



The Capacity Problem in University Disability Support

Research, Roadmaps & Resources



A QUICK INTRODUCTION

♥ Our mission

Empowering every neurodivergent student to study in a way that finally works for them.



Spent years **deep in research**: gamification, temporal reward discounting, neurodesign, OT, CBT, sensory profiling, PDA profiles.



Built the first version of Kumo as a research tool, then ran **18-month formal trials** in 2024 with Canterbury University, Waikato University, and Curtin Student Guild.



Relunched 2025 this presentation is the distillation of everything those trials and that research revealed.



TODAY, WE'LL COVER THREE THINGS TOGETHER

1



WHAT WE'RE SEEING
IN THE RESEARCH

2



THE PATTERNS
CAUSING THE SYSTEM
TO STRUGGLE

3



WHAT A PRACTICAL
PATH FORWARD
LOOKS LIKE



MARKET OVERVIEW: **DISABILITY SERVICES**

53%



of Gen Z
identify as
neurodivergent

26.7%



increase in **ADHD**
diagnosis rates since
2019

1 in **5**



people are
neurodivergent



Neurodivergent
students have actually
had the **highest**
increase in tertiary
education enrolments
than any other cohort.



Disability services
registrations have
grown sharply
while staffing and
budgets have not
kept pace.

WHAT ARE STUDENTS SAYING?



We conducted **hour long** user interviews with undergrad students registered with disability services around **Australia and New Zealand**



A follow-up survey was issued to 139 students and asked... what is your **biggest struggle when studying?**

“Every time I got back to my disability services department, I get a different advisor every time, then I have to catch them up all over again and I never feel like I get my **accommodation**”

“I don’t know what I need and then I just feel like I am wasting their time over someone who needs it more”

“I forget there is help until the last minute”

“The accommodations don’t really help me like I don’t actually need 10 extra minutes but I just take it cause that is all that is available”

“exams aren’t really my problem it is more daily assessments or study that make me fall behind and I don’t think there is help for that”

“My disability services can actually be really helpful but it’s just like... the support stops there? When I tell my course coordinator about my IEP they just don’t care?”

25.9%

said
FOCUS
is their main struggle.



15.8%

said
MOTIVATION
is their main struggle.



18%

said
ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS
is their main struggle.



41%

said
“ALL OF IT,” COMPLETE EXECUT DYSFUNCTION.”



What the trials showed us: the advisor reality



Advisors are doing the work of many overstretched, under-resourced, often working from legacy systems



No higher-level view of the cohort — always responding, never getting ahead



Tight and inconsistent budgets across institutions



Austerity conditions in many universities mean any “Nice to have” tool doesn’t get funded

If neurodivergent students were a faculty... they would be the biggest one on campus



The Three Barriers



Functional & Navigational Barriers



Difficulty finding, understanding and navigating support.



Attitudinal Barriers



Bias, misconceptions and low understanding of disability.



Structural & Systemic Barriers



Policies, processes and resourcing that create systemic obstacles.

Functional & Navigational

Need support but
overwhelmed



Try to navigate
complex systems



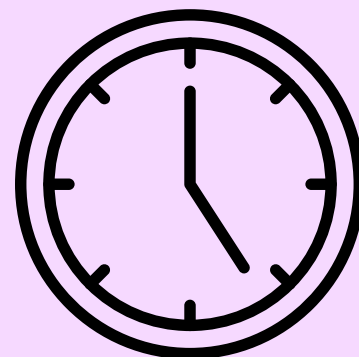
Wait, follow up,
fall further
behind



Finally receive
support



TIME



The Time-Lapse of Support

Support doesn't arrive in the time of need. Academic momentum declines while the student navigates these systems.

Attitudinal Barrier

Uncertainty is widespread.

Different understandings of accommodations, inclusive teaching, and UDL.



The landscape is evolving fast.



Language is changing



Expectations are changing



Student needs are more visible and diverse



New research emerges constantly

Good intentions, real fear.

Staff want to be supportive but worry about:



Saying the wrong thing



Using the wrong terminology



Making assumptions



Offending someone



Advocacy fatigue is real.

