

Written literature review and dissertation replaced by audio files with support pack

Student with dyslexia and medical problems

York St John University. Film and Television Production.



Presenting situation:

A mature student with dyslexia struggled to express his ideas fully in writing and experienced significant stress-related health problems as a result. The student planned to do his final dissertation on the use of sound in film. It was therefore felt appropriate that he submit his dissertation as an audio file, accompanied by supporting written materials.

The submission was marked against the same Learning Outcomes as a dissertation in written format.

Alternative assessment:

The Literature Review (representing 20% of the final mark) was submitted as follows:

- a seven minute audio file
- written bullet-pointed outline summarising key secondary sources
- full written bibliography
- notes used to construct the audio recording were submitted as an appendix

The Research Project (representing 70% of final mark) was submitted as follows:

- written cover sheet and contents page
- written bullet-pointed outline of the structure of each chapter
- twenty minute audio file with the research project delivered verbally
- written reference list
- any necessary appendices of film stills, quotes etc
- notes used to construct the audio recording were submitted as an appendix

The audio recordings were submitted as a playable CD; the student retained a copy of this in addition to other documentation.

Reflection: Student

The student felt this assessment method reduced his stress levels considerably, enabling him to manage his related health issues better. In terms of dyslexia, he felt an audio submission was a more equitable assessment format for him, as not having to focus on writing and proofreading allowed him to focus fully on research and analysis. The student felt he was able to express his knowledge and understanding better, rather than 'dumb down' his thinking due to his difficulties with academic writing.

On the downside, the student said he struggled to fit enough detail into the time limit of twenty minutes. He also felt that, as this was the first time his department had used an audio submission, time was lost in clarifying practicalities such as referencing.

Reflection: Study Development Tutor

This was an exciting project to work on, which required more contact time, especially in the initial stages as the assessment format was clarified. Once the student had the task clear, however, he was able to use his existing sound editing skills to create the audio file, including inserting sound clips from the films under discussion. Overall, this alternative worked well, though obviously using this method for a student without sound editing skills would have been much more challenging.