

# HOW TO TRANSITION TO TERTIARY EDUCATION



HELPFUL HINTS FOR PEOPLE WITH  
AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

## ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

### About this booklet

It is provided to you free and is also available on the website:

[www.adcet.edu.au/autism-transition](http://www.adcet.edu.au/autism-transition)

It has been prepared by the National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) program, which is funded by the Australian Government to provide information, advice and support to people with disability transitioning to tertiary education. To find your nearest NDCO, go to:

[education.gov.au/ndcoprogramme](http://education.gov.au/ndcoprogramme)

This short version of *How to Transition to Tertiary Education: Helpful Hints for People with Autism Spectrum Disorder* includes useful points and checklists at the end of each chapter. There is also a longer version, which has case studies and links to additional resources. Each covers the same information. It is up to you which one you prefer to use.



# CONTENTS

## Contents

1: <a href="#">Introduction</a>	4
2: <a href="#">Awareness of yourself and others</a>	5
3: <a href="#">Knowing your strengths</a>	6
4: <a href="#">Familiarising yourself with the campus</a>	7
5: <a href="#">Studying at university or TAFE</a>	8
6: <a href="#">Organising your study</a>	10
7: <a href="#">What support could be helpful</a>	14
8: <a href="#">Finding key people who can help you</a>	17
9: <a href="#">Communication tips</a>	18
10: <a href="#">Managing stress and anxiety</a>	19

## Tables

Table 1: <a href="#">Comparing characteristics of people with and without ASD</a>	5
Table 2: <a href="#">Talents, skills and character strengths</a>	6
Table 3: <a href="#">Differences between studying at high school and university or TAFE</a>	8
Table 4: <a href="#">Semester Assessment Planner (example)</a>	11
Table 5: <a href="#">Weekly Planner (example)</a>	12
Table 6: <a href="#">Support for study</a>	15

## Exercises

Exercise 1: <a href="#">My skills</a>	6
Exercise 2: <a href="#">My talents and character strengths</a>	6

# 1. Introduction

Congratulations on deciding to undertake tertiary study at university or TAFE. You will encounter many changes with this transition:

- a new physical environment.
- different teaching and learning approaches.
- new expectations of you as a student.

You will already have a number of strategies you use for study and everyday life. It will be important to use these strategies in your new learning environment.

Reading this booklet and completing the worksheets and checklists will help guide you through this transition to university or TAFE.

## What this booklet does

- Provides you with helpful hints and strategies on making the transition to university or TAFE.
- Provides you with advice on how to succeed in your studies.
- Helps you be aware of what to expect in your new learning environment.
- Helps you identify 'early warning signs' that things are not going well and when you may need additional advice and support.
- Provides information about the people at university or TAFE who can support you.

## Getting started at University or TAFE

- Knowing what might change is helpful, so find this out.
- Have a plan in place for situations you may find challenging.
- Prepare a plan when you are coping okay so that it is ready when you need it.
- Know that there are people at university and TAFE who can support you in your studies.
- Seek help at the earliest possible time if you feel you need help or are not coping.

## Be a self-advocate

Some staff at university or TAFE have a good understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder, but others may have limited understanding. To improve the support you receive:

- Be knowledgeable about how being on the Autism Spectrum impacts on your studies.
- Be clear on your rights and requirements as a student on the Autism Spectrum.
- Communicate this clearly and calmly to staff.

## 2. Awareness of yourself and others

This chapter provides information on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). You may find this information helpful to gain greater awareness and insight into some of your thought processes and behaviours. It is useful to:

- Know that ASD impacts on a person's ability to comprehend and interact with the world around them. The spectrum refers to the wide range of ways the condition can affect people.
- Know that every person with ASD is different. You are the expert on how ASD affects the way you think, comprehend and respond to your experiences.
- Remember that most of the people around you are not on the Autism Spectrum.
- Compare how people with ASD and people without ASD interpret and respond to situations.
- Remember that everyone is different and every person with ASD will not have all the ASD characteristics and every person without ASD will not always respond in a characteristic way.

