

Understanding Neurodiversity

Supporting people who think, learn
and communicate in different ways



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Celebrating different kinds of people



Everyone is different and likes doing different things. Being different is great.



Many people have brains that work in the same way.



But lots of people have brains that work and think in different ways.



We call this being **neurodivergent**.
We say it like this:
new-row-die-ver-jent



Neurodivergent people often need some support to be the best that they can be.



But we know neurodivergent people have lots of great skills that can help everyone.



Our university is stronger for having different kinds of people working together.



This booklet will tell you about

- Different types of neurodiversity.



- How the university can support people who are neurodivergent.



- How managers can support neurodivergent staff.



Neurodivergent students and staff can use this booklet to help them find the support they need.



This booklet is very long. You don't need to read it all at once.



You can take a break or just go to the part you are interested in.

Different types of neurodiversity

Autism



Anyone can be born with autism.
It is part of who a person is.

Every autistic person is different.
But these are some things that are
the same for a lot of autistic people:



- Liking things to be the same.
Things like the clothes they wear,
and doing the same things.



- Any changes being very stressful.

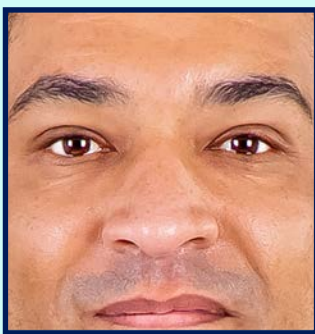


- Feeling things in a different way.
Things like bright lights, sounds,
smells and being touched.

Bright lights and too much noise
can be very stressful for autistic
people.



- Having different types of relationships with people.
Sometimes making friends can be hard.



- Making eye contact can be difficult.



- Understanding what people are trying to say can be hard.



- Understanding peoples body language can be hard.

Things that autistic people could find hard at university:



- Understanding what people are trying to tell you.



- Working in an office or classroom if the sound or lights are wrong for them.



- Coping with lots of different types of information.

Things that autistic people are good at:



- Coming up with new and clever ways to understand and fix a problem.



- Wanting to do things really well and finishing all work they have to do.



- Having a good memory for information.



- Talking to people in a very clear way so they understand what needs to be done.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

This is called **ADHD** for short



Every person with ADHD is different. But these are some things that are the same for a lot of people with ADHD:



- Finding it hard to follow what is being talked about.



- Being very active and finding it hard to calm down.



- Rushing into doing things without thinking about what could happen.



- Feeling very fidgety and restless.

Things that people with ADHD could find hard at university:



- Finishing their work on time.



- Following instructions.



- Keeping calm and controlling their emotion.

Things that people with ADHD are good at:



- Coming up with clever ways to solve problems.



- Having good leadership skills.



- Being very creative.



- Being very excited about doing work and having lots of energy to do it.

Dyslexia



Some people's brains make it hard for them to read, write and find the right words. We call this **dyslexia**.

We say it like this: **diss-lex-ee-a**

Things that dyslexic people could find hard at university:



- Reading, writing, and making notes.



- Sending emails.



- Taking in lots of information at once.



- Organising things.

Things that dyslexic people are good at:



- Solving problems.



- Drawing, painting and making things.



- Clearly explaining things.



- Explaining things by using drawings and shapes.

Dyspraxia



Some people's brains make it hard for them to move different parts of their body.

We call this **dyspraxia**. We say it like this:
Diss-park-see-a

Things that Dyspraxia people could find difficult:



- Moving both legs at the right time.



- Turning around easily.



- Moving your arms in the way you want them to.

Things that people with dyspraxia could find hard at university:



- Falling or bumping into things.



- Moving around and finding where they need to go.



- Getting to places on time.



- Typing and writing.

Things that people with dyspraxia are good at:



- Solving problems.



- Thinking of new and different ways to do things.



- Making sure that work gets finished.

Dyscalculia



Some people's brains make it hard for them to understand and work with numbers.

We call this **dyscalculia**. We say it like this: **diss-cal-cue-lee-a**.



Having dyscalculia can make lots of things hard. Things like:

- Maths.
- Telling the time.
- Remembering dates.
- Using money.



Things that people with dyscalculia could find hard at university:



- Sharing information that has numbers in it.



- Writing down anything that has numbers in it.



- Adding up numbers.

Things that people with dyscalculia are good at:



- Making big plans.



- Talking in a way that is clear and easy to understand.



- Thinking of clever ways to solve hard problems.

How the university can support people who are neurodivergent



Without support, many neurodivergent people can find learning hard.



People might:

- Feel worried, sad or unhappy.



- Feel very tired all the time.



- Find all the work hard to cope with.



We want our university be a kind and supportive place for neurodivergent people.



Neurodivergent people know best what support they need.



We will ask people the best way to support them and what things need to change.



We will make a plan about the best way to give people the support they need.

Reasonable adjustments



Reasonable adjustments means changing the way we do things to meet people's needs.

Things like giving information in different ways or having a ramp to get into a building.



The law says that universities must make reasonable adjustments so that everyone can take part.



