate's responses. A reader must read accurately and at a reasonable rate.

<sup>3</sup> A scribe or amanuensis is a responsible adult who writes down the student's verbal answer - to record the student's answers, hereby allowing the student to focus on the questions asked rather than the process of recording.



<p>Oral Language Modifier<sup>4</sup></p>	<p>It is about re-wording/ re-phrasing exam questions so that the meaning can be understood. Technical or subject specific terms are not explained/ re-phrased. It is for those students with below average reading comprehension. It does not apply to papers testing reading primarily.</p> <p>The examiner needs to bear in mind how to word questions to remove ambiguity, particularly for students with dyslexia.</p>	<p>Reference 1: P.19-20, Section 2.11 ; P.54, Section 9.6; P.81, Appendix 5</p>
<p>Supervised rest breaks</p>	<p>Students with dyslexia can often suffer from fatigue in long tests because they require more efforts in processing information than most students. By giving rest breaks, their true ability in a subject can be shown.</p>	<p>Reference 1: P.7, Section 2.4</p>
<p>Modified papers</p>	<p>Papers need to be modified to become dyslexia-friendly.</p> <p>(In the long run, it is preferable that the standard paper should suit all candidates with substantial comprehension difficulties, irrespective of the reason for impairments.)</p>	<p>Reference 1: P.40-43, Section 6.1</p> <p>Reference 15</p>
<p>Colored/ enlarged paper</p>	<p>Some students with dyslexia find the background color of a text affects their ability to read as the white paper produces a glare. For example, off-white/ gray/ yellow color may be better for some students. Enlarged papers, bigger fonts and spacious presentation reduce the sense of crowdedness which may adversely affect the reading and comprehension ability for some students with SLD.</p>	<p>Reference 1: P.27, section 2.22</p>

<sup>4</sup> An oral language modifier is a responsible adult who clarifies the carrier language used in the examination paper upon the request of candidate.

Other alternatives such as oral examination, short question instead of essay/ long question question	A student with dyslexia may not give their best performance in a written examination. Other alternatives may be considered provided that such examination formats can equally test the student's knowledge and ability in a particular subject.	Reference 7
Marking system that will not penalize reading and writing difficulties	For non-language subjects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Spelling and grammatical errors will not affect the marks or the grade</li> <li>● Handwriting will not be marked</li> <li>● Answers can be given in a note form</li> <li>● Diagrams are acceptable</li> </ul>	

### 3 Other Issues to Consider

- 3.1 Although some local universities offer note-taking services to students with SLD, they are largely rendered by volunteers and the service quality is inconsistent. In order to enable these students to have a designated note-taker throughout the semester, government may consider offering special grants to the universities to set up 'paid note taking services' for SLD students.
- 3.2 Students normally will bring along their own recommendation letter for accommodations to the university's student affairs office for advice and support. The designated staff will then conduct an initial needs assessment before further referral. If there is a discrepancy between the student's requests and the recommended accommodations, the designated staff needs to think of means to resolve the differences. Maybe every university could consider setting up a Disability Office which can coordinate services, provide assessment and give advice to the student as well as staff. Government may consider funding such offices to ensure equal opportunities for students with various disabilities in tertiary institutions.
- 3.3 As many university teaching staff are unaware or have little knowledge of SLD and its impact on the student's academic studies, one could mount publicity efforts, training/ faculty development programmes to raise the university's awareness of SLD and relevant accommodations.

## References

- 1 JCQ 2010/2011 – Access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special considerations  
<http://www.jcq.org.uk/attachments/published/538/25.%20AARASC%200910.pdf>
- 2 Patoss SpLD Resources Booklet 2008-2009  
<http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/downloads/TotalBooklet20089secondrevison.pdf>
- 3 Common Principles - Access Arrangements and Special Consideration  
<https://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/I%20want%20to%20%20Tasks/Common%20Principles%20-%20Access%20Arrangements%20and%20Special%20Consideration.pdf>
- 4 Scribes/amanuenses for access for students with dyslexia (Dr Catherine C C Lam, 2010, not yet published)
- 5 The use of word processors by students with Specific Learning Disabilities as an accommodation in open examinations (Dr Catherine C C Lam, 2008)  
[http://hkndp.org/20100319/doc/publication/brainchild/Nov\\_2008/fulltext.pdf](http://hkndp.org/20100319/doc/publication/brainchild/Nov_2008/fulltext.pdf)
- 6 Examples of Accommodations from State Assessment Policies  
By: Julia K. Landau, Janet R. Vohs, and Carolyn A. Romano (1999)  
[http://www.ldonline.org/article/Examples\\_of\\_Accommodations\\_from\\_State\\_Assessment\\_Policies](http://www.ldonline.org/article/Examples_of_Accommodations_from_State_Assessment_Policies)
- 7 Dyslexia and Exams (Dyslexia Online Magazine)  
<http://www.dyslexia-parent.com/mag45.html>
- 8 Scribing Manual (by The University of Western Australia)  
[http://www.ecu.edu.au/student/data/shared/documents/scribing\\_manual.pdf](http://www.ecu.edu.au/student/data/shared/documents/scribing_manual.pdf)
- 9 JCQ 2009/2010 – Access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special considerations  
<http://www.jcq.org.uk/attachments/published/538/25.%20AARASC%200910.pdf>
- 10 Australian Universities: Reasonable Accommodations - Strategies for Teaching University Students with Disabilities  
[http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/resources\\_for\\_staff/reasonable\\_accommodations.php](http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/resources_for_staff/reasonable_accommodations.php)

## Other References

- 11 STECDfESGuidelines20092010 - Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties in Higher Education (Revised October 2009)  
<http://www.sitesetserver.co.uk/sasc/downloads/STECDFESGuidelines20092010.pdf>
- 12 Assessment Resources for Exam Arrangements (by PATOSS, the professional association of teachers of students with specific learning difficulties)  
<http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/Publications17.html>  
<http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/Publications17p.html>
- 13 University of Cambridge – Disability Resources Centre  
<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/disability/students/exam.html>
  - Cambridge\_Board of Examination  
<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/exams/>
  - Cambridge U\_exam\_access\_info for candidates  
[http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/exams/students/special\\_10.pdf](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/exams/students/special_10.pdf)
  - Cambridge U\_undergraduate\_exam\_allowance  
[http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/exams/students/allowances\\_and\\_warnings\\_2009.pdf](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/exams/students/allowances_and_warnings_2009.pdf)
- 14 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (2002). Enforcement Guidance on Reasonable Accommodation and Undue Hardship Under the Americans with Disabilities Act . Retrieved from  
[http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html#N\\_3](http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html#N_3)
- 15 Readability Project Report\_Patoss  
<http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/publications33.html>
- 16 [Learning Disabilities Association of America](#): accommodations of all aspects for adults
- 17 [Canada’s government-funded report on policy & programs of support at the post-secondary level](#): examples of accommodations from various higher education institutions given in a table
- 18 [University of Washington accommodations](#) as an example

Prepared by the Working Group on Accommodations, Joint Meetings with Tertiary Institutions in Hong Kong on Support Services to Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD).

# Annexes

- I Enquiry on Support Services to Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) to Directors of Student Affairs Offices (Sep 2009 to Feb 2010)
- II Integrated replies from tertiary institutions in Hong Kong (Dec 2009, revised Jun 2011)
- III Summary on the state of support services to students with SLD in Hong Kong's tertiary institutions (Dec 2009)
- IV Dates and venues of the Joint Meetings
- V Participants at the Joint Meetings
- VI Membership of the Working Groups
- VII Feedbacks from participating institutions & Comments from invited guests (consolidated Dec 2011)
- VIII The current support of students with SLD in Hong Kong tertiary institutions by April 2012

To: Directors of Student Affairs Offices

9 Sep 09 to 11 Feb 10

**Enquiry on Support Services to Students  
with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)**

Dear Sir / Madam,

The Hong Kong Society of Child Neurology & Developmental Paediatrics (HKCNDP) is a professional society formed in April 1994 (website:

<http://www.fmsk.com.hk/hkcndp/index.htm> ). Objectives of the society include:

1.Enhancing the standard of practice of Child Neurology and Developmental Paediatrics;  
2.Promoting cooperation among medical professionals, and 3.Acting as advocates for children suffering from neurological and developmental disorders. The Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities (HKASLD) is found in 1998 (website: <http://www.asld.org.hk>). The association is a parent organization aiming at self-help, mutual support in both emotional and informative aspects, promoting understanding of the public on SLD, improving educational policies and school environment, and advocating for the needs and services for persons with SLD.