Table 1: Comparing characteristics of people with and without ASD

Characteristics	Person with ASD	Person without ASD
Literality	Takes the meaning of spoken or written words literally.	Is able to interpret the meaning of figurative speech and sarcasm.
Gathering information	Persistence and focus on gathering and cataloguing information on a given topic of interest.	Not always committed to gathering information on an interest in an organised manner.
Recall of details	Has exceptional memory and/or recall of details, for example: names, dates, schedules, routines.	Can have difficulties remembering and recalling specific details.
Application of learning	Learning is specific to a given situation.	Can generalise learning to other situations. Is able to build on existing knowledge in new situations.
Predicting outcomes	Has difficulty predicting outcomes or consequences of actions.	Is able to predict consequences and outcomes from actions.
Regard for others	Able to relate to others at 'face value', free of sexist, 'ageist' or cultural biases.	Often considers others in terms of biases and societal contexts.
Honesty	Gives honest comments or responses at all times.	At times may not give an honest comment or response if it will hurt another person's feelings. At times may give an honest response in language that is diplomatic and gentle.
Social situations	Can feel uncertain and anxious about how to act in social situations, especially if these are new to the person. Has difficulty understanding the context and expectations of a given social situation.	Can generally understand the unwritten rules of social situations. Is able to interpret a given social situation and understand appropriate expectations.
Organisation	Has difficulty managing timelines, and planning and prioritising study or work requirements.	Can generally plan, manage and prioritise study or work requirements.
Non-verbal communication cues	Has difficulty understanding facial expression, voice tones and body language.	Uses and understands facial expression, voice tones and body language as a significant part of communication.
Eye contact	Avoids eye contact with other people, especially when uncertain, nervous or in new situations.	Considers eye contact to be an important part of communication.
Routines and unexpected events	Can become stressed and anxious when established routines are not followed.	May not have well-established routines. For those who do have regular routines these can vary without undue stress or anxiety. Is flexible and able to cope with change.
Sensory stimuli	Can be hypersensitive to external stimuli such as background noise, loud noises, bright lights or strong smells. Can be distracted by external stimuli.	Does not necessarily become distracted or is not usually hypersensitive to external stimuli. Is able to filter these, so can concentrate on task at hand.
Stressful situations	Reacts to stressful situations in an effort to stop the stimuli by doing such things as flapping hands, shouting, pacing, or extreme fidgeting.	Can show minimal reaction to stressful situations and stimuli.
Speech	May have difficulty entering, regulating and exiting a conversation.	Is generally adept at engaging in conversations.
Motor skills	May have difficulty with fine and gross motor skills, writing, or co-ordination.	Is flexible with fine and gross motor skills and co-ordination.

### 3. Knowing your strengths and challenges

Every person has their own set of talents, skills and character strengths.

- You will have used many of yours so far in your schooling and life in general.
- Knowing what they are and how you use them may help you cope better with the transition to tertiary study.
- You may have talents and skills that are beneficial for tertiary study. For example if you have a strong interest in a particular subject you will have knowledge and information, and are highly motivated to learn more about this topic. Or you may have a talent for being able to absorb and remember facts. This will make learning new factual information easier for you.

Table 2: Talents, skills and character strengths

	What they are	Examples
Talents	Qualities you are born with. Can be improved by purposeful action.	Able to sing in perfect pitch. Good memory. Able to draw images.
Skills	Learnt ability you have developed over time.	Writing assignments. Using a computer. Being punctual.
Character strengths	Virtues that you develop and use by choice.	Fairness. Honesty. Curiosity.

#### Exercise 1: My skills

Write down some of the skills you have learnt and developed. These examples may help:

Activity	Skills developed
English pre-tertiary subject	Understanding different types of texts. Able to write essays – with introduction, logical arguments, and a conclusion. Able to write to required word limits.
Using computers	Knowledge of computer applications. Able to load software. Able to troubleshoot computer problems.
Part-time job at bakery	Following instructions. Working in teams. Knowledge of occupational health and safety.

#### Exercise 2: My talents and character strengths

Ask family members and current teachers what they think your talents and character strengths are.

	Talents	Character strengths
What my family say I have		
What my teachers say I have		

#### Who can help?

- Family.
- Teachers.

#### Checklist

Tick each of these when you have completed the activity:

- I have listed my skills.
- I have asked others about my talents, skills and character strengths.

## 4. Familiarising yourself with the campus

It is important to familiarise yourself with your university or TAFE campus before you commence.

### Before semester starts

- Download the campus map from the university or TAFE website.
- Highlight particular areas that you will be using, such as the library, lecture theatres and cafeteria.
- Most universities and TAFEs have Open Days when future students can walk around the campuses, meet with staff and attend information sessions. Check the campus website for the date.
- You can arrange a private visit at another time. Speak to your schools career adviser to organise.
- Visit the campus and take photos of yourself at locations you will be using, as this may assist you to place yourself in these contexts.
- Identify a place on campus that you can go to if you are feeling stressed or agitated. This could be a quiet place outside, an area in the library, a quiet corridor or a specific area that is set aside for people with disability.
- Attend pre-semester information sessions for new students.
- Know how to get to and from the campus, how long the journey takes and what time you will need to leave your residence.
- If travelling by public transport, find out the timetable, the stops to use and the ticketing system.
- If travelling on a bicycle, find the nearby bike tracks and campus bike-rack locations.
- If travelling by car, find the campus car parks and payment system.