Students often repeat, explain and justify their needs... all while managing university.

Staff hesitation can be experienced by students as **dismissal, lack of understanding, or lack of support.**

Structural Barriers



Overcoming them means building **flexibility** into the system itself, so support doesn't depend on a student's ability to navigate red tape.

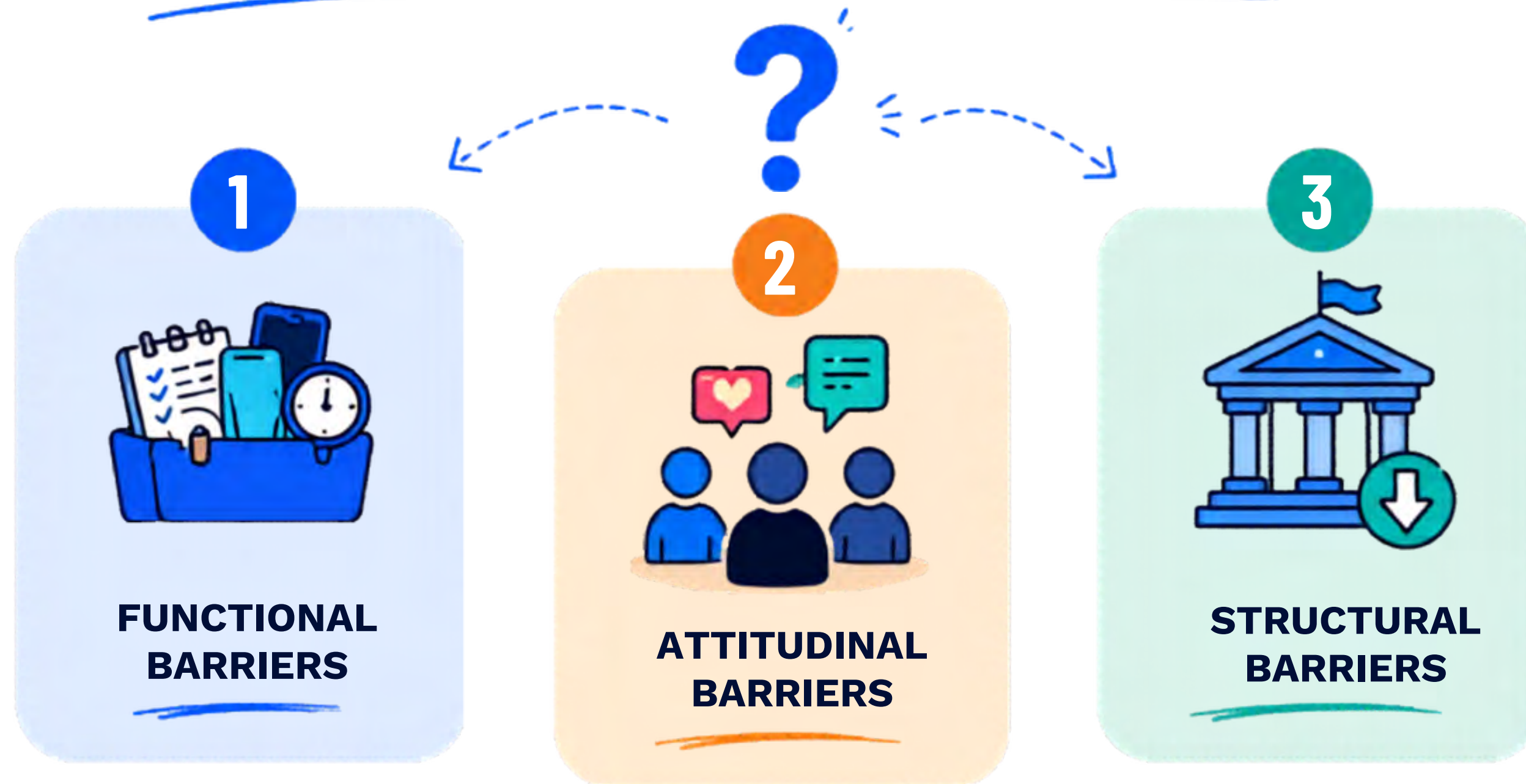


Structural barriers aren't about individual understanding... they're built into policy, process, and administrative design.