We are becoming aware of students with SLD who are entering universities in Hong Kong, through its regular admission system. This phenomenon is not uncommon in oversea universities where prompt identification and good support for this group of students is bringing about an increase of students remaining on their courses and obtaining qualifications higher than would be expected had they been undiagnosed or unsupported in the educational system.

SLD is a recognized category of disability under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (see Code of Practice on Education under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, Equal Opportunities Commission, <http://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/otherproject/eng/color/youthcorner/education/index.html> ) and under Rehabilitation Programme Plan of Labour and Welfare Bureau (see Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan 2005-2007 [http://www.lwb.gov.hk/eng/advisory/rac/rpp\\_report.htm](http://www.lwb.gov.hk/eng/advisory/rac/rpp_report.htm)).

However, there is delayed awareness by various organizations, professionals and the general public on the issue of SLD in Hong Kong. Local research on SLD have found a population prevalence of 9.7-12.6% Hong Kong (Chan D, Ho C, Tsang SM, Lee SH, Chung K 2007). Many of these children/ adolescents have previously not succeeded in Secondary education or have not continued into Higher Education, despite having high IQ

and good aptitude. At present, about 90% of these children/ adolescents with SLD expected from the population prevalence are still hidden and undiagnosed. While great strides have been made in the past decade to identify and support younger students, Hong Kong appears to be a long way behind the international community with respect to its university students with special needs, in particular SLD which account for over 80% of most students with special educational needs in overseas institutions.

We personally know of university graduates, even university professors in Hong Kong with dyslexia, although they may not have a formal diagnosis in Hong Kong. In view of the normal/ superior intelligence (and possibly talents in selected areas) in students with SLD, a significant proportion of these students should be entering universities. We realize that students with SLD may be present and supported in various ways in our local universities, although these cases are not officially recognized or documented. . We are seeking to find whether such support is coordinated, systemic and covering the range of expectations for students with special needs, particularly those with SLD. We would like to find out what support is offered to students with SLD in different universities in Hong Kong today, and would like to have your kind help in providing us with information on the following aspects:

**1. Is there a policy, with implementation accountability, to ensure equal opportunities and appropriate support to students with SLD? Is staff responsible for admission, teaching (from department chairs to classroom teachers/ tutors) and administration, aware of such policy?**

(Examples from University of Cambridge:

Equal Opportunities Policy and Codes of Practice

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/equal.html>,

Disability Equality Policy and Scheme

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/equality/disability/des/policy.pdf>,

Undergraduate Applicants with Additional Support Requirements

[http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/admissions/handbook/section2/2\\_10.html](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/admissions/handbook/section2/2_10.html))

**2. Is there a specific and dedicated “disability support unit” providing relevant resources, training to students with SLD and staff, advice and recommendations to students with SLD and staff?**

(Examples: Disability Resource Centre of University of Cambridge

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/disability/>

Disability Advisory Service of University of Oxford

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/disab/>

Disability Services Centre of Australian National University

<http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/>)

**3. Would your university help to arrange diagnostic assessment or update assessment for students with suspected or known SLD?**

(Examples: p.23 to p.25, p.34 to p.36 of “Information for students with specific learning difficulties” of University of Cambridge

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/disability/services/pdf/spld0708.pdf>)

**4. Would your university provide information on symptoms of SLD, impact of SLD on university study, support services available in university, procedures for getting the necessary assessment/ support and tips on study/ exam skills to students with suspected or known SLD?**

(Examples: “Information for students with specific learning difficulties” of University of Cambridge

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/disability/services/pdf/spld0708.pdf>

“Disability Services, Student Information Guide 2009” of Australian National University

<http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/infoguide/>)

**5. Regarding the fulfillment of requirements of a course, would language or mathematic requirement be exempted or substituted with appropriate alternative(s) for students with SLD and particular difficulty in such module, if such language or mathematic requirement is not essential to the course programme?**

(Examples: Policy for Exemptions from the Foreign Language Requirement, Guidelines for Students Applying for a Waiver of the Foreign Language Requirement & Alternative Requirements for Students Exempted from the Foreign Language Requirement of University of Pennsylvania, see appendices in

<http://web2.adfl.org/adfl/bulletin/v18n2/182013.htm>

For the American system, many institutions permit students with documented difficulty in learning a second language to substitute a course in literature or culture in place of studying a foreign language. Please refer to a section on “Waiver of Foreign Language and Mathematics Requirements”, P.331 to P.333 of the chapter “Legal Issues, Postsecondary Students”, in *“Speaking, Reading and Writing in Children With Language Learning Disabilities”*, Katherine G. Butler, Elaine R. Silliman 2001, available in the internet

<http://books.google.com.sg/books?id=KPRxvNZstsUC&pg=PA331&lpg=PA333&ots=0mD2wb85W8&dq=dyslexic+Exemption+from+Second+Language++university&hl=zh-TW>)



**6. What reasonable adjustments are offered to students with SLD during day-to-day teaching and assignments?**

**Do accommodations include volunteers' help with note-taking, audible books, use of software such as screen readers (a component of ClaroRead, TextHELP or similar softwares), extension of deadlines, accepting spelling and grammar mistakes on non-language assignments, special library services, etc.**

**Is there a facility to allow extension of duration for course work, changing of course choices, or substituting for subjects?**

(Examples: Reasonable Accommodations adopted by various Australian universities [http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/resources\\_for\\_staff/reasonable\\_accommodations.php](http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/resources_for_staff/reasonable_accommodations.php))

**7. What special arrangements are available to students with SLD in formative and terminal examinations?**

**Do accommodations include: extra time, use of word processor, use of amanuensis (or computer equivalent), quiet/ separate room, reading out questions, oral instead of written exam, less crowded schedule, alternative formats, marking systems that do not penalize reading and writing difficulties (such as accepting spelling and grammar mistakes on non-language examinations) etc?**

(Examples: "Examinations and Assessment" section of Reasonable Accommodations adopted by various Australian universities [http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/resources\\_for\\_staff/reasonable\\_accommodations.php](http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/resources_for_staff/reasonable_accommodations.php))

Special Examination Arrangements of Australian National University <http://www.anu.edu.au/sas/seap/examinationsandassessment/5.9.php>

See also Special Examination Arrangements in "Disability Services, Student Information Guide 2009" of Australian National University

<http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/infoguide/index.php#exgroups>

Adjustments in course and examination arrangements for students with disabilities of University of Oxford

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/disab/arrange.pdf>)

**8. Would there be procedures to ensure confidentiality of disability information?**

(Examples: See confidentiality section of the disability services of Australian National University

<http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/infoguide/index.php#rego>)

**9. Would there be a mechanism to resolve disagreement between accommodations requested by a student with SLD and accommodation provided by staff?**

We would be grateful for the contact information of the key staff responsible for the provision of support service for students with SLD in your university. We shall contact the staff shortly for further follow-up.

Your reply to us by return mail at [chancwhc@netvigator.com](mailto:chancwhc@netvigator.com), [iriskeung1@netvigator.com](mailto:iriskeung1@netvigator.com) and [changeladys1@netvigator.com](mailto:changeladys1@netvigator.com) will be most appreciated. Should you need more information, please feel free to contact Ms Iris Keung at 2340 0803, or Dr Rommel Hung via (pager) 7116 3228 call 6597.

Wishing your university every success..