### At the start of semester

- Find and read information for new students on the university or TAFE website.
- Attend orientation and information sessions for new students. These can cover topics such as:
  - How to get a student identification card.
  - The online systems.
  - How to access student support services.
  - How to use the library including: borrowing, reserve sections, and searching for articles.
- Most universities also have orientation activities put on by student clubs and societies. These might include political, religious, sporting, social or ASD student groups. They can be a great way to meet people with similar interests.

### University accommodation

- If you need to live away from home in university accommodation you will also need to familiarize yourself with this environment.
- This will include your room, bathroom, kitchens, dining room, laundry and recreation facilities.
- There will be many new routines to establish.
- You can discuss with the accommodation services manager or student support services any impact your ASD may have on your accommodation.

### Who can help?

- Your career adviser.
- National Disability Coordination Officer Program [education.gov.au/ndcoprogramme](http://education.gov.au/ndcoprogramme)
- Disability support services at the university or TAFE where you are enrolled.

### Checklist

Tick each of these when you have completed the activity:

- I have downloaded a map from the campus website.
- I have visited the campus – on an Open Day or arranged a personalised visit.
- I have located the library, lecture rooms, cafeteria and bookshop.
- I have located student support services.
- I have identified a quiet place to go to de-stress.
- I have practised travelling to and from campus.
- I have read information for new students on the campus website.
- I have attended information sessions for my course.
- I have attended a library information session.
- I have a student identification card.

## 5. Studying at university or TAFE

Studying at university or TAFE is very different from high school.

- There is less structure and less follow-up from teachers.
- You are expected to manage your own study and ask for help when you need it.
- Undertaking fewer subjects or a part-time study load can be helpful in the first few semesters to help you adjust to the changes.

Table 3: Differences between studying at High School and University or TAFE

Studying at High School	Studying at University or TAFE
It is a young person's learning environment. Your parents/guardians can be contacted directly to discuss any matters related to your attendance or study.	It is an adult learning environment. Staff at universities and TAFEs cannot discuss matters concerning your study or attendance with anyone else (including your parents/guardians) without your permission.
Schools may use online resources to supplement teaching material.	Many universities and TAFEs use online processes for student enrolments, course information, discussion forums, submission of assignments, and the delivery of course material.
Your classes are scheduled for you.	Lectures are set, but you may be able to select your preferred time for tutorials and practicals.
Teachers carefully monitor class attendance.	Attendance at lectures is not monitored. Attendance at tutorials and practicals is usually monitored.
Classes generally have about 25 students.	Lectures may have 100 students or more. Tutorials and practicals usually have about 20-30 students.
Teachers check your completed homework.	Lecturers and teaching staff don't check if you have done required readings. However, tutorial discussions, assessment tasks and exams require that you have read these.
Teachers approach you if they believe you need assistance.	Lecturers and teaching staff expect you to approach them if you do not understand class material or task requirements.
Teachers often write information on the board to be copied in your notes or provide handouts of relevant information.	Lecturers may present their material without stopping, expecting you to note the important points. It is important to take good notes or record the lecture if handouts are not provided. Tutorials or practicals may extend or apply the lecture material.
Teachers often remind you of the due dates for assessment tasks. They may accept late submission with no	Lecturers expect you to keep track of the due dates for assessment tasks. You may have marks deducted for late submission.
You usually spend 20-25 hrs in class between the hours of 8.30am and 3pm, Monday to Friday.	As a full-time university student you can expect to spend 12 to 20 hours each week in lectures or tutorials between 8am and 9pm, Monday to Friday. TAFE classes may require more contact hours.
You may study outside of class as little as a few hours a week.	University requires you to study at least 1 hour outside of class for each hour in class to keep up, e.g. 16 hrs of class time requires at least 16 hours of private study per week.
Study and revision tasks are often set by the teacher throughout the school year.	You will need to plan and manage your own study time and revision tasks. Some assessment tasks may be due at the same time. It is advisable to use a Weekly Planner and a Semester Assessment Planner.
You often need to read or hear presentations only once to learn all you need to know about them.	Concepts and ideas can be more complex and difficult to understand. You may need to review lecture notes and other study material regularly.
You are expected to read short specific amounts of material (for example one book chapter).	You may be assigned extensive reading material. You may also be required to read additional material from books or journal articles.
Writing tasks may not require referencing or acknowledging information sources.	Universities have strict policies about plagiarism, which is using someone's work as your own. This includes the internet and other students' work. Find out the referencing guide for your course and follow these guidelines to acknowledge others' theories or research.



# Managing your study at University or TAFE

## Study Requirements

Prepare for classes by reading class notes, textbooks and other recommended materials.

- Attend lectures and classes.
- Take relevant notes or record information from lectures.
- Find your own resources from the library or internet for completing your assignments.
- Complete and submit assessment tasks by the due date.