An outdated system



HOW DO WE PRIORITISE THESE THREE BARRIERS?



How do you overcome these barriers?

...

Create **Visibility**



Visibility for **students**
into their own needs
and brains
(psychoeducation).



Visibility for **academic staff**
into the challenges
students are experiencing.



Visibility for **institutions**
into how support can
be delivered more
effectively and at
greater scale.



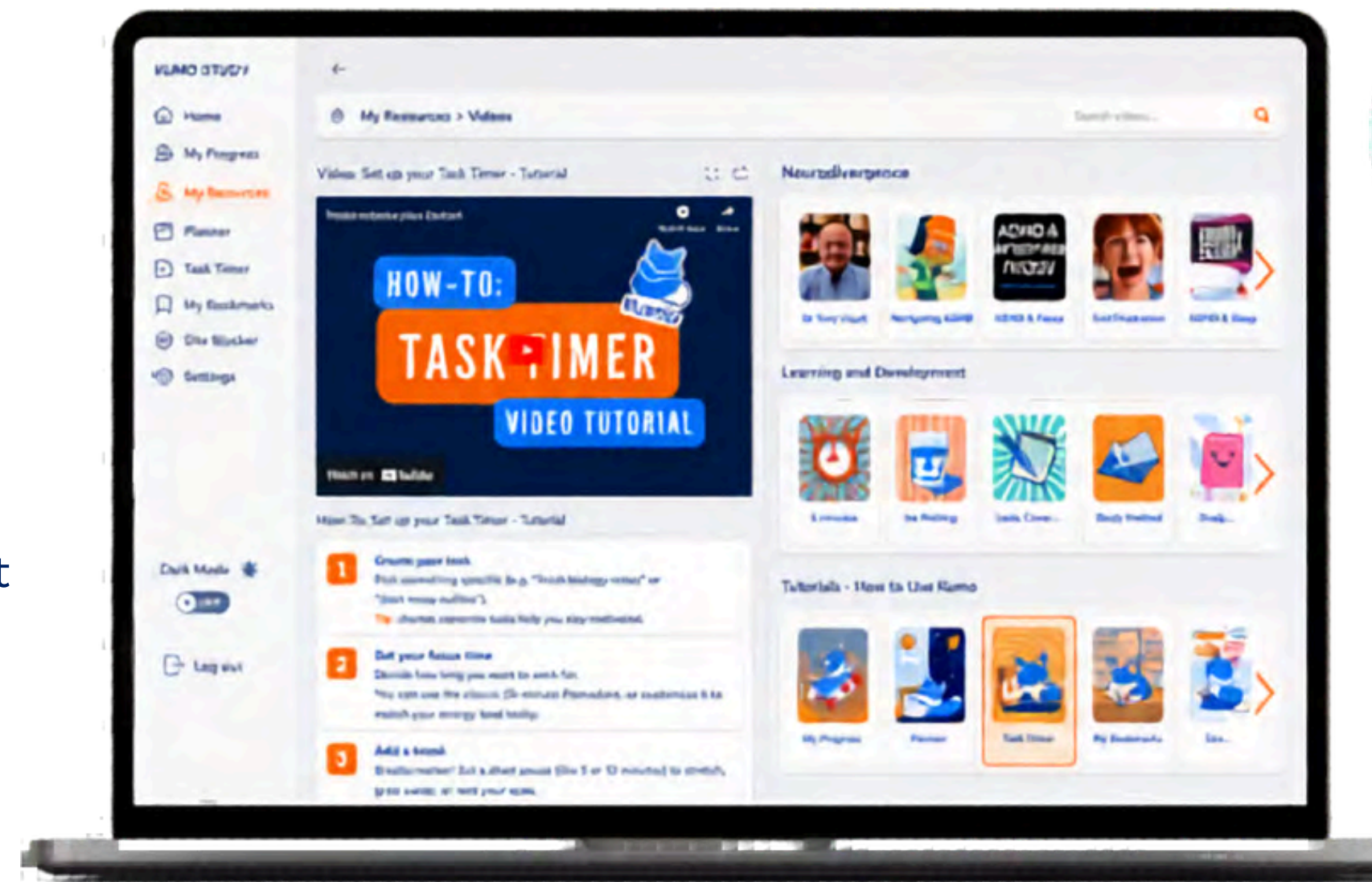
Barrier 1: Building Visibility through Psychoeducation

The problem was never wanting to, it was translating want into action.
Psychoeducation gives students the map to close that gap themselves.



