

The research, led by Durham University, found that almost half of dyslexia professionals in the study believed at least one unproven indicator for dyslexia, which could lead to children being misdiagnosed.

In a survey of 275 dyslexia professionals, the most common myth—which is not backed up by solid evidence—was that people with dyslexia read letters in reverse order, believed by 61% of specialists.

Just over 30% of professionals also believed that letters jumping around is a key feature of dyslexia. However, there is currently no evidence to show that either of these are reliable indicators of dyslexia.

The survey targeted a range of UK professionals involved in assessing students for dyslexia, such as dyslexia specialists, specialist assessors and educational psychologists. They were asked about the assessments they used, how they make their decisions on diagnosis and what they believe to be indicators of dyslexia.

Although over 75% of professionals used assessments which are recommended by the Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) Assessment Standards Committee (SASC), more than 82% of respondents also used additional measures. A further 71 different measures were listed by participants, indicating that there are many different tests used by professionals during the assessment process.

In the UK, there is currently no official policy guidance on defining and identifying students with dyslexia or other [learning difficulties](#). Instead, the onus of developing diagnostic procedures and standards relies heavily on various independent professional organizations.

The researchers are calling for evidence-based knowledge to be built into the [assessment](#) procedures and for this to be guided by [government policy](#).

The study is published in *Annals of Dyslexia* and involved researchers from Durham University and National Taiwan Normal University.

Lead author, Dr. Johny Daniel from the School of Education at Durham University, said, "Our findings show that there is a need for government policy to guide how students with reading disabilities should be assessed, based on reliable evidence. It's also important that dyslexia and psychological associations in the UK ensure that any misconceptions among professionals are directly addressed in their guidelines so that children are assessed in a consistent way across the board."

It's estimated up to one in every 10 people in the UK has some degree of dyslexia.

The research uncovered a general lack of consensus among assessors on the process of identifying someone with dyslexia. Many did subscribe to the notion of dyslexia being a deficit in core areas of reading, but several others saw it as a discrepancy between individuals' reading and cognitive abilities.

The dyslexia specialists in the study also used a number of other unsubstantiated dyslexia indicators such as high levels of creativity (17%), motor skills issues or clumsiness (17%), and difficulty with reading words in certain colors (15%) or fonts (12%). Empirical data does not support these as indicators of dyslexia.

Dr. Daniel added, "Early identification is absolutely crucial so that support can be put in place as quickly as possible. However, our study shows there is significant variability in the methods used for identifying reading disabilities such as [dyslexia](#), which could lead to children being misdiagnosed or missed altogether."

More information: Identifying Students with Dyslexia: Exploration of

Current Assessment Methods, *Annals of Dyslexia* (2024). [DOI: 10.1007/s11881-024-00313-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11881-024-00313-y)

Provided by Durham University

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