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Title: Conference Reports: Session 6: Virtual learning: Can the drawings of students identified as dyslexic or dyspraxic reveal visual indicators that might inform future teaching strategies in the studio? Quona Rankin, Dyslexia Coordinator/Tutor, Royal College of Art

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Virtual Learning Dyslexia in Art and Design. Dyslexia Support at the Royal College of Art: recent research using students' drawings to develop and inform future drawing studio based teaching strategies. By Qona Rankin.

Qona Rankin is the Dyslexia Co-ordinator/Tutor at the Royal College of Arts (RCA), she began this session by setting a challenge to do or change something to make a difference to dyslexic students. The session began with an alarming statistic that 28% of students at RCA are known to have dyslexia. This is higher than the national figure for known dyslexics in art and design subjects (25%) which in itself is 15% higher than any other population group apart from prisoners. Qona suggested that the high levels may be explained by the fact that if dyslexic people find written communication difficult then they find other (perhaps more visual) ways to express themselves. Qona then discussed the support available to students at RCA: support is made up of three pathways the first of which is aimed at students, the second aimed at staff within RCA and the third pathway aims to contribute to current research into dyslexia.

Qona's first job is to try and identify students who do not know they have dyslexia. These students can then be offered support and screened for the DSA allowance in the same way those who arrive knowing they have dyslexia are supported. The dyslexia co-ordinators at RCA also work with tutors to help them understand the difficulties faced by dyslexic and dyspraxic students, they have different videos to highlight the problems faced by some students, including one Qona showed in the session by a past student titled Gifted (Mantell, n.d.).

Qona used the final part of the session to discuss some current research being carried out in collaboration between the RCA, Swansea Metropolitan University and Middlesex University aiming to identify traits of dyslexia in drawing. The research started with creating a taxonomy of drawing difficulties and linked this to well known dyslexic cognitive problems. Qona mentioned the need to resolve what you know about something with what you can see of it when drawing (i.e. knowing a dog has four legs but only being able to see three of them while drawing the animal). Qona mentioned research by Nicholson and Fawcett (1994) and moved on to explain that they have adapted an 8 step learning process by Nist and Mealey (1991) for use in learning how to draw and are currently testing the success of this process which could have huge implications for the way in which drawing is taught to students.

References

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