## Lectures and classes

Attendance at lectures is not compulsory but it is highly recommended that you do attend all your lectures to help you learn the course content. If you miss classes, it can be very difficult to catch up. Usually you enrol in tutorials and laboratory classes in the first week of semester. They then commence in the second week of semester.

It is important to attend all your tutorials and laboratory classes.

## Online systems

It is important to find out what online systems and resources are used for your course, and how to access these. These may include:

- Lecture hand-outs and recordings
- Reading materials and useful resources
- Details of assessment tasks
- Assessment task lodgements
- Class discussion boards and blogs

It is important to know the library online system for checking the catalogue and borrowing books.

## Assessments

- Assessment tasks will develop your critical analytical skills. You may be asked to gather evidence for and against an argument and compare and contrast theories.
- Assessment formats include: essays assignments, laboratory reports, group assignments, individual or group presentations, online discussions, tests and exams.
- Contact student support staff if you find an assessment format too stressful due to your ASD. It may be possible to arrange alternative assessment tasks.

## Online discussion boards or blogs

You may be required to make comments about a given topic, or comment on other students contributions. It is important to know:

- How many words are expected?
- How many comments are required?
- How often are postings required?
- Do your postings require referencing?

## Group assessments

Group assessments work well when:

- Tasks are allocated fairly and evenly between group members.
- Everyone is clear on their allocated tasks.
- The group establishes clear timelines for completion of tasks.
- Members know how to best contact each other.
- The group meets regularly to discuss work in progress.

Tip: Identify two components of the task that match your skills and/or interests. Propose to the group that you take responsibility for one or both of these areas.

## Who can help?

- Student transition officers.
- Disability support staff.
- Learning support staff.

## Checklist

Tick each of these when you have completed the activity:

- I have enrolled in tutorials or laboratory sessions.
- I know how to access the course online system.
- I know how to use the library online system to search the catalogue.

## 6: Organising your study

Students who are well organised are more likely to succeed in their studies.

### Get a copy of the Unit Outline for each of your subjects

- This provides an overview of the subject and assessment tasks.

### Use a Semester Assessment Planner each semester (See example, Table 4)

- It is important to get assessments in on time, even if you are worried that they are not perfect.
- Note all assessment tasks on the day they are due and the percentage of the semester mark.
- Allocate the time you spend on an assessment task in proportion to the mark it is worth. For example, generally you would spend twice as much time working on an assignment worth 20% than you would on one worth 10% of the overall semester mark.

### Preparing an assignment has five stages

**Stage 1:** Ensuring you understand the question and assessment criteria.

**Stage 2:** Searching for and finding relevant references – from text books, additional books, journal articles, web data bases.

**Stage 3:** Reading information and highlighting parts you will use in the assignment, and conducting practical work if required.

**Stage 4:** Writing a draft.

**Stage 5:** Reviewing and editing your draft (if necessary) before submission.

### Use a Weekly Planner each week (See example, Table 5)

- Ask student services for a blank Weekly Planner form.
- Include your lecturers, tutorials and private study time.
- Use a different colour highlighter for each subject.
- Plan for one hour private study time for every hour that you have class contact hours. For example, one of your subjects has 3 contact hours per week, therefore you should plan for 3 hours private study per week for this subject.
- Allocate private study time in one hour chunks of time.
- Check your Semester Assessment Planner for any assessment tasks that are due this week.
- Make a 'To-do list' of tasks for that week.
- For example: Biology – write up Prac Report; History – read Chapters 9 and 10 in text book; Computing – prepare for class test.
- Alternate subjects in your private study time. For example, study geography for one hour, and then study science for another hour.
- Allocate specific tasks for your private study time. For example, use the time to work on upcoming assignments or to read required readings.
- Plan private study time to link with lectures or classroom requirements. For example, have one hour study time before a class to review readings or material.
- Remember to also include time for relaxation and doing things other than study in your Weekly Planner.
- Review your study plan each week by asking yourself:  
Am I following the plan? Am I staying focused on tasks? Is it assisting me to meet my study requirements? Does it need to be changed?



Table 4: Semester Assessment Planner (Example)