Yours faithfully,

Signed

Dr. Chan Chok Wan  
President, Hong Kong Society of  
Child Neurology &  
Developmental Paediatrics

Ms. Iris Keung  
Chairperson  
Hong Kong Association for  
Specific Learning Disabilities

## Recipients

<b>Directors of Student Affairs</b>	<u>Dates of sending out the letter</u>
City University of HK	9 Sep 2009, 29 Sep 2009
Hong Kong Baptist University	9 Sep 2009, 29 Sep 2009
Hong Kong Shue Yan University	9 Sep 2009, 29 Sep 2009
Lingnan University	9 Sep 2009, 29 Sep 2009
The Chinese University of HK	9 Sep 2009
The Hong Kong Institute of Education	11 Feb 2010
The HK Polytechnic University	9 Sep 2009
The HK University of Science & Technology	9 Sep 2009
The Open University of HK	11 Feb 2010
The University of HK	9 Sep 2009, 29 Sep 2009

## Copied

City University of Hong Kong	President
Hong Kong Baptist University	President & Vice-Chancellor
Hong Kong Shue Yan University	President
Lingnan University	President
The Chinese University of Hong Kong	Vice-Chancellor
The Hong Kong Institute of Education	President
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	President
The Hong Kong University of Science & Technology	President
The Open University of HK	President
The University of Hong Kong	Vice-Chancellor and President Head of Equal Opportunity Unit

**Integrated replies from universities\*\* in Hong Kong to the “Enquiry on Support Services to Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)”<sup>1</sup>  
(Dec 2009, revised Jun 2011)**

**1. Is there a policy, with implementation accountability, to ensure equal opportunities and appropriate support to students with SLD? Is staff responsible for admission, teaching (from department chairs to classroom teachers/ tutors) and administration, aware of such policy?**

- Our university has an equal opportunities policy. We have a full-time Equal Opportunity Officer to implement such policies including education, handling complaints and enquiries and recommending changes to policies and practices. We have an institutional policy on Equal Opportunity. It is clearly stated that “The University is committed to creating, promoting and maintaining an environment for staff and students which provides equality of opportunity, which is free of any discrimination and harassment. It supports equal opportunity and strongly opposes discrimination/ harassment. The University will take whatever action that may be needed to prevent, and if necessary, discipline behaviour which violates this Policy. Staff members responsible for admission, teaching and administration are aware of the policy and there are equal opportunity advisers in the teaching departments, administrative officers and service units.
- Our student resource centre has developed a three-pronged approach to promote inclusion and diversity on campus. Services for the students with disabilities included (1) supportive services such as learning aids or equipment, study or lecture arrangements, examination arrangements, study space or facilities in the library, and volunteer support; (2) community support such as financial support and work experience opportunities; and (3) campus awareness such as the Celebrating Abilities Week.
- Financial Aid: We have a number of external funds to assist students with disability for purchase of equipment, study aids or services in support of their studies.
- Career Preparation: There is special and focus career support for students with disability. But so far, we have very little experience working with SLD students in this area.
- The University is committed to equal opportunities for academic pursuits. Students with disability, including those with SLD, intending to apply for

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\*\* For simplicity, all tertiary institutions involved in the reply are referred to as “universities” in this document

admission can view the details of the comprehensive range of services and facilities available at the University for them on our website.

- Local school students with SLD may apply for admission through the JUPAS Sub-system for Applicants with a Disability, which is intended for such applicants to find out as early as possible the special assistance and facilities the University could provide to them on their admission. It also helps the University to identify these students, so that help and advice can be provided at an early stage. JUPAS applicants may receive an offer through the Sub-system and they will be notified by the JUPAS Office. For details on JUPAS application through the Sub-system, please refer to the JUPAS website. Students applying for non-JUPAS admission may approach the Office of Admissions and Financial Aids of the University to discuss their disabilities and seek advice and assistance as necessary.
- The University is committed to offering equal opportunities to all applicants and students regardless of their sex, race, religion, ethnic origin or disability. Assistance and support will be provided to students with disabilities (including SLD) as far as possible (see sections on admissions of the appended regulations governing post-graduate and undergraduate studies.)
- In Hong Kong, applicants with disabilities who seek admission on the strength of HKALE results may apply via the JUPAS Sub-system for Applicants with a Disability. They should contact the JUPAS office directly or visit its website ([www.jupas.com.hk](http://www.jupas.com.hk)) for details. Non-JUPAS applicants could apply to the University directly starting from mid-December annually. Applicants with disabilities are welcome to contact the Registry of the University directly for information concerning special assistance or existing facilities for disabled persons at the University.
- Our university is committed to the active pursuit of equal opportunity in all areas of its operation. Members of the University are encouraged to take note of the recent legislation on equal opportunities in Hong Kong, including the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO), the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), and the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO) issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission, in order to make it unlawful for anyone to discriminate against another person on the grounds of sex, pregnancy, marital status, disability and family circumstances.
- The University's admission policy is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities, and is directed towards the selection of students who have the ability and motivation to benefit from the courses which they intend to follow. There shall be equality of opportunity in access to all University facilities and services. Wherever reasonably practicable, arrangements will be made to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the same facilities as

others.

- There is a policy to ensure equal opportunities and appropriate support to students with SLD in our University. We have a code of student conduct from Academic Regulations and Records Office stating the following policy.
- The University has established policies, e.g. the policy statement on equal opportunities, policy statement on sexual harassment, code of practice on personal data (privacy) issues, etc. in support of ordinances in Hong Kong which accord rights to individuals in various aspects. As members of the University, students will have their respective rights protected by these policies and are expected at the same time to adhere to the principles and requirements of these policies. We have a Code of Practice stating the equal opportunities policies.
- The University has adopted a policy on equal opportunities which states that: “Our university is committed to the principle and practice of non-discrimination in the fulfillment of its dual responsibilities as an employer and a provider of higher education. It considers that talents, skills, intelligence, ambition and potential required by the University of its staff and students are spread across the community and can be found in people irrespective of their race and national origin, sex and gender identity, sexual orientation, abilities and disabilities, age, religion and family status.”
- We have put in place a policy pledging our commitment to provide a productive study and work environment which promotes fairness, positive interpersonal attitudes and equal opportunities for all students and employees; and to offer appropriate assistance to students with special needs in overcoming learning difficulties. An Equal Opportunities Officer, a post taken up concurrently by the Dean of Students or the Director of Human Resources on rotation for a three-year term, is appointed to deal with matters concerning equal opportunities and to seek to resolve complaints of discriminatory acts. Such university policy and the mechanism and procedures for resolving grievances are published in both staff and student handbooks. Furthermore, to ensure that staff and students are aware of them, leaflets are distributed and workshops organized for staff and students from time to time.
- The University is committed to offering equal opportunities to all applicants and students. The University has developed its policy in accordance with the legislation on equal opportunities in Hong Kong, and our Equal Opportunity Officer would implement the University policy and promote equal opportunities in employment and education.
- Our university has been working on a “a non-discriminatory policy in admitting students with disability so long as they fulfill the essential academic requirements for entry and satisfy the physical demands of particular

courses”.

- There is a policy to ensure equal opportunities and appropriate support to students with SLD.

**2. Is there a specific and dedicated “disability support unit” providing relevant resources, training to students with SLD and staff, advice and recommendations to students with SLD and staff?**

- The Student Affairs Office, working closely with other academic and administration services departments, provides a support Network to all the Academic Departments with known disabled students. In past years, our university is continuing to upgrade its campus facilities and to set aside special resources to assist students with special needs. These included the enhancement of campus access, the provision of special study room, improved signs and lighting on campus, the acquisition of assistive devices on loan to students, the special examination arrangements, priority service at all vendor outlets on campus, free medical services at the university clinic, free parking, etc. Service provision is reviewed periodically to cater to the changing needs of our students.
- Upon admission we will facilitate the direct communication of the students and their host departments to identify the special needs of the disabled student. We strongly believe that each of the students has their individual differences and particular needs. The direct communication between faculty members and the freshmen, sometimes with representatives of the supportive Network, will speed up the provision of special services or the acquisition of assistive devices. We have helped a number of students with multiple disabilities successfully completed their university studies and with outstanding results using this intervention method.
- In the past month, we have also enacted this “tried-and-tested-approach” for the freshmen with SLD as soon as we were informed that student has formally registered with our university. From mid August to-date, no less than six meetings were held between the student and different parties (including all his subject lecturers) to work out the additions and adjustments required to assist the learning of the student. The Student Affairs Office has also assigned a dedicated counselor to oversee the adjustment of the student to the University. From the meetings, the experience of the student in his secondary studies, his successful public examinations methods, as well as advice from experts in the field are drawn together to assist the Department special Academic Advisor assigned to the student, to prepare a personalized study plan in the first and subsequent semesters.
- While we do not have an independent office responsible for dealing with disability issues, our student resource centre is a one-stop service unit

responsible for all kinds of student services and development such as accommodation, catering, student finance, student advising, counselling, career education, internship, etc. Support for students with disabilities has always been one of the key portfolios of our student resource centre. A designated staff (Disability Support Coordinator) in our student resource centre -Campus Life Section coordinates support for students with a disability within the University while the Equal Opportunity Unit is responsible for fighting against discrimination including disability discrimination.

