

Accommodations for Handwriting Difficulties

Handwriting is a fine-motor skill that causes problems for many students with specific learning difficulties. Handwriting problems often arise from a difficulty in automatically remembering and mastering the sequence of muscle motor movements required in writing letters or numbers. For students with handwriting problems, there are a range of accommodations that can be used in the classroom to reduce the burden of handwriting. The following are suggested:

■ Change the demands of writing rate

- Allow more time for written tasks including note-taking, copying, and tests.
- Permit the student to begin written projects or assignments early.
- Allow the student to type some assignments and projects.

■ Adjust the volume of written work

- Allow the student to use voice-activated software or a scribe to dictate some assignments or tests.
- Teach and allow abbreviations in some writing (such as b/c for because). Have the student develop abbreviations in a notebook.
- Reduce copying aspects of work. For example in mathematics, provide a worksheet with the problems already on it.
- Reduce the length requirements on written assignments.
- Limit the need for draft copies, or have the student type their final copy instead of re-writing it.

■ Change the complexity

- Have a writing file that contains a model of cursive or print letters and a laminated template of the format required for written work (cut out holes where name, date, title, and information should go so it can be placed over A4 worksheets).
- Provide a template or blank copies of diagrams, charts etc, for completion rather than asking the student to create one from scratch.
- Remove neatness or spelling (or both) as marking criteria for assignments. Alternatively, provide two marks; a mark for content, and a qualitative mark for neatness and spelling.
- Encourage the student to use a spellchecker and have someone proofread his or her work.

■ Change the tools

- Allow the student to write in print or cursive, whichever is most legible.
- Encourage the student to use paper with raised lines, to encourage writing on the baseline.
- Allow the student to write on graph paper for mathematics to assist with aligning columns of numbers.
- Allow students to write with pens or pencils of their choice. Soft plastic pencil grips help the student to use the correct grip.
- Allow alternatives to hand written responses such as the use of a computer, a scribe or a digital recorder.

■ Allow students to take breaks when writing so they can put pencils down and shake or stretch their hands.

■ Allow the use of technological aids such as spellcheckers, word processing, and voice-activated software (see information sheet on **Computer Software and Assistive Technology**). If the handwriting problem is severe and impeding academic progress, occupational therapy may be of assistance.