



# Studying with dyslexia

If you have dyslexia, reading and writing costs you more time and energy. This can get in the way of your studies. For example, you may experience the following issues:

- You can't process learning materials well enough or quickly enough;
- You run out of time in exams;
- You can't finish essays and papers on time;
- You can't take good lecture notes;
- Studying can feel very stressful;
- You have doubts about your ability to study;
- You are afraid of failure.

Leiden University finds it important that everyone has the same opportunities to be successful in their studies. For this reason, students with dyslexia are entitled to request additional guidance and facilities. In this brochure you can read about the support offered by the university. You will also find study tips and information on workshops and courses that can help you to improve your study skills



# 1. Guidance

## Fenestra Disability Centre

Dyslexia is a so-called disability. Leiden University has an expertise centre for students with a disability: Fenestra Disability Centre. Fenestra staff can offer you advice, help you to request extra facilities and refer you to other sources of guidance.

## Intake appointment

In order to provide you with the best service, Fenestra staff need to be aware of your specific situation. You are therefore advised to arrange an intake appointment as soon as you can. You can even make an appointment if:

- you are not sure whether you have dyslexia;
- you are unsure whether you need extra support;
- you are uncertain whether you will definitely study at Leiden University.

You are always welcome!



## 2. Facilities

As dyslexia is legally classed as a disability, you are entitled to request special facilities. However you must be able to prove that you have dyslexia. For this, you require an official statement issued by an expert. Fenestra can help you to arrange this.

### **Binding study advice (BSA)**

In the first year of your bachelor's programme you are subject to binding study advice (BSA). This means you must obtain a certain number of study credits to be permitted to continue onto the next year of your study programme. If this isn't achievable as a result of your dyslexia, you can request that your study programme takes this into consideration when issuing binding study advice. This doesn't automatically mean that you will be allowed to continue studying despite insufficient credits. The Board of Examiners will look at the total picture, for example your abilities, determination and attitude to study.

### **Request a statement of hindrance**

If you want the board of examiners to take your dyslexia into consideration, you must request a so-called statement of hindrance from the BSA committee. To do so, you will need a statement issued by your doctor or another professional.

### **Do this on time: by 15 July at the latest!**

Request your statement of hindrance on time: by 15 July at the latest! Remember that it might take some time to get the necessary doctor's statement, so don't wait till the last minute.

Read more about requesting a statement of hindrance.

[universiteitleiden.nl/bsa-exceptional-circumstances](https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/bsa-exceptional-circumstances).

## Exams

### Extra time for exams

If you need additional time to complete exams due to your dyslexia, you can request extra exam time. Submit your request, accompanied by an official statement confirming that you have dyslexia, via [universiteit.leiden.nl/fenestra](https://universiteit.leiden.nl/fenestra). If you don't yet have the necessary official statement, Fenestra can help you to arrange one.

If you are taking exams for more than one study programme, you must request extra exam time for each programme separately.

## Other adaptations

You may need other adaptation to help you when taking exams, for example:

- Questions written in a larger or clearer font;
- Laptop or other aids.

Fenestra staff can tell you more about what it is available.

## Support for study delay

If you fall behind in your studies as a result of your dyslexia, and you are receiving Dutch student finance, you may be eligible to request (financial) support from DUO or the university.



- From DUO you can, for example, get a loan reduction, a one-year extension of your loan or OV card, or additional time to graduate.
- From the university you can, in some cases, receive financial assistance via the Regulations on Financial Support for Students (FOS).

Fenestra staff can tell you more about the options available.

### **Text to speech software**

Via Fenestra you can request text to speech software. With the help of this software, digital text is read out loud whilst being marked on the screen. You can use this software for self-study.

### **Other facilities**

Maybe you need other facilities, such as additional guidance or extra time for your thesis. Discuss this with Fenestra staff. Together you can look for the best options for your particular situation.

## 3. Study tips

The tips below can help you to study more effectively and keep the difficulties caused by your dyslexia to a minimum. Try a few of them to find out what works best for you. Give it a few weeks. Research proves that it takes 21 days to change a habit.

### Planning and organising

- Plan your work well.
- Use a well-structured agenda.
- Make sure you have an organised workspace where you won't be disturbed.
- Install IT aids when necessary, such as a magnifying screen or special software. Fenestra staff can offer advice.
- The Pomodoro technique is a good method to help you concentrate on your studies. For periods of 25 minutes you focus intently on your studies, then take a short break and repeat. You can find out more on [www.pomodoratechnique.com](http://www.pomodoratechnique.com).

### Processing study materials

- Summarise longer texts into a different format such as a list or diagram.

- Study graphics, diagrams and tables carefully.
- Repeat what you have read out loud in your own words.
- Discuss the materials with fellow students to improve your understanding and test what you have learnt.
- Find out if your text books are available in other formats.
- Read the *study tips* on the student website to help you study more effectively..

### Following lectures

- Try to find out in advance what the lecturer is going to cover that day so you can look at the materials in advance.
- Check if the sheets and notes that your lecturer will use are available in the digital learning environment. If not, ask your lecturer for them.
- Ask your lecturer if you may record the lecture.
- Ask a fellow student if you may copy his or her notes.
- You can buy study notes and summaries via SIL ([Silverlagen.nl](http://Silverlagen.nl)) and the JoHo [joho.org](http://joho.org).

## Written assignments

- Divide your written assignment into smaller steps and complete them one by one. Read *how to do this* on the student website.
- If you find it hard to order your thoughts, first record your ideas on a voice recorder, then put them on paper.
- Don't try to make it perfect first time round. Make a rough version. Once you have all the basics on paper, start working on the style.
- Ask someone to check and correct your text. This isn't a sign of weakness. Your lecturers also ask people to edit their work.

## Taking exams

- Prepare well. Practice doing old exam papers and let fellow students test you.
- Before starting, read the instructions carefully. Check how many questions you must answer and how much time you have.
- First answer the questions you immediately know the answers to. Then do the questions you find more difficult.
- Try to remain relaxed. Take short breaks now and then and try doing relaxation exercises. Don't feel pressurised by the tempo of other students.
- At the top of essay-type exams, add a brief note explaining that you are dyslexic and apologising for any textual mistakes. Lecturers will take this into consideration.
- Read the tips on *taking exams* on the student website.

### Also take a look on the website

On the Leiden University student website you can find tips on a wide range of *study skills* such as:

- Planning
- Concentrating
- Summarising
- Taking exams



## 4. Workshops and courses

Leiden University offers a range of courses to help you improve your study skills. Take a look at what's on offer on the student website [universiteitleiden.nl/en/courses](https://universiteitleiden.nl/en/courses).

Fenestra staff can also tell you more about workshops and courses that might be of help to you.





## Contact

### Fenestra Disability Centre

Make an appointment via: *this link*

Contact form: *[universiteitleiden.nl/fenestra](https://universiteitleiden.nl/fenestra)*

Telephone: 071 - 527 8025

#### **Visiting address:**

Plexus Student Centre

Kaiserstraat 25

2311 GN Leiden

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