- The needs of the students with SLD have long been recognized by the Counselling section of our student resource centre, which is staffed by a team of Clinical Psychologists. This section provides services for students with dyslexia and other specific education needs. In the past few years, we have only a few students who self-identified to have SLD and the special arrangements were negotiated on a case-by-case basis.
- Counselling section of our student resource centre has formalized the service under a new pilot project since March 2009. This involves customer-tailored service to fit the academic needs of the students. The spectrum of service included needs assessment, one-to-one tutoring, note-taking and learning aids for lectures, support network, skills training, and also recommendations and advice to Faculties and advocacy for students with SLD.
- Students are encouraged to inform the University of their special needs (including disabilities) so that timely support and assistance tailored to their needs will be provided by the University. The first point of contact can be the Registry (upon admission), the Student Services Centre or even the home departments of the students. Then referrals will be made to other units concerned for follow-up actions to provide the most appropriate assistance to these students. Such collaborative support may involve relevant academic and administrative units such as the Registry, Library, Information Technology Services Centre, Student Services Centre and Office of the Comptroller. All parties concerned will adhere to the privacy principle.
- Firmly believing in equal opportunity for all and fully committed to serving our students, the Office of Student Affairs is always on the side of disabled students, trying its best to ensure that sufficient support is given to disabled students.
- When classes begin, the Office of Student Affairs will invite every student who has declared disability in the admission documents to an interview during which the degree of disability and the kind of special educational aids required will be carefully studied and assessed. If necessary, disabled students will be referred to agencies specialized in helping disabled citizens. These agencies would in turn recommend the kind of educational aids



appropriate for the students.

- The Office of Student Affairs will coordinate with the Academic Registry, relevant Academic Departments, the Information Technology Services Centre, the Library and the Estates Office to provide appropriate facilities, equipments, special class and exam arrangements. Some support and services are on individual basis upon request.
- Volunteers are also recruited from students at large at the beginning of academic year to provide day-to-day assistance to disabled students.
- It is hoped that, through these concerted efforts, disabled students could complete their university education on equal footing as their able-bodied counterparts. Disabled students are also recommended to apply for different disability grants and awards which provide financial sponsorship towards the costs of study aids.
- We do not have a specific and dedicated "disability support unit" providing relevant resources, training to students with SLD and staff, advice and recommendations to students with SLD and staff. However, the Counseling Service of Student Affairs Office assigns a student counselor to look after "students with special educational needs". The counselor provides personal counseling for these students and coordinates with teaching departments and non-teaching offices to give such students the best available education.
- In the university, we have a joint department support group on students with special needs. While academic and administrative departments would cooperate to facilitate students' admission, academic study and examination, the Student Affairs Office would provide counseling services, financial assistance, hall arrangement and general study skills etc. after understanding the needs of the students. In the past, the university has converted two student flats to accommodate the needs of physically disabled students. However, up till now, the support group has not handled any cases of students with SLD.
- The University provides comprehensive support services and resources for students with disabilities or special needs. The Student Affairs Office will coordinate with relevant academic and administrative units to provide appropriate support and services to accommodate the special needs of students.
- Student Development Services would identify relevant resources on campus, provide support and coordinate the services as well as provide advice and recommendations to students with SLD and staff.

**3. Would your university help to arrange diagnostic assessment or update assessment for students with suspected or known SLD?**

- Counselling section of our student resource centre has assigned a

designated Senior Counsellor, who is a Clinical Psychologist with experience working with people with SLD, to provide diagnostic assessment for students suspected to have SLD. With the increasing demand, a two-tier assessment process has been proposed: Our student resource centre Clinical Psychologists will provide the preliminary diagnostic assessment and arrangements will be made if the student requires a full diagnostic assessment which provides detailed profiles and recommendations. Liaison has been made with the Clinical and Educational Psychologists in the Department of Psychology at this University and in the community.

- Our Student Affairs Office (SAO) offers students counseling services and psychological treatment. Assessments are conducted primarily for treatment of general emotion/mood problems. Diagnostic assessment for specific disability is not one of our service areas and is not offered currently. Subject to future needs, SAO could refer students concerned to receive diagnostic assessment services available outside the university.
- The student counselor helps to arrange diagnostic assessment or update assessment for students with disability or special educational needs, including students with suspected or known SLD.
- The University would make referrals to assist students with suspected or known SLD to conduct diagnostic or update assessments.
- The University will not provide diagnostic assessments for students with special needs, as assessments are best performed by agencies and organizations with specialized expertise.
- We would also make proper referral for diagnostic assessment or update assessment of the students with suspected or known SLD.

**4. Would your university provide information on symptoms of SLD, impact of SLD on university study, support services available in university, procedures for getting the necessary assessment/ support and tips on study/ exam skills to students with suspected or known SLD?**

- When a student with special needs, including different forms of disabilities and SLD, is admitted to the university, he/she will be advised to contact his/her academic department or the Student Affairs Office to discuss his/her needs. We would provide appropriate support services which may include psychological treatment of emotion/mood problems, tips on study skills, financial and hall assistance as well as “Person of First Contact” in different supporting departments/offices. Currently we do not have any designated unit to build up expert resources to provide the information as listed. However the Joint Department Support Group (comprising the Registry, Faculty Offices, Estates Office, SAO) and other relevant departments could work together to develop the SLD resources for the university.

- The counsellors in our Counselling Service would provide information on symptoms of SLD, impact of SLD on university study, support services available in university, procedures for getting the necessary assessment/ support and tips on study/ exam skills to students with suspected or known SLD referred by staff of different departments and offices.
- The University provides information and support services for students with disabilities. Because of resources constraint and uniqueness of each disability, we do not provide detailed information on specific symptoms of SLD. Students with SLD should make request for support services to the Student Affairs Office or related academic and administrative unit. Our counsellors or responsible staff would provide appropriate information and make referral to meet with their needs.
- We would provide information on symptoms, impact, services available on a personalized basis for students with special educational needs.
- This is an area we are working on and we expect to have more details in the next academic year (2010-2011).

**5. Regarding the fulfillment of requirements of a course, would language or mathematic requirement be exempted or substituted with appropriate alternative(s) for students with SLD and particular difficulty in such module, if such language or mathematic requirement is not essential to the course programme?**

- Our current system on identification of students with special needs including SLD relies on the students to indicate their disability on a voluntary basis at the time of application for admission and at registration upon successful admission. Based on our records we have not admitted any students with SLD and hence there are no details of exemptions from course requirements that we can report at this time. Notwithstanding, should any case emerge, we would adopt an open and flexible approach in making suitable adjustments in the cited areas, by taking reference to the guidelines formulated by the HKEAA as well as good practices in local and overseas universities.
- Course requirements, including language and mathematics, may be modified in cooperation with academic departments.
- The medium of instruction of this University is English, except in some Departments such as the Department of Chinese and the School of Chinese Medicine. Although there are language requirements, the University exercises flexibility regarding admission of students with a disability and this will be done on a case by case basis.
- We provide support services such as tutorial assignment and special course materials for students with disabilities or special needs. For students with

SLD who requested exemption of language or mathematic requirement, the University would review the application and grant the exemption on a case by case basis without compromising academic requirements and standards.

- On course registration, there is no separate arrangement for students with SLD. Just like all other students in the same programmes, they can freely select courses within the confines of the curriculum concerned on the same e-platform. Students with SLD are not subject to any additional requirement or restriction. The academic requirements and standards of students with SLD are the same as those applied to other students. However, for students who have health problems, the Physical Education Unit will arrange special courses to meet their needs and enable them to fulfill any compulsory course requirements.

