The Dyscalculia and Dyslexia Interest Group (DDIG) held the first in a series of three workshops covering aspects of dyslexia, dyscalculia and the teaching of mathematics on Tuesday 4 December 2007 at Digby Stuart College, Roehampton University.

The workshop, entitled “Dyscalculia and Numeracy Testing” focused on the difficulties students with dyscalculia face when required to complete numeracy tests, highlighting the needs of student teachers and nurses.

Bridget Middlemas, the PGCert Learning & Teaching in Higher Education Course Convenor at Froebel College, Roehampton University illustrated the particular issues faced by dyslexic and dyscalculic student nurses in her lecture. By illustrating the myriad of different ways numerical information is presented to nurses in their working lives and the consequences of making errors, she highlighted the importance of numeracy support for these students (see Fig 1).

Student teachers are required to pass the Training and Development Agency for Schools (tda) Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) numeracy tests. Janette Matthews, Support Tutor in the Mathematics Education Centre at Loughborough University presented as a case study, Stephen, a mature, dyscalculic trainee teacher.

Approximately 30 delegates worked in small groups to consider the difficulties a student like Stephen may have in preparing for and sitting the QTS numeracy tests. Together they developed practical resources and strategies to assist Stephen, focusing on two aspects - how to prepare Stephen in advance of the tests and ideas that Stephen could put in place during the tests. These ideas and resources, relevant to other students, were presented to the whole group in a feedback sessions. These included showing Stephen how to simplify and extract key information from a question (see Fig 2), how to use ‘post-its’ to record and...
sort data (see Fig 3), how to represent fractions (see Fig 4) and ways to simplify the reading of information on the day and reduce visual disturbance (see Fig 5).

Delegates commented that workshop was valuable in “providing ideas and strategies for improving the support I offer” and highlighted “the need to treat each student as an individual with specific needs.”

Two further workshops were planned. They are “Climbing up the Slippery Slope - helping the dyslexic engineer master the peaks and troughs of Calculus” - 30 June 2008, De Montfort University, Leicester and an event covering the particular issues dyslexic students face with numeracy to be held in Bath in early July.

For more details about DDIG events, visit the website http://ddig.lboro.ac.uk or contact Clare Trott (c.trott@lboro.ac.uk)