Week/Dates	Biology	Geography	History	Computing
1				
2		Research for assignment 1.	Research for assignment 1.	
3	Prac report due Thursday. Worth 10%.	Research and write up assignment 1 draft.	Research assignment.	In-class online test Monday. Worth 5%.
4		Review, edit and submit assignment 2. Due Monday. 1000 words. Worth 10%.	Research and write up assignment 1 draft.	In-class online test. Monday. Worth 5%.
5	Prac Report due Thursday. Worth 10%.	Research for assignment 2.	Review, edit and submit assignment 1. Due Wed. 1000 words. Worth 15%.	In-class online test. Monday. Worth 10%
6		Research and write up assignment 2 draft. Check online discussion.		In-class online test Monday. Worth 10%.
7	Prac Report due. Thursday. Worth 10%.	Review, edit and submit assignment 2. Due Monday. 2000 words. Worth 20%. Participate in online discussion.	Research for assignment 2.	
8		Meet with group to plan presentation. Participate in online discussion.	Research for assignment 2.	In-class online test Monday. Worth 10%.
9	Prac Report due Thursday. Worth 10%.	Online discussion due. Total 1000 words. Worth 10%.	Commence writing assignment 2 draft.	In-class online test Monday. Worth 10%.
10		Meet with group.	Review and edit assignment 2.	
11	Prac Report due Thursday. Worth 10%.	Meet with group to finalise presentation.	Assignment 2 due Wed. 3000 words. Worth 45%.	
12		Group presentation and paper due Tuesday. Worth 20%.		In-class online test Monday. Worth 10%.
13	Start exam revision.	Start exam revision.	Start exam revision.	Start exam revision.

### Table 5: Weekly Planner (Example)

Week Number: .....		Date Range: .....					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9 am	Prepare for computer online assessment.		Computer lecture.		Computer lecture.		Family and friends time.
10 am	Prepare for computer online assessment.	Biology lecture.	Read history tutorial readings.	Geography lecture.	History research.	Write history assignment.	Family and friends time.
11 am	History lecture.	Biology lecture.	History lecture.		Geography research.	Write history assignment.	Family and friends time.
12 pm			History tutorial.	Society club.			Family and friends time.
1 pm						Free time.	Family and friends time.
2 pm	Geography lecture.	Biology prac.	History assignment. start writing	Geography group project meeting.	Geography research.	Free time.	Family and friends time.
3 pm		Write up biology prac.	Proof read biology prac report.	Geography prac.	Society club get-together.	Start writing geography assignment.	Family and friends time.
4 pm	Computer prac.	Write up biology prac.	Geography assignment				
Research.			Review biology text book.				
5 pm	Gym.			Gym.			
6 pm			Free night.				
7 pm	Read history tutorial readings.	Read history tutorial readings.					Check Semester Assessment Planner.
							Do 'To-do list'.
							Do new Weekly Planner.
8 pm		Geography online discussion.					

## Organising for exams

### Exam timetable

- Check your exam timetable online. Be clear on the date, time, duration, materials allowed and venue.

### The exam environment

- Most exams are held in large rooms with many students.
- If you think that this environment will be too distracting or stressful, it is possible to arrange an alternative venue that is smaller and quieter.
- You may also be entitled to other alternative arrangements.
- There is a cut-off date for requests for alternative examination conditions so you need to ensure that your request is made before this date.
- Speak to the Disability Support Staff or Student Centre about alternative arrangements.

### Preparing for exams

- Your teacher or lecturer should inform you of the structure of the exam. Is it multiple-choice, problem-solving, short answer questions, practical demonstration, essays or a combination of these formats?
- What is each question or section worth?
- Look at subject past exams on the library site.
- Use your course outline to guide you on the themes of the material during semester.
- Use Weekly Planners to plan your study.
- Allocate specific tasks to chunks of study time.
- Write summaries of the information, use mnemonics, or use mind-mapping.
- Use past exams to practice answering questions.
- Practice answering questions within the time restrictions of the exam.
- Plan to get 8 hours sleep the night before an exam. This will be more beneficial than all-night cramming.

### Sitting the exam

- When the exam begins, take a couple of minutes to scan the exam as a whole.
- Write down the duration to spend on each section or question, and what time you should start a new one.
- It is more important to answer or attempt to answer each required section, rather than spend the entire exam time on only part of the exam.

### If you have exam questions requiring an essay

- Spend a couple of minutes on the ones you will answer underlining key words.
- What are you asked to do? You may be asked to describe, compare, contrast or analyse.
- What theories do you need to refer to?
- Write down the key points you will make.

### Who can help?

- Student services.
- Learning support team.
- Teaching staff.