#### **6. What reasonable adjustments are offered to students with SLD during day-to-day teaching and assignments?**

**Do accommodations include volunteers' help with note-taking, audible books, use of software such as screen readers (a component of ClaroRead, TextHELP or similar softwares), extension of deadlines, accepting spelling and grammar mistakes on non-language assignments, special library services, etc.?**

**Is there a facility to allow extension of duration for course work, changing of course choices, or substituting for subjects?**

- We provide accommodations regarding day-to-day teaching and assignments for students with disabilities. So far, our students who have SLD only need some of the listed accommodations. Our staff (Disability Service Coordinator and/or the Clinical Psychologist) makes recommendations to the Faculties regarding the special arrangements. This University is open to all sorts of special arrangements. We are trying to formalize these procedures and explore other possible special arrangements.
- The following is a list of the current arrangements. It is neither exhaustive nor final.
- We provide a comprehensive and tailor-made personal service. We work with various units in the University to eliminate structural and other barriers.
- Classroom Modifications include lecture notes in advance , copies of syllabi in advance of the program, materials available in alternative formats , front seating in class, tape recording of lectures and note takers in lectures (negotiation in progress).
- Other coursework modifications include course material available in an alternative format (e.g. large print, digital format), modified deadlines for assignments and computer lab for student use.

- Special study aid include scanner, screen magnification software, large screen for reading magnified print, CCTV (magnifies hard copy print to closed circuit television) and cassette tape recorder.
- Students with SLD can discuss with their teachers on their special needs. Teachers will make special arrangements. If the students so require, to assist and facilitate the learning of individual students, e.g. arrange tutors to prepare the materials in soft copy for the students' viewing in their own computers or to use appropriate devices which are required by the students to facilitate their learning.
- The University Health Service can also liaise with other departments/units (e.g. library, sport centre, etc) to setup equipment to facilitate students' special study needs.
- Reasonable adjustments we offered include: flexibility in course registration, copies of lecture notes to be given in advance or online, acquisition and provision of appropriate equipment or instruments, extended exam time, suitable on-campus accommodation, financial assistance, guidance and advice in academic study and career counseling in job search.
- We serve as a liaison with Colleges and Support Units in the university to make arrangement to accommodate students' special needs caused by their disabilities. With verified document of the disability, students could get support in their study and campus life involvement, e.g. taking the examination in a separate quiet room, extension of duration for course work as well as examination hours, less crowded schedule, alternative formats and so on. Students would be offered adjustments and special arrangements on case-by-case basis.
- Students with disabilities are encouraged to use the special learning equipments available at the Disabled Student Centre of the University Library. The equipments include computers installed with magnification or screen reader software, VISTA (a screen enlarging system), Chroma CCD TV, Reading Edge, CREDIT ("Cantonese Reader Electronic Document in Text Format") software, and some of them are available to be borrowed for home use. In addition, students are encouraged to apply for our Student Financial Assistance Scheme which aims at subsidizing students with financial difficulties. Several donations are reserved as bursaries for students with disabilities to apply. In general, all university students are required to comply with the academic rules and regulations stipulated by the University, and exemptions on course assessment might be made at the discretion of the University under special or exceptional circumstances.
- The support services provided include: assignment of personal tutor / academic advisor, arrangement of special study aids (computers, enlargers, etc.), access and use of special study rooms, assistive devices, scholarship/

financial assistance specifically for disabled persons, the need of student helpers.

**7. What special arrangements are available to students with SLD in formative and terminal examinations?**

**Do accommodations include: extra time, use of word processor, use of amanuensis (or computer equivalent), quiet/ separate room, reading out questions, oral instead of written exam, less crowded schedule, alternative formats, marking systems that do not penalize reading and writing difficulties (such as accepting spelling and grammar mistakes on non-language examinations) etc?**

- We provide accommodations regarding formative and terminal examinations for students with disabilities. So far, our students who have SLD only need some of the listed accommodations. Our staff (Disability Service Coordinator and/or the Clinical Psychologist) makes recommendations to the Faculties regarding the special arrangements. This University is open to all sorts of special arrangements. We are trying to formalize these procedures and explore other possible special arrangements. The following is a list of the current arrangements. It is neither exhaustive nor final. We provide a comprehensive and tailor-made personal service. We work with various units in the University to eliminate structural and other barriers.
- Accommodation for examinations: extra time for examinations, a place for exams that is quiet with few distractions, computers with spell check for essay exams, calculators for mathematics tests and a person to act as reader or scribe.
- As regards special assessment arrangements, the Registry will play a coordinating role to ensure the best support is provided. Extended examination time, additional breaks during examinations, special examination venues, and special provisions such as enlarged question papers, specially printed answer books and even alternative formats of assessment can be provided to accommodate the special needs of our students.
- Students with SLD can discuss with their departments on special needs which they may require. The departments concerned or the Registration and Examinations Section of the University will assist in making the special arrangements. In order to ensure fairness of students' assessment, special arrangements are usually made according to the professional assessment of University Health Service, and not act on individual requests from students. There are various measures to assist SLD students, if they require. Based on the professional assessment of the students' needs made by the University Health Service, the Registration and Examinations Section would

work with the departments concerned to provide special assistance, e.g. holding the examination at a suitable venue, making extra-time arrangement, and allowing students to use special aids, etc.

- Students with SLD are required to submit application for special examination arrangements. The University would provide arrangements including special venue, longer examination hours, provision of Braille or enlarged examination paper, provision of special equipments such as Powerbraille and personal computer. It should be noted that the University adopted same assessment standard on the academic performance of all students.
- We provide special exam arrangement (including special room, special exam paper and time allowed).

**8. Would there be procedures to ensure confidentiality of disability information?**

- For students who have declared themselves as a disabled person, our colleague will contact the student to ascertain their nature of disability, special needs as well as the assistive devices and/or measures required based on their past experience. All these information will be passed to the particular department and teaching staff on a “need-to-know” basis. The information as with all other personal information belonging to the student will be handled within the guidelines of the Personal Data Privacy Ordinance under the direction of our Academic Secretariat.
- Observing the spirit of the data protection principles, the University has issued guidelines to comply with the requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance in its data management practices. Staff who are required to handle student personal data have to make declaration of keeping student personal data confidential and not disclosing the data to any unauthorized third parties.
- This university upholds a Code of Practice based on the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. Disability information is kept confidential. Student’s consent for disclosure and release of information is needed.
- The University is committed to complying with the requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance and has developed guidelines and code of practice for all staff of the University to collect, hold, process and use personal data. Information of students with disability is professionally kept confidential.
- We will discuss with students with disabilities and respective Departments with the consent of students to explore ways to help meet their individual needs to their benefit and ensure confidentiality of disability information.
- The university fully supports and observes recognized standards of protection in the security and confidentiality of personal data, as stipulated in

the requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance.

- Confidentiality is professionally kept.

**9. Would there be a mechanism to resolve disagreement between accommodations requested by a student with SLD and accommodation provided by staff?**

- This could be handled by using these mechanisms, the use of a second opinion and the Grievance Procedure. When the student and staff have different opinions, a second opinion will be sought. This can be the Director of Counselling, the Director of the University Health Service, or other relevant professionals. The University also has a formal Grievance Procedure, in which the student can make a complaint to the Head of the department or school, centre or unit concerned; or directly to the Vice-Chancellor.
- The university has laid down mechanisms for students to lodge complaints against various issues, including any discrepancies between the special provisions requested for and the actual provisions, as well as procedures for resolving student grievances, though as a matter of records there are no cases of complaints lodged by a student with SLD.
- Disagreement between student and staff may be resolved via the Deputy Director of Student Affairs in conjunction with the undergraduate programs coordinator of the student's department or relevant dean's office.
- We always discuss with students about the accommodation arrangements before we take reasonable and practicable steps to accommodate their needs. So far there has been no case of disagreement.

Summarized by The Hong Kong Society of Child Neurology & Developmental Paediatrics (HKCNDP) and Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities (HKASLD)



## **Summary on the state of support services to students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Hong Kong's universities (Dec 2009)**

### **Background**

Students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) in Hong Kong, with the known local prevalence of around 10%, have had very limited success at pursuing tertiary education in Hong Kong. The youth of this subject in Hong Kong has resulted in students only being systematically recognized, and given reasonable support, in the past ten to fifteen years. Prior to the mid-1990's, students with significant SLD studying in Hong Kong's primary and secondary schools had virtually no hope of accessing tertiary education in local universities. Only those with mild SLD impairments (diagnosed or still unbeknownst to the students), superior cognitive ability and heavy family resource input made it into these universities, most of whom without disclosure to the schools or to their peers. Others left Hong Kong during secondary school years, some then being given the necessary remedial support and completing tertiary education overseas.

