
The Story of Lenka with Specific Learning Difficulties

I am a student at the Faculty of Education, Charles University, with specific learning needs. Since the first grade, I have been diagnosed with dyslexia and dysorthographia. In my case, this means a slow reading pace combined with greater effort needed to concentrate on text. I also struggle with spelling rules, which affects my written work, and I write more slowly than most of my classmates.

Naturally, I addressed the conditions of the entrance exams. For me, it was crucial to have more time for reading and writing, which allowed me to work more calmly. I had no problem requesting an extension of the time limit. I provided a certificate from the Pedagogical-Psychological Counseling Centre (PPP), which was accepted without issue. I was subsequently admitted to two bachelor's double majors focused on education: ZSV-D and ZSV-TV, both of which I enrolled in.

In order to apply for study modifications, I had to undergo a functional diagnosis at the department. This is definitely not an evaluation of whether or not a student "deserves" the modification. Rather, it's a friendly conversation in which the student explains their needs and the modifications that would help them, while a specialist assesses what the faculty and university can offer to support them.

I mainly used my study modification during written exams, where I requested extended time from individual instructors. It's important to realize that each instructor has many students, so you cannot expect them to automatically know about students with specific learning disabilities and their needs. That's why I always approached each instructor before such exams to request extra time, either in person or by email. I never encountered any issues—every instructor was accommodating and supportive.

Another crucial aspect of studying—without which everything becomes much more difficult—is undoubtedly having friendly relationships with classmates. That's why I highly recommend participating in orientation courses. I was lucky to have wonderful classmates. Since I often couldn't keep up with taking notes, I needed help from my peers. That's when I began using a study assistant. My assistant was my friend and classmate, who took notes during lectures and then shared them with me.

The hardest part of my studies was definitely preparing for the final state exams. Studying was exhausting because I had to invest much more time than my classmates. What worked very well for me was multi-sensory learning (read, write, read aloud). And when writing both of my bachelor's theses, my assistant once again helped me tremendously by proofreading them for grammar.

I successfully completed both bachelor's programs. I'm now finishing my master's degree in ZSV-D, during which I've used the same support as in my undergraduate studies.

The Carolina Centre provides various forms of support for students with specific learning needs. Among other things, it lends technical equipment (like voice recorders or tablets) and offers various courses that can be very helpful during your studies. The Centre was especially active and helpful during remote learning—it regularly contacted students with offers to lend equipment, organize seminars (not only on study topics but also on mental health), and much more.

In conclusion, I want to say that having a disadvantage and asking for help is not a weakness. Believe me, even with all the support, your own effort will be the decisive factor. University studies are definitely not easy. There were many times when I was completely exhausted, went straight from final exams into the next semester, didn't have summer break for three years, and wondered whether I should just give up. But I didn't.

I am deeply grateful for all the help, and for both internal and external motivation, because it helped me achieve what I've always dreamed of: teaching. Because it truly matters to me.