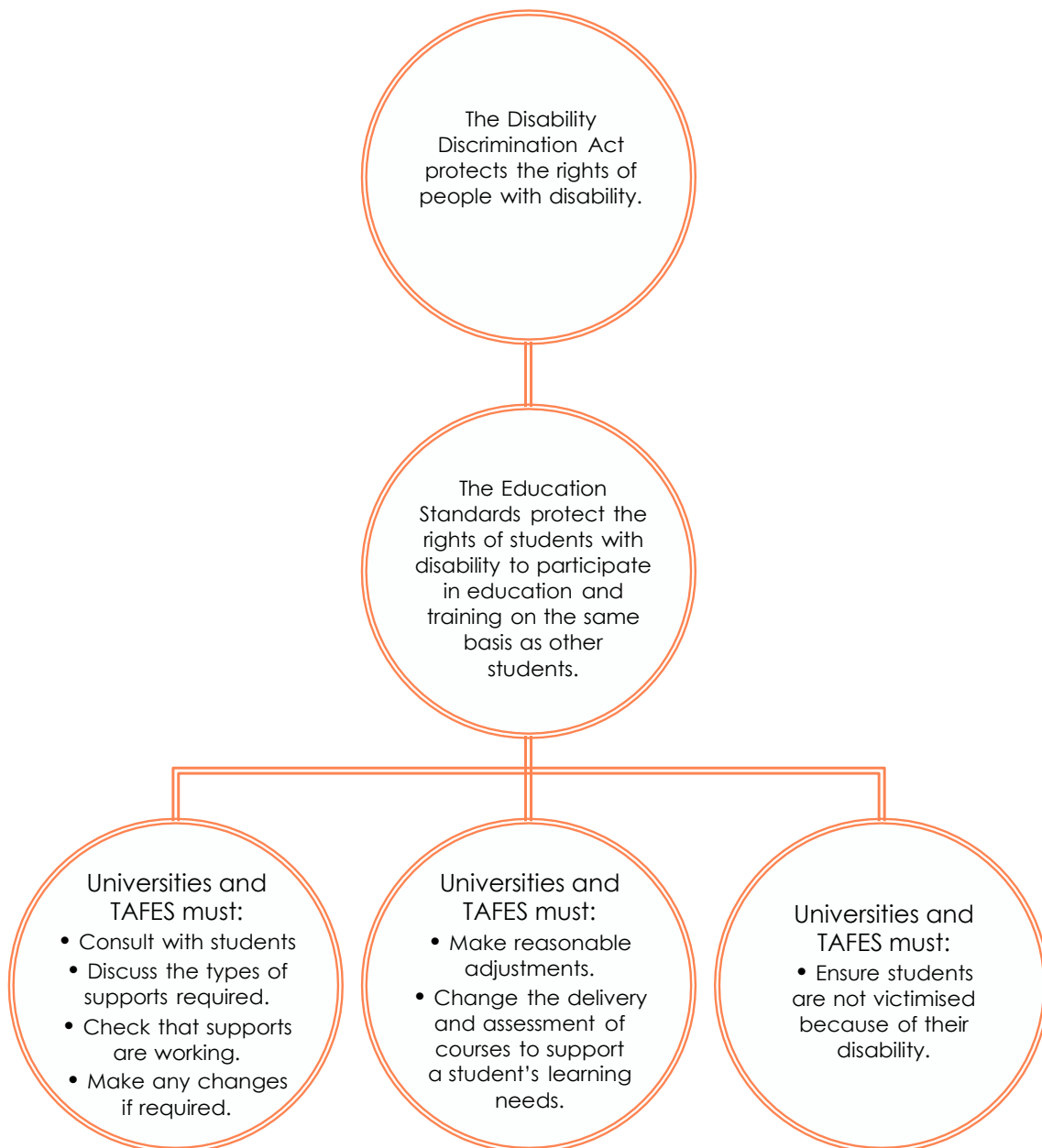
### Checklist

Tick each of these when you have completed the activity:

- I have obtained a copy of the Unit Outline for each of my subjects.
- I have drawn up a Semester Assessment Planner.
- I am drawing up a Weekly Planner at the start of each week.
- I review my Weekly Planner each week.
- I have checked with staff if I did not understand a task or request.
- I know my exam timetable.
- I know my exam question format.
- I have drawn up an exam study plan.

## 7: What support could be helpful

It is important to know that students with ASD have a right to ask for help and adjustments to support their study.



### **Inherent requirements**

You have a right to question how a given assessment task measures the inherent or essential requirements of a course. If it does not, you then have a right to ask for an alternative assessment task if the proposed task is not appropriate for your learning needs. For example, the subject assessment requires you to do a presentation to the whole class. If public speaking or presentation skills are not inherent requirements of the course, you can ask for an alternative assessment. You may be able to present to your teacher only, or a small group, or by a video presentation.

## Table 6: Support for study

Help is available if you need it. It is important that you ask for help when required.