With improved support to these students in foundation education, a few outstanding and resilient students with significant SLD have succeeded to overcome the challenges of local foundation education, open exit examinations and the university recruitment systems, and were admitted to local universities in 2008. These students declared their disability at admission, and requested for support and accommodations in their respective studies. Some shared their experience through the mass media around the time of admission. These are set against the background of SLD being added as a category of disability in Hong Kong's Rehabilitation Policy in 2007, along with the more familiar categories such as physical and sensory disabilities.

The Hong Kong Society of Child Neurology & Developmental Paediatrics (HKCNDP) and the Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities (HKASLD) have all along been keen advocates for children and individuals with SLD, and strive to promote opportunities for students with SLD to achieve admission to tertiary education, and to receive professional and adequate support within them. In September 2009, these two bodies wrote to the ten tertiary institutions in Hong Kong with the purpose of understanding their systems of support for students with SLD (Annex I). With expected continuing improvement in the performance of students with SLD and admission rates to universities, it is also hoped that through dialogue and professional exchange, a platform can be developed among university together with outside related professionals and bodies, to support what will be an increasingly significant number of

these students in tertiary education in the coming years.

### **Integrated summary of responses**

Replies to the letter of inquiry were received from all eight universities. Direct unedited, unnamed listing of responses is provided in a document for mutual reference (Annex II). An integrated summary of the situation in Hong Kong is presented below, based solely on the response received, and without additional research into each university's publicly available information.

All universities reported policies in place for ensuring equal opportunities. There are offices chiefly or jointly responsible for overseeing services and resources for disabilities in each university, and one reported the presence of a specific equal opportunities unit. The degree to which these offices apportion focus and resources on supporting students with disabilities, and in particular students with SLD is varied. Related sections within these offices may be under student counselors, health service personnel, psychologists and/or administrators. The experience of a student with SLD upon admission and declaration of his/her disability can apparently be very different. This ranges from being directly approach by the university for understanding their special needs and referral for further support, or being expected to contact teachers or administrative departments if they felt need to support. Each university cites a number of departments involved in supporting these students, including academic units, libraries, information technology centres, registration and examination sections and student life offices. Students may need to navigate through these various departments step by step, or the university may have in place a network of support that is coordinated through a chief office/centre. Access to or referral for professional diagnostic assessment or assessment update is available in some universities, while others expect students to be responsible for bearing documentation of the disability. Individual planning based on recommendations by psychologists knowledgeable in SLD profiles was only mentioned in the minority. All schools offer varying degrees of teaching and examination accommodations, with some stating their universities' open attitude to all or a wide range of special arrangements, and others offering basic special accommodations, and learning support measures that apply to the whole student population. Due process mechanism specific for managing disagreement between student and university specifically in relation disabilities was not mentioned in the replies.

### **Conclusion**

Individuals with SLD have normal to superior intelligence, with a 9.7-12.6% prevalence in Hong Kong (Chan D, Ho C, Tsang SM, Lee SH, Chung K 2007). With improvements in early identification, primary and secondary educational support and open examination accommodations for SLD, many more students with SLD will be

expecting to be at the doors of our universities before long. Indeed, in developed countries, over 80% of students with special needs and disabilities in universities are those with SLD. It would seem desirable, indeed necessary, for those working with these students, in and outside of our universities, to share experience, knowledge and resources, in order that the system to support them in tertiary education may reach standards that should be expected of Hong Kong's universities, which rank amongst the top of the world.

Summarized by The Hong Kong Society of Child Neurology & Developmental Paediatrics (HKCNDP) and Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities (HKASLD)

**Annex IV**

**Dates and Venues of Joint Meetings on Support Services  
to Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)  
in Hong Kong Tertiary Institutions**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>
18.12.2009	The Federation of Medical Societies of Hong Kong
3.3.2010	The University of Hong Kong
21.6.2010	City University of Hong Kong
1.12.2010	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
9.12.2011	The Chinese University of Hong Kong

## PARTICIPANTS AT THE JOINT MEETINGS WITH TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN HONG KONG

	18/12/2009	3/3/2010	21/6/2010	1/12/2010	9/12/11
City University of HK	Miss Joey Law	Dr Larry Ng	Dr Larry Ng	Dr Larry Ng	
HK Baptist University	Miss Verona Lau	Ms Verona Lau	Ms Ivy Mak	Ms Ivy Mak	Mr Gavin Ngai Ms Vicki Kwan
HK Shue Yan University	Ms Ms Karen LEE	Ms Alice Wu	Ms Alice Wu		
Lingnan University	Ms Cathryn Yip	Ms Ophelia Tam (on behalf of Ms Cathryn Yip), Ms Debby Ng	Ms Cathryn Yip	Ms Cathryn Yip	
The Chinese University of HK	Mr. Raymond Leung	Ms Amanda Lau	Ms Amanda Lau	Ms Amanda Lau	Ms Amanda Lau
The HK Institute of Education	--	--	Ms Yolande Chan	Ms Yolande Chan	Ms Yolande Chan
The HK Polytechnic University	Mr John Chan, Miss Cynthia Cheng	Mr John Chan	Mrs Rainbow Leung, Ms Sue Wong	Ms Sue Wong	Ms Sue Wong
The HK University of Science & Technology	Mrs Pandora YUEN, Dr Isaac Tam	Ms Vava Kwok	Ms Vava Kwok	Ms Vava Kwok	Ms Vava Kwok
The Open University of HK	--	Ms Helen Lau	Ms Dawn Wong	--	Ms Dawn Wong
The University of HK	Dr Eugenie Y Leung, Mrs Sylvia Wong, Ms Michele Fok, Miss Angela Lau	Dr Eugenie Y Leung, Mrs Sylvia Wong, Ms Michele Fok, Ms Iris Lam	Dr Eugenie Y Leung, Mrs Sylvia Wong, Ms Michele Fok, Mrs Iris Lam	Dr Eugenie Y Leung, Ms Michele Fok	Dr Eugenie Y Leung, Ms Michele Fok Mrs Iris Lam
The HK Society of Child Neurology & Developmental Paediatrics	Dr Chan Chok Wan, Dr Catherine Lam, Dr Fanny Lam, Dr Becky Chan	Dr Chan Chok Wan, Dr Catherine Lam, Dr Becky Chan	Dr Catherine Lam, Dr Becky Chan	Dr Catherine Lam	Dr Catherine Lam
HK Association for Specific Learning Disabilities	Ms Iris Keung, Dr Rommel Hung, Mrs Gladys Hung, Mrs Daisy Lam, Mr Jason Lau, Mr William Wong	Ms Iris Keung, Dr Rommel Hung, Mrs Daisy Lam, Mr Jason Lau	Ms Iris Keung, Dr Rommel Hung, Mrs Gladys Hung, Mrs Daisy Lam, Mr Jason Lau,	Ms Iris Keung, Dr Rommel Hung, Mrs Gladys Hung, Mrs Daisy Lam, Mr Jason Lau,	Ms Iris Keung, Dr Rommel Hung, Mrs Gladys Hung, Mrs Daisy Lam, Mr Lo Chi-kin, Mr Tora Lui
Invited guests		Ms Alice Tai, Ms Elaine Chan, Prof Kim Fong Poon-McBrayer	Prof Kim Fong Poon-McBrayer	Prof Kim Fong Poon-McBrayer	Poon-McBrayer Prof Cheng Pui-wan Ms May Chan

**Membership of the Working Groups**

Support systems for students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Tertiary Institutions	John Chan (convenor till Mar 2010) Sylvia Wong (convenor after Mar 2010 till Jun 2010) Alice Wu Cathryn Yip Sue Wong Rainbow Leung Michele Fok Catherine Lam	The HK Polytechnic University  The University of Hong Kong  HK Shue Yan University Lingnan University The HK Polytechnic University The HK Polytechnic University The University of Hong Kong The HK Society of Child Neurology & Developmental Paediatrics
Assessment guidelines for students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Tertiary Institutions	Larry Ng (convenor) Kevin Chung Elaine Chan  Iris Lam Becky Chan	City University of Hong Kong The Hong Kong Institute of Education The HK Jockey Club Read and Write Project  The University of Hong Kong The HK Society of Child Neurology and Developmental Paediatrics
Accommodations for students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Tertiary Education	Eugenie Leung (convenor) Kim Fong Poon-McBrayer Vava Kwok  Michele Fok Rommel Hung  Gladys Hung	The University of Hong Kong The Hong Kong Institute of Education The HK University of Science & Technology  The University of Hong Kong HK Association for Specific Learning Disabilities  HK Association for Specific Learning Disabilities

Members of the Joint Meetings wish to express our appreciation to the contributions by the Working Groups, for their research and preparation of the three guidelines presented in this report.

