Clare Trott

"Forging The Future". Dyscalculia and Dyslexia in Higher Education

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The Dyscalculia and Dyslexia Interest Group

The Dyscalculia and Dyslexia Interest Group (DDIG) held its second full day event on Wednesday 5th April 2006 in the Edward Herbert Building.

The programme included both key presentations and optional sessions. The key presentations focused on Maths Anxiety, mathematical resources and calculators and dyslexia.

Dr. David Sheffield, Reader in Biological and Health Psychology from the Department of Psychology and Mental Health at Staffordshire University asked "How Does Anxiety Influence Maths Performance and What Can We do About It?" His research has shown that Maths anxiety has an effect on accuracy, particularly when performing a secondary task that puts heavy demands on working memory, that students with high levels of maths anxiety reported greater anxiety and performed less well, particularly with respect to sums involving carry operations, compared to non-anxious students. Further, his neuropsychological investigations have revealed that waveforms representing the mental calculation procedure were greater for those with a high level of maths anxiety, but only when calculating problems involving a carry problem, and this is thought to be the result of the consumption of working memory resources in those who are highly maths anxious. He went on to describe a brief intervention that has been found to reduce anxiety during maths tasks and improve performance.

Presentations from The Mathematics Education Centre at Loughborough University focused on "Mathematics for All - Supporting your Students with Mathematics and Statistics at the Transition to University", Dr Tony Croft, and "The Difficulties Dyslexic Students Experience Using Calculators", Clare Trott.

A wide range of optional sessions was available in both the morning and afternoon. These covered such topics as dyscalculia, neurodiversity, satellite navigation, dyslexia and student nurses and mathematics study skills.

The conference was supported by an excellent exhibition of relevant books and products and an extended lunchtime allowed delegates time to browse the displays and several delegates took the opportunity to visit the Mathematics Learning Support Centre.

Approximately 120 delegates attended the event and between them they representing nearly 70 different institutions and organisations. One delegate summed up the day:

"From Beatles' "Help" and iPod videos to EEG's, this conference was all about technological innovation extending our knowledge and significantly extending our ability to help students in need of maths support. But no! It was far more than this, allowing us to see into a range of strategies to help students with mental health, dyspraxic, dyslexic, dyscalculic and maths anxiety difficulties. Joined up support and joined up thinking helped all of us there to combine our resources for a very successful day."

For more details about The Dyscalculia and Dyslexia Interest Group (DDIG) visit the website **http://ddig.lboro.ac.uk** or contact Clare Trott (**C.Trott@lboro.ac.uk**)

Around the workshops ('Science students with numerical difficulties' with Dr Corinne M. Spickett)

Around the workshops ('A Model of a Joined-Up Support Service' with Jacqueline Szumko, Clare Trott and Eleanor Trigg)

Around the workshops ('Study Skills in Mathematics' with Lynn Ireland)

At the supporting exhibition