

## **The effects of features of GCSE questions on the performance of students with dyslexia**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the research was to investigate whether question presentation features affect students with dyslexia differently to other students, potentially affecting whether they have a fair opportunity to show their knowledge, understanding and skills relating to the subject under assessment. A number of questions from past GCSE science papers were chosen and sometimes adapted. For some questions, two versions of the question were created to allow the effects of changing various features of the question to be investigated. Fifty-four students considered by their teachers to have dyslexia and a matched control group of fifty-one students took the test under exam conditions. A dyslexia screening assessment was also conducted with students where possible and some students were interviewed.

Facility values were used to compare performance between the versions of the same question and between student groups (dyslexic and control groups). Rasch analysis was used to look at item difficulties and item misfit. The findings were not always unambiguous but provided implications for question writers on a number of question features (e.g. pronouns, spacing, bullet points, using information) and were generally aligned with current understandings of good practice in examining.