What I need support with	Possible adjustments or support
Untidy and illegible handwriting.	Disability support services may organise for a note-taker to take notes in lectures for you or discuss assistive technology options.
Writing quickly enough to keep up with lecturer.	Disability support services may organise for a note-taker to take notes in lectures for you or discuss assistive technology options.
Writing and listening at the same time.	Disability support services may organise for a note-taker to take notes in lectures for you or discuss assistive technology options.
Understanding abstract terms without concrete examples to clarify concepts.	Speak to your lecturer or tutor afterwards and ask for an alternative concrete example.
Deciding what is important when reading text books or journal articles.	The learning support service can help you with strategies to determine key messages.
Interpreting general or large chunks of instructions.	Ask your instructor for clarification of instructions. Relay back to them your understanding of what is required. They can then provide additional information.
Concentrating on topics that do not interest me.	Do a Weekly Planner and allocate time and tasks to these topics. If these topics are part of your weekly study plan, you will be more likely to concentrate on them for the time allocated. Follow the advice in Chapter 6 of this booklet.
Setting goals and being organised.	Do a Semester Assessment Planner, and then a Weekly Planner each week. Follow the advice in Chapter 6 of this booklet. Counselling or transition support staff may be able to assist you.
Knowing what to study for in exams.	Talk to your tutor about an exam preparation strategy.
Sitting exams in unfamiliar surroundings.	Disability Services can arrange an alternative exam venue. Ask to visit this room before the exam.
Being distracted in large exam rooms.	Disability Services can organise alternative exam venues, in smaller rooms, with less people and less distractions.
Unable to concentrate in large lecture theatres.	Sit as near to the front of the lecture theatre as you can. Try and sit next to other students who concentrate.
Feeling stressed or overwhelmed by the workload.	Review your Semester Assessment Planner and Weekly Planner (Chapter 6). Talk to transition support staff or counselling staff about your concerns. Show them your Semester Assessment Planner and Weekly Planner – they may be able to suggest ways to change it to assist you to manage your workload. If you are doing a full study load, consider withdrawing from one subject. This can also be regarded as a full-time study load.
Managing anxiety and stress.	Talk to a counsellor in student support services.

## Support services

### Use general student support services

- You can use these on the same basis as students without a disability.

### Use student disability support services

- Disability support staff assist students with disability to access the reasonable adjustments they require for their studies.
- They will work with you to develop a Learning Access Plan (LAP) or Reasonable Adjustment Plan (RAP) that outlines the learning supports your university or TAFE will put in place for you.
- You can ask for your LAP or RAP to be reviewed or changed at any time.

### Disclosing your disability

- You will need to tell the disability support services about your ASD if you want reasonable adjustments made.
- You may also need to provide documentation about your condition from a health professional.
- From 2015, NSW TAFE students who wish to access funded disability support MUST disclose their disability at time of enrolment.
- Disclosing your disability is a personal decision. There are pros and cons associated with this
- It is recommended that you consider the benefits of disclosing very carefully.

### Benefits of disclosing

- Many students with ASD are much more successful with their tertiary studies once they have disclosed and sought appropriate assistance.
- You will be able to discuss your specific learning needs and options for reasonable adjustments with disability support staff.
- It will help university or TAFE staff understand you.
- The personal information you provide to the University or TAFE will be confidential.
- You will have the right to decide who else gets the information, and will need to give written consent for your information to be shared with anyone else (including your parents).

### Who can help?

- Student services on your campus.
- Disability support staff.

### Checklist

Tick each of these when you have completed the activity:

- I have considered the benefits of disclosing my ASD.
- I have contacted student support services to enquire about supports provided to students with ASD.
- If disclosing my ASD, I have made an appointment with disability support staff to arrange a Learning Access Plan or Reasonable Adjustment Plan.





## 8: Finding key people who can help

It will be important to find people at your university or TAFE who can assist you to manage your studies or life in general. Look on your university/TAFE website for student assistance or visit a student information desk to find out the exact title and how to access their support.

Disability support staff assist many students with ASD with:

- Developing a Learning Access Plan or Reasonable Adjustment Plan.
- Note-taking for classes.
- Advice on the use of assistive technology.
- Loan equipment for note taking.
- Special arrangements for exams, such as a separate room, use of a computer or scribe.
- Time management and organisational skills.
- Extensions for assignments.

Transition support staff assist many students with:

- Timetabling, time management and study planning.
- Campus familiarity.
- Subject and course selections.
- Communication with the academic staff.
- Understanding the university or TAFE processes.

Counselling staff assist many students with:

- Coping strategies.
- Managing anxiety and stress.
- Communication and social skills.
- Dealing with relationships.
- Course selection and career planning.
- General life issues.

Learning support staff help many students with:

- Understanding an assessment task.
- Approaches to academic writing.
- Assessment planning and organisation.
- Spelling and grammar.

Student mentor programs help many students with:

- Finding their way around campus.
- Support with communication.
- Understanding assessment requirements.
- Finding useful clubs and societies to join.

### Who can help?

- Student services on your campus.
- Disability support staff.

### Checklist

Tick each of these when you have completed the activity:

- I have found the titles of staff who could help me if required.
- I know how to access the services of support staff.

## 9: Communication tips

### Communicating with lecturers and other academic staff

- Lectures are mostly attended by large number of students.
- Little interaction occurs between the lecturer and students during lectures.
- It is usually not appropriate to ask questions or make comments during lectures.
- Initiate contact through email with specific questions about course material.
- Request an appointment to discuss course material.

