

Dyslexic's research set to help fellow sufferers

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A University of Derby student inspired by her own experience to examine the challenges dyslexic students face at University, was surprised and delighted to see her research published in a top psychological journal.

BSc (Hons) Psychology graduate Julianne Kinder, 41, from Belper, struggled with reading and writing throughout school but was only diagnosed with [dyslexia](#) after she began an Access to Higher Education course at the University of Derby in 2006.

Although she received support throughout her studies, Julianne still faced daily challenges producing written assignments. On discovering there was a [gap](#) in knowledge about this particular aspect of the condition, she embarked on a study investigating how dyslexic students approach written university assignments.

The original study, completed as her final year dissertation, was accepted into the [British Journal of Educational Psychology](#) and published this month (June 2012).

Julianne said: "Dyslexia is best known as a disability affecting reading but it has important and less well-understood implications for writing, especially at university level where a far higher standard of writing ability is required. I frequently struggled, especially when trying to explain in writing things I had read or previously written.

"To investigate dyslexic students' challenges in writing I compared dyslexic with non-dyslexic students on measures such as their [confidence](#) in writing, sense of [authorship](#) and approach to writing. I then conducted in-depth interviews with some dyslexic students to explore their experiences in more detail."

The study identified a number of key disadvantages faced by dyslexic students compared with their non-dyslexic [peers](#). Dyslexic students had significantly lower levels of confidence in writing and understanding of authorship.

In particular, the findings highlighted some key aspects of academic writing that could be focused on in developing new services to support dyslexic students; such as improving dyslexic students' knowledge of how to avoid plagiarism, which the study showed could be a particular issue for them.

Professor James Elander, Head of the University's Centre for Psychological Research, and co-author of the study, said: "We are proud and delighted that Julianne's study has been published in such an esteemed academic journal. It is an exceptional achievement, as undergraduate research is rarely accepted.

"I hope that the findings of Julianne's study will be heard and taken onboard by [higher education](#) institutions. As universities become even more focused on supporting student learning and enabling students with [disabilities](#) to achieve their academic potential, this is the type of research that is needed to guide the development of better support strategies for dyslexia."

Provided by University of Derby

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