Understand yourself

- Sensory Profile Quiz
- Learning Preference Quiz
- Motivation Style Assessment
- Mood Tracker
- Habit Tracker



Digitise executive functioning

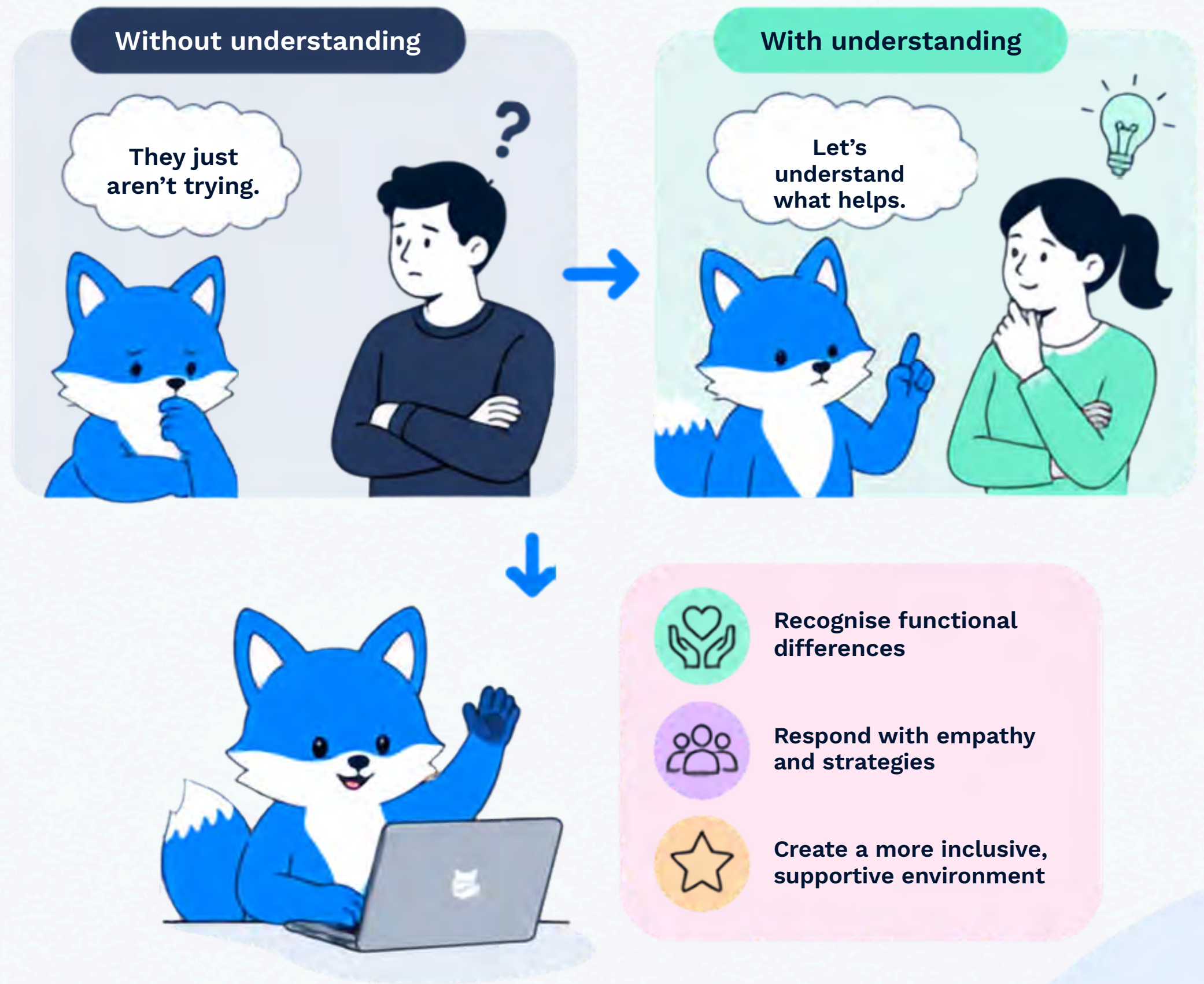
- Visual Planners
- Focus Timers
- Site Blocking
- Progress Tracking