### Communicating with tutors and small class teachers

- Tutorials and classes are mostly attended by 20 to 30 students.
- Interaction and discussion occurs between tutors/teachers and students.
- It is not always compulsory to contribute.
- It is appropriate to ask questions and make comments during small classes.
- Keep comments and questions relevant to course material.
- Remember that all students need the chance to contribute to the discussion. It is important not to make too many comments or answer most of the questions.
- You can make a time to meet with your tutor or teacher outside of class time to discuss course material or assignments.

### Communicating with peers

- You can use questions about the course or assignments to start conversations with other students studying the same subjects as you.
- Make a list of possible questions you could use to start conversations.
- Observe conversations between other students to learn communication rules, such as physical proximity to each other, eye contact, and popular greetings. Practice using these rules.

### Who can help?

- Student services.
- Student counsellors.
- 

### Checklist

Tick each of these when you have completed the activity:

- I know the contact details of my lecturers and tutors/small class teachers.
- I have made a list of possible questions to start conversations with other students.
- I have observed conversations between other students and noted communication rules.



# 10. Managing stress and anxiety

## Symptoms of stress, anxiety and panic attacks

- It may be useful for you to identify the symptoms associated with stress and anxiety.
- Muscle tension, quicker heart rate, churning in the stomach and headaches are physical reactions to stress and anxiety.
- If you are stressed, you may feel overwhelmed or uncertain about how to cope.
- If you are anxious, you may feel concern about possible threats or dangers.

## Panic Attacks

If you have a panic attack:

- You may think you are in immense danger and feel fearful for your life.
- You may have physical reactions such as heart palpitations, hyperventilation, muscle pain, stomach pain, dizziness and sweating.

## Healthy and unhealthy stress

- If you occasionally experience stress and anxiety, it is healthy.
- If you often experience stress or anxiety, this is unhealthy and you may need to find ways to manage this.
- It is unhealthy to have occasional panic attacks.

## Managing stress, anxiety and panic attacks

- There are a number of techniques to help manage stress, anxiety and panic attacks.
- Choose 2–3 techniques that you will be most confident to use.
- Practise these every day, even when you are experiencing low levels of stress or anxiety.
- You can then be confident in using these techniques to cope with challenging situations.

## Relaxation techniques

- Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise - Tense muscles for 5 seconds and relax for 15 seconds. Focus on 4 main muscle groups: face and shoulders; arms; lower abdomen and back; legs and buttocks. Practice for 15 minutes, twice a day.
- Meditation to relax your body and mind. Guided meditations are available on CD, Apps or through internet sites.
- Slow Breathing to calm you before or during a stressful situation. Count to 5 while you breathe in slowly and deeply through the nose. Hold the breath for a few seconds. Count to 5 slowly as you breathe out. Do this 5 times.

## Training your thoughts

- Mindfulness means not being distracted by your thoughts and being fully aware of your present moment or experience. Ask a psychologist or counsellor to help you learn this.
- Remind yourself what you are good at: your skills, talents and character strengths.
- Every night, write down 3 good things that happened that day (for example, got to the lecture on time, handed in my assignment, talked to a classmate).
- Use your imagination to visualise pleasant thoughts or memories. Focus on what you can see, hear, smell and feel. Repeat statements to yourself such as 'I am feeling relaxed'.
- If you experience a panic attack, remember it is NOT life-threatening. Say to yourself:
- 'This anxiety won't hurt me, even if it doesn't feel good'.

## Behaviour Scale

- The Fabic Behavioural Scale is a visual chart to help change unwanted behaviours that are caused by anxiety. The scale uses faces and colours to help show how you react and feel as you anxiety levels increase. It teaches you appropriate behaviours to manage stress and anxiety. Visit: [fabic.com.au/products/fabic-3-step-process-behaviour-change](http://fabic.com.au/products/fabic-3-step-process-behaviour-change)

## Caring for yourself

- Aim for at least 30 minutes exercise every day (for example, brisk walking, bike riding or gym).
- Avoid high-caffeine foods such as coffee and chocolate.
- Aim to do something you enjoy at least once every day (for example, listening to music, reading a book).

## When to get additional help

- If you are persistently experiencing high levels of stress or anxiety, or you feel depressed, make an appointment with your GP, a student counsellor or a psychologist.

**Who can help?**

- Student counsellors.
- GP.
- Psychologist.

**Checklist**

Tick each of these when you have completed the activity:

- I have identified at least 2 stress reduction techniques to use.
- I regularly practise stress reduction techniques.
- I know where to get additional assistance if I am feeling highly stressed or anxious, or experiencing panic attacks.





This booklet and other resources are available at:

[www.adcet.edu.au/autism-transition](http://www.adcet.edu.au/autism-transition)

[www.ndcotas.com.au](http://www.ndcotas.com.au)