

## Medical Schools Council

### Recommendations on Selection of Medical Students with Specific Learning Disabilities including Dyslexia

Medical schools are keen to support applicants with disabilities, including specific learning disabilities, although all applicants must be fit to practise as doctors. *Tomorrow's Doctors*, The General Medical Council, 2003, states that 'by awarding a medical degree, a university is confirming that the graduate is fit to practise as a PRHO' (paragraph 84). The university is therefore not only confirming that someone has reached the requisite academic level but that they are also fit to practise medicine, which is not simply a question of academic attainment. Medical schools are conscious of their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act. These recommendations represent best practice guidance to universities.

1. Applicants to medical schools who satisfy the academic criteria of the medical school to which they are considering applying should be encouraged to submit a formal UCAS application, and should indicate on the UCAS form if they have specific learning disabilities, including dyslexia, that will require additional support in their course. Disclosure of a specific learning difficulty will not be used to influence the admission selection procedures regarding academic performance and personal qualities, but will be used to inform assessment of applicants' physical and mental ability to practise as a doctor.
2. Medical schools will make clear their policies with respect to all disabilities in their literature and on their websites.
3. If a candidate is required by the institution to which they have applied to take an additional test (eg GAMSAT, MSAT, BMAT) they should ensure that the testing organisation is also made aware of their needs so that appropriate adjustments can be made.
4. All successful candidates will be offered a place subject to a number of conditions, one of which will be their physical and mental ability to practise as a doctor. Schools will need to be as reasonably assured of this as possible before admitting students.
5. Where candidates have a disability, which might impinge on their fitness to practise medicine, the school has a duty to satisfy itself that, given reasonable adjustments, the candidate could safely practise as a doctor.
6. If a student is found to have deliberately failed to disclose information that would have made him or her ineligible or given false information, the school can consider removing them from training.
7. Medical schools will first consider applications on the basis of academic performance and personal qualities, and at those schools that interview, interviewers will not mention or discuss or evaluate the applicant's disability during a selection interview intended to assess personal qualities. All staff involved in their admissions procedures will be knowledgeable of equal opportunities requirements including disabilities.
8. Universities have disability advice services and candidates are advised to contact them in advance of application if they think that their disability might have some effect upon their work as a student doctor. Advice will be available throughout during the application process from university advice services.
9. If an applicant with a specific learning disability is offered a conditional place to study medicine, he or she should provide the school with evidence of this in the form of a full diagnostic assessment by an educational psychologist, specialist teacher or other appropriately qualified professional. Candidates are personally responsible to ensure

that evidence is provided about any specific learning disability or other factor affecting their physical or mental ability to practise as a doctor. This evidence may also provide indications of recommendations for support, which can then be followed by a full assessment of need in higher education, for those students who are eligible for Disabled Students Allowances.

10. This evidence will be considered by the Occupational Health Physician, who will make a recommendation to the School about whether the student will be able to work safely as a doctor, and will recommend to the School's Admissions Panel or Fitness to Practise Committee whether this applicant is fit to be admitted.
11.
  - a. The usual practice in medical schools is to allow students with specific learning disabilities additional time in the written component of exams in accordance with the usual policies of the University.
  - b. However, there is only very limited scope for alternative arrangements for these students in clinical examinations, since they are designed carefully to assess examinees against specific standards of fitness to practise. Individual school will be able to provide details of their policies and arrangements in relation to both written and clinical examinations.
  - c. If the specialist's report recommends support beyond additional time in written examinations, then the recommendations will be considered by the Occupational Health Physician and Fitness to practise committee to establish whether this is consistent with the student being able to practise safely as a doctor.
12. Medical Schools recognise that in some cases a diagnosis may not be made prior to enrolling at the University. A subsequent diagnosis of a specific learning disability identified by the University will be assessed through the University's Occupational Health Service in terms of fitness to practise medicine.
13. Candidates are strongly encouraged to disclose their needs so that the medical schools can ensure that the appropriate support mechanisms are put in place by the time new students are admitted to the course.

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