Barrier 2: Building Visibility through

Learning and Development

Building understanding of neurodivergence among academic staff needs to become a priority.

Learning and development builds that understanding, helping staff recognise functional differences instead of misreading them as unwillingness, so they can meet students where they're at.



Barrier 3: Building Visibility through

Longitudinal Data



Structures designed for individual case-by-case support don't scale

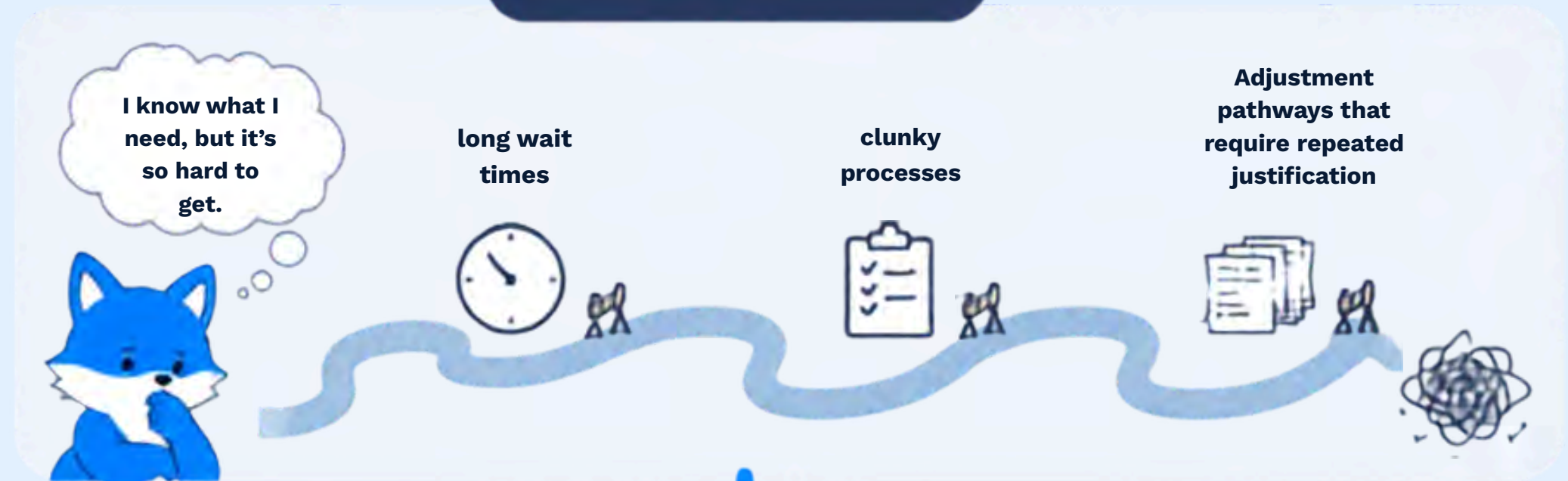


as student numbers grow, reactive models break down.



Building visibility through data allows institutions to identify need earlier and make support proactive rather than reactive.

A system with barriers



A system built for scale



The Capacity Problem



Disability services face a capacity problem, **demand is outpacing resourcing**, and the current '**come to us**' model relies on students self-identifying and initiating contact, often only once they're already struggling.



Without longitudinal data on student need over time, support stays **reactive by design**.



Building this visibility is what enables a shift to **proactive support**, catching need early, rather than waiting for a student to reach crisis point and find their own way in.



About Kumo Study



All-in-one



Externalised support



Affordable at scale



Psychoeducation-backed



The Advisor Hub

Better profiles,

built with technology.