## **Feedbacks from participating institutions & Comments from invited guests (consolidated in Dec 2011)**

### **A. Feedbacks on the proposed guidelines from participating institutions:**

No further comment on the “Support Services to Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in Hong Kong Tertiary Institutions- Proposed Guidelines” was received from the participating universities after trying out what have been discussed and laid out for 1 year.

### **B. Comments from invited guests:**

#### **List of Invited Guests (according to alphabetic order of surname):**

Ms Elaine Chan, Society of Boy’s Centers
Ms May Chan, Dept. of Psychology, HKU
Prof. Cheng Pui-wan, Dept of Educational Psychology, CUHK
Dr Kevin Chung, HKIEd
Prof. Connie Ho, Dept of Psychology, HKU
Professor HO Man-koon, Faculty of Education, CUHK
Dr KF Poon- McBrayer, HKIEd
Ms Alice Tai, Former Ombudsman of Hong Kong

#### **The followings are comments gathered from some of our invited guests:**

##### a. Comments related to Guidelines from the Working Groups on Support Systems for Students with a Disability & Disability Support Services

- Having a post designated as the Disability Officer (DO) is necessary as recommended by the report. Perhaps the report can also suggest the general/minimum qualifications of the Disability Officer (DO)—e.g., with special education training at the master’s level. One major issue for institutions to decide on who should make decisions for appropriate accommodations is the general lack of expertise within the Student Affairs Office because supporting students with SLD is relatively new to local institutions. In some countries (e.g., the US), a dual approach is generally found: (a) their legislations require that the assessment

reports include recommendations of types of support; and (b) universities hire persons with special education training (typically with master's or doctoral degrees in special education) to be DOs. This approach allows a simple process of having decisions basically made within the Disability Office and faculty members are required to provide any or a combination of the accommodations as recommended by the DO. It helps to keep students' privacy. To my understanding, Hong Kong assessment reports don't normally include support recommendations. If that's the case, higher education institutions must find someone with expertise to interpret the assessment results and determine with the students on specific difficulties and appropriate support services. To take this role effectively, the DO must have adequate training background. This allows others without the expertise (e.g., program coordinators/leaders who don't necessarily have expertise in knowing what's appropriate) not have to stretch their roles.

- While the Disability Office will oversee the support services, the role of the faculty or the department should be adequately addressed. For example, a representative from the department concerned should be involved in the process of developing specific accommodations.
- 大學應主動提前做好下面的準備工作：
  - 1 設立專門部門專責其事，包括：行政主任及辦公室
  - 2 設立專家小組
  - 3 各學院(或各學系)做好配套教學和支援準備工作
  - 4 預定若干收生額
  - 5 向大學教授及各部門行政人員展開宣傳工作，讓他們對讀寫困難問題有所認識以上「設施」都是「看得見」的，而且是可行的。

#### b. Comments related to Guidelines from the Working Groups on Assessment Guidelines for Student with SLD

- I have read Section 3. Since the recommendation relies heavily on Ho Man Koon's test, I think you may consult him as well. I think your group has covered the major literacy skills. However, reading-related skills (e.g., morphological awareness, syntax and discourse skills) were not included. Currently, there is no standardized Chinese test on these areas in HK but they are some important skills to consider for making a diagnosis. Otherwise, you may just pick up some low achievers.
- 大學應提前做大學生有關「讀寫困難」問題的研究。例如，設計測量工具，評估疑似(或已有)讀寫困難問題學生的語文水平，及其遇到的困難。只有這樣，大學才能有效地解決學生的讀寫困難問題。梁子勤教授是研究讀寫困難問題的專家。這件事，你們可邀請梁子勤教授積極參與。他九月來港大訪問，精神矍鑠，我認為他勝任有餘。



c. Comments related to Guidelines from the Working Groups on Reasonable Accommodations for Students with SLD

- Should we also consider setting priorities among our recommendations if the institutes are reluctant to adopt all of the recommendations? Should we specify (may be at a later stage after the December meeting) what are the core elements that must be implemented and what are the supplemental elements that should also be included when manpower and resources are available?

d. Other Comments

- The proposed guidelines are well written and comprehensive.
- While it is the university's responsibility to lay out the guidelines for all disability groups, it may be wise for the working groups to present some suggestions as general guidelines for all disability groups and some suggestions as special considerations for SLD. Actually, some existing support measures for VI (visual impairment) students may be also applicable to SLD students as well. The point I would like to make is that we are not asking something totally new and the institutes should not feel reluctant to include SLD as a category of special needs. They just have to take a few extra steps to meet the needs of this special group. However, the present presentation seems to indicate all the recommendations are totally new to the institutes.
- 細閱你們撰寫的計劃書，我認為它內容具體，很有參考價值，這對推動大學「讀寫困難」教育將起一定作用。在計劃書中，談到「香港中學生中文讀寫能力測驗」，梁子勤教授也有參加這個研究計劃，貢獻良多。
- 大學是一個非常自由的地方。要推動一個計劃，一個部門之代表難以起作用。若能以大學校長代表身份(或大學代表)出席會議，並共同決議，則成事機會會較高。
- I was impressed by the contribution and effort of the working groups being put on this guidelines. It's comprehensive and suggestions are sound, with basis of good practices from other countries. I love to learn more about the successful experience of the try out and what obstacles being encountered by the universities during the year.

## **The current support of students with SLD in Hong Kong tertiary institutions by April 2012**

The current support of students with SLD in Hong Kong tertiary institutions were reported below (in the order of presentation during the 9 December 2011 meeting):

- **The University of Hong Kong**

- i. CEDARS provides one-stop student support, like student affairs, disabilities support and counseling services. This year, a total of over 100 students in HKU registered themselves as students with disabilities. Among those, at least 14 were students with SLD, including both exchange students, local and non-local students.
- ii. There is a designated officer in CEDARS responsible for disabilities support.
- iii. After students disclose their disabilities at JUPAS application, CEDARS will provide proactive assessment of the students' special needs, appropriate accommodations and learning support. Students can also refer themselves or be referred any time during their university years.
- iv. A letter of introduction, which lists out recommendations on accommodations, will be sent to Registry and the relevant faculty, with a copy to the respective students. Academic staff then can provide accommodations (e.g. examination access arrangements) according to the letter of introduction.
- v. If further assessment on disability needs is indicated, CEDARS's in-house clinical psychologist or part-time educational psychologist will provide the assessment, or refer the student to the Psychology Department for assessment and advice.
- vi. CEDARS also provides personal counselling service for emotional support, self-confidence enhancement and learning skills building. The supporting system requires students' self-disclosure of disabilities.
- vii. CEDARS handles two inclusion funds related to disabilities. These funds are available for projects on services and researches related to disabilities and for supporting the individual needs (such as learning aids and support services) of the students with disabilities.
- viii. The Disability Action Committee, is a university-wide committee that

consists of University teachers, staff members and students to advise the University on the overall planning and implementation of policies, practices and facilities students and staff with disabilities.

- ix. The Adult Learning Disability Project matches students and volunteer tutors on a 1:1 basis, providing necessary assistances such as support on students' studies. . There are workshops and awareness promotion activities, such as a recent Equal Opportunity Festival event on SLD.
- x. CEDARS website provides information on disabilities and support for students.
- xi. HKU has started its Academic Advising System. Faculty Academic Advisors will see students to discuss their academic plans. Academic Advising Office (a central body) works with CEDARS to advise students with disabilities.
- xii. Students with disabilities showed that the most wanted supports are, in descending order of priority, examination access arrangements, 1:1 support (e.g. help with kick-off/ revision essays), homework accommodations, enhancement of self-confidence/ emotional management. Students with disabilities were either referred by self or by friends.
- xiii. Disability support in university is supported by top-down initiatives from senior management and various University committees. The focus has extended to hidden disabilities.