This part of the booklet tells you some of the reasonable adjustments we can make.

1. Make changes to where people work

We can:



- Change the lighting in a room.



- Make a room easy for people to move around in.



- Make sure people have a quiet place to work.



- Support people to work at home if they need to.



- Support people to cope with any changes that happen at work.

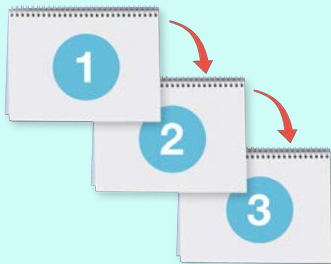
2. Support people to do their work

We can:



- Help people make a clear plan about how to do their work.

The plan will say when the work has to be finished by.



- Help people to break down their work into small steps that are easy to understand.



- Give people lots of support to make sure they are doing well.

3. Support people with reading and writing

We can:



- Make sure any information is easy to understand.



- Use technology to support people.
Things like computers and phones that can record what people say and read information out.



- Speak to people in a way that is best for them to understand.
Things like speaking clearly or not using big words.

4: Support people in meetings

We can:



- Make sure people understand what the meeting is about.



- Make sure people have lots of time to get ready for the meeting.



- Record the meeting so that people can listen to it again.



- Make sure people have the chance to speak up in meetings and share their ideas.

This might be things like putting their hand up to show they want to speak.

Access to Work



Access to Work is help people can get from the government to do their job.

Things like:



- Money to help with travelling to work.



- Things to help people do their job. This might be laptops and things that can read aloud.



- Money to pay for a support worker to help someone at work.



Your manager can give you more information about Access to Work.

How managers can support neurodivergent staff



There are lots of ways you can support neurodivergent staff. Things like:



- Helping people to learn all the skills they need for their job.



- Making sure that people's skills are used in jobs they can do well in.



- Supporting people to do different jobs and new jobs when they are ready.



- Letting people know how well they are doing.



- Not blaming people for things they have done wrong.

Think of ways to help them understand and do their job better.



- Making sure that you understand how people like to communicate.



- Making sure that people get the support they need as soon as possible.

Supporting people to look after themselves



Neurodivergent people can sometimes find things hard and stressful.



It is important that staff get the support they need to feel well.



You should make sure staff:

- Are not working too many hours.



- Look after themselves by doing things that make them feel happy.



- Feel included at work.



- Can have some quiet time by themselves, if they need to.



- Know where to go if they need extra help and support with their mental health.

Getting new staff



Think about neurodivergent people when you look for new staff. Things like:

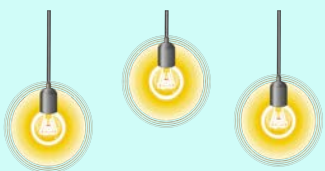
- Letting people know about any new jobs and how they can apply.



- Being clear about what the job is about and what skills are needed.



- Making sure that people have extra support in an interview. Things like:



- Doing the interview in a quiet room with dimmed lights.



- Asking questions that are easy to understand.

Supporting new staff



You should support people from their first day at work.

Ask people how they want to be supported.



You can support staff in the best way by:

- Finding somebody who can help new staff get used to the workplace and all the rules.

Things like where their desk is and what time breaks are.



- Getting any reasonable adjustments a person might need as soon as possible.



- Making sure you speak to new staff often. Check how they are doing and if they need more support.

Supporting neurodivergent students



A **lecturer** is someone who teaches at a university.

Lecturers can support neurodivergent students in lots of different ways.



1. Teach in different ways

Lecturers should ask students the best way for them to learn.

This could be things like:

- Having work experience.



Work experience is when a person works for a company for a short amount of time.



They learn about the company and get new skills.



- Working in groups.



- Learning from watching films or looking at pictures.



- Learning online.



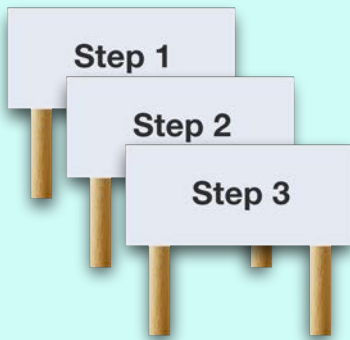
- Lecturers should make sure they speak clearly and use words that are easy to understand.

2. Give students support

Lecturers can support students by:



- Finding somebody to support students to plan their work and check they are doing well.



- Breaking work down into smaller parts that are easy to understand.



- Making sure the student knows when work has to be finished by.



- Making sure classrooms are quiet, have lots of sunlight.



- Making sure classes start on time.



- Letting students know what will happen in class. Things like:

- When they will be given work

and



- When they will need to work in a group.



3. Support students to do tests

Students should be given information about how they are going to be tested.



This will help them plan their work and will be less stressful.



Students should be given extra time during the test to help them think clearly.



You should make sure all students are comfortable with how the tests are done.

Students might need extra support to do tests. Things like:



- Having a test in a quiet room by themselves.



- Being able to have a break.



- Putting questions in a way that is easy to understand.