CDL HUB
Career Development Learning Hub

Supporting tertiary students with neurodivergent conditions
Tips for career development practitioners

What is neurodiversity, and who are neurodivergent students?

Neurodiversity is the natural variation of cognitive functioning in humans. Every person has a unique set of skills, abilities and way of seeing the world.

People whose cognitive functioning differs from society's standard of what is "typical" or "normal" can be described as having a neurodivergent condition.

Neurodivergent conditions include autism (autism spectrum disorder/ASD), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyspraxia (developmental coordination disorder) and dyscalculia. Students with these conditions may think, learn or behave differently.

This tip sheet summarises key adjustments you can implement in your practice, as well as career development resources specifically designed to support students with neurodivergent conditions.

Resource and workshop adjustments

Workshop delivery
- Invite participants to request adjustments via the workshop registration form. Provide examples of adjustments such as bringing a support person or requesting written task information.
- Where possible, choose a low-sensory environment (not too noisy or bright).
- Build in rest breaks and have a designated area or signal for participants who need to take a break.
- Provide a plain English explanation of activities in advance of the workshop.

- Explain how the workshop will run, present a visual schedule, and introduce facilitators.
- For group activities, try to keep group numbers small. Consider alternative engagement strategies such as a group map or Slido, writing down ideas on sticky notes, or providing materials with which to draw.
- Always use closed captioning options when showing videos.
- Send copies of slides and other resources immediately following the workshop.

Online or printed documents and resources

- For general accessibility, use sans-serif fonts such as Arial or Calibri. For printed documents, use 12pt and 120% line spacing.
- Use visuals to support written text. Visuals can help support the structure and sequencing of a document, as well as helping learners to understand the content.
- Colour contrasts can be helpful to some visual learners but avoid using colour as the only way to distinguish or present information. This may exclude students who experience colour blindness. Refer to the Full Fabric article for further information.
- Use plain English. Structure your documents to logically step readers through the content. To improve readability, avoid overloading written documents.
- Ensure consistency by using your software's inbuilt "styles" to pre-set the format of your body text and headings.
- Use the Microsoft Accessibility Checker to check your documents.

What career development resources can I refer to?

- The Image Project provides tools to help students with autism navigate the transition from university to employment. This includes information and advice on choosing a career, applying for work, arranging adjustments and settling into work.
- myWay Employability is an online profile builder to help students with autism identify strengths and work preferences, match to relevant education training and career information, and set goals to track progress.
- The MyPlus Students' Club offers careers advice for students with disability. Resources include information on sharing a disability with an employer, applying for jobs, requesting adjustments and standing out for the right reasons.
- The Neurodiversity Hub provides programs and materials to support students with neurodivergent conditions in developing life skills and becoming work ready.
- The LaunchPad website has been created by Autism Spectrum Australia to assist young people with autism with leaving school and transitioning to work or further study. The website includes practical strategies, personal stories and links to resources.

Interested in learning more?

Visit the following sites for more information:

- Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training. Reasonable adjustments: Disability specific. https://www.adcet.edu.au/students-with-disability/reasonable-adjustments-disability-specific
- Full Fabric. How to design visual learning resources for neurodiverse students. https://www.fullfabric.com/articles/how-to-design-visual-learning-resources-for-neurodiverse-students
- Job Accommodation Network. Autism spectrum. https://askjan.org/disabilities/Autism-Spectrum.cfm

- Walker, Nick. Neurodiversity: Some basic terms and definitions. https://neuroqueer.com/neurodiversity-terms-and-definitions/?fbclid=IwAR1hn-QWGiQuvaJE7jhjDbd8kZ2yu3moo3sRIl_Ebbxe9qyQE3PAjOL7zQ8