- **The University of Science and Technology**

- i. On the website, there is a compulsory health questionnaire for all students every year during registration. Students can choose to declare disabilities in that questionnaire. The student counselors meet those who declare disabilities to collect more information about their assessment, past accommodations and individual needs.
- ii. For each student with disabilities, Student Affairs Office will contact relevant tutors and departments about student's needs and accommodations in the beginning of every semester. Relevant documents may be copied to major department heads, some of who will interview students with disabilities personally.
- iii. A website, currently under development, will aim at picking up unidentified students with disabilities.
- iv. Starting from Sep 2011, a new fund for special needs may support students with SLD, e.g. paying for assessment reports, paying note-takers (who are

- trained yr 1 to yr 3 students, often friends/ classmates of such students). .
- v. Peer counselors (undergraduate/ postgraduate students) are trained to provide buddy/ mentor support to students with academic and/ or socializing difficulties.
  - vi. From Jan 2012, an educational psychologist (replacing a vacant counselor post) will be responsible for providing supports and services to students with disabilities.
  - vii. There are about 70 students with disabilities at present. Less than 10 of these students are students with SLD, who are mostly exchange students.
  - viii. Student Affairs Office also contacts students who fail in examinations by email to offer assistance and support services. For those who fail in consecutive semesters, Student Affairs Office will try to contact them more often.

- **The Hong Kong Institute of Education**

- i. A working group had been formed at the Institute level in 2010, responsible for affairs related to students with disabilities. The working group composes of staff from Registry, library, estate office, information technology department, Student Affairs Office, academic and administrative staff of faculties.
- ii. A workflow on how to support students with disabilities had been designed. The data of declared students with disabilities during registration is kept in Registry and Student Affairs Office. The student counselor of Student Affairs Office will interview such students to understand their needs. Student Affairs Office would liaise with other departments such as program coordinators of respective departments, library staff etc. If necessary, a letter will be offered to the student, which lists out supports needed for the student.
- iii. There are less than 10 students with disabilities asking for support at present, but none of them has SLD. Effort will be paid to find out students with undisclosed disabilities. Leaflets on disabilities are distributed to all new students to increase their awareness of disabilities and relevant supports available in HKIEd.
- iv. HKIEd is exploring the possibility of creating a disability officer who will be responsible for disability supports and services.
- v. They are no special fund from university to support students with special needs at present except bursaries for financially needy students.

- **The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

- i. There are about 70 students with disabilities and among them at present, three local students have SLD. 3 more exchange students with SLD may be coming.
- ii. Student Affairs Office is responsible for coordinating support for students with disability. There is also a Network on Students with Disability, comprised of expert advisors and colleagues from different departments, for sharing information and facilitating the implementation of PolyU's policy on students with disability .
- iii. Student Affairs Office collects students' information on disabilities from JUPAS/ non-JUPAS application forms, although students may declare their disabilities at later stages. Student Affairs Office staff will arrange individual meetings with such students, assess their needs and inform relevant departments. Accommodations and supports to the students will be provided by academic departments, information technology department , library and/or other parties if necessary.
- iv. Peer mentors are recruited from all undergraduate students. They could be arranged to help new full-time sub-degree, degree students with disabilities. For further supports they may contact relevant departments via SAO.
- v. Department of Rehabilitation Sciences could provide services and supports to students . Cases that are not relevant for OT support may be referred out to other services if necessary. A counselor with education psychology background may provide assessment service, and a professional from the School of Nursing may provide expert advice.
- vi. The possibility of development of a disability office has been discussed.
- vii. Currently there is no special fund for SLD, though a lump-sum fund related to physical disabilities has been mobilized to help.

- **Hong Kong Baptist University**

- i. The Campus Life and Amenities team of Office of Student Affairs is responsible for students with disabilities. At the beginning of the first semester of 2011/2012, the staff-in-charge approached students who have declared disabilities during registration to offer support. When necessary, the team will coordinate meetings between the students and university departments including Academic Registry, Estate Office, Office of Information Technology, the Library, academic departments or other responsible offices. Counselling services for the students will be arranged

where necessary. *(Post meeting note: Starting from September 2012, the initial contacts will be made by Academic Registry to take care of students' academic respects.)*

- ii. According to the record of the first semester of 2011/2012, among newly admitted students, there are about 10 students with disabilities declared and none of them has declared with SLD. Only one student at year 3 is known to have SLD.
- iii. Peer mentors (with mental health training) and academic advisors/ mentors (teachers) may notice students' adjustment/ learning difficulties and refer students to counsellors. Academic Registry will issue letters and encourage students with low GPA to seek help from counsellors. They are encouraged to work with counsellors actively since students with low GPA in two consecutive semesters may face the risk of dismissal.
- iv. A formal assessment report is required for students to receive support services in SLD. Awareness on disabilities can be strengthened among staff and peer mentors through training and promotion.

- **The Open University of Hong Kong**

- i. During admission students can choose to declare their disabilities. Student Affairs Office will then mail leaflets and application forms to declared students for special examination arrangements and other accommodations (e.g. parking services, library supports, printing materials etc). Accommodations in examination will be passed to Examination Office of Registry for further processing.
- ii. Not more than 10 students per year declared themselves to have disabilities, most of these being physical disabilities and none of these being SLD.
- iii. Open university is self-financed, hence less resourceful than other universities.

- **The Chinese University of Hong Kong**

- i. A Disability Services Coordinating Committee, with chairperson being the Director of the University Health Service and representatives from major departments and offices, is responsible for supervising and coordinating services and policies to students with disabilities.
- ii. The University had recently conducted a review of the University's disability services and related mechanisms. Recommendations were also

made on further strengthening of related services hence support to students with disabilities.

- iii. There are altogether around 30 students who had reported to the University their disability conditions. Among these there are 3 students with specific learning difficulties or dyslexia.
  - iv. Students can declare their disabilities on admission to the University or in the yearly voluntary student health evaluation, also anytime during their studies at the University.
  - v. The Student Counselling and Development Service of the Office of Student Affairs provides counselling to students on various concerns and issues in relation to their overall personal growth and well-being. Decisions on the provision of relevant reasonable accommodations particularly those in terms of assessment and examinations rest on respective academic departments.
- **City University of Hong Kong** (written report only, dated December 7, 2011)
    - i. City University of Hong Kong has a standard procedure on the service for students with disabilities. After having declared their disabilities at the time of admission, the students are required to fill out a “Questionnaire for Students with Disabilities” and submit relevant supportive documents to the Academic Regulations and Records Office (ARRO). The questionnaire mainly collects information on students’ special individual needs on travelling to campus, when attending lectures, in completing course assignments, and on examination arrangements, etc. The office will then pass the information to a counselor at the Student Development Services for consultation and to Department Heads for approval. A meeting between the students and the counselor will be arranged. “Departments, in consultation with the Student Development Services, should make justifiable adjustments to assessment procedure to ensure that disabled persons have an equality of opportunity when undergoing assessments.” (The University Assessment Policy and Principles for Taught Programmes).
    - ii. At present, City University of Hong Kong has three full-time undergraduate students who had declared to have learning difficulties/ disabilities and had submitted the questionnaire and documents as stated. Counselling services had been provided to them and their requests for individually tailored accommodations had been granted including 25% extra-time allowance for examinations, using separate room for tests and examinations, printing out diagrams/graphs with colors on examinations and tests, and printing

examination/test papers on light yellow papers. No complaint has been received.

- iii. For those students who have not declared their difficulties at the time of admission, information on community resources for assessment will be provided on request. In fact, one of the students mentioned above was granted the accommodations after she/he obtained assessment results from a local psychological services agency.

- **Lingnan University** (written report only, dated November 28, 2011)

- i. There has not been any known case (student with SLD) at this moment.
- ii. The proposed guideline had been noted by university administrators and passed on to relevant parties.

- **Hong Kong Shue Yan University** (written report only, submitted after the meeting, dated March 16, 2012)

- i. There is a questionnaire for all new students during their registration. The aim of questionnaire is to understand the background of all new students. Students can choose to declare their disabilities in the questionnaire. When some students declare their disabilities in the questionnaire, OSA will refer the disable students to designated counselor. The designated counselor will approach and interview with them and assess their needs.
- ii. If the students need for accommodations or special supports, such as special examination arrangement, the designated counselor will coordinate and mobilize different university departments to meet their needs. Certainly, the students must provide the relevant supporting documents to support their special needs, such as a updated assessment report, past accommodations, etc.
- iii. Furthermore, the designated counselor will provide further counseling and follow-up for new students with disabilities.
- iv. At present, there are only 2 students who claimed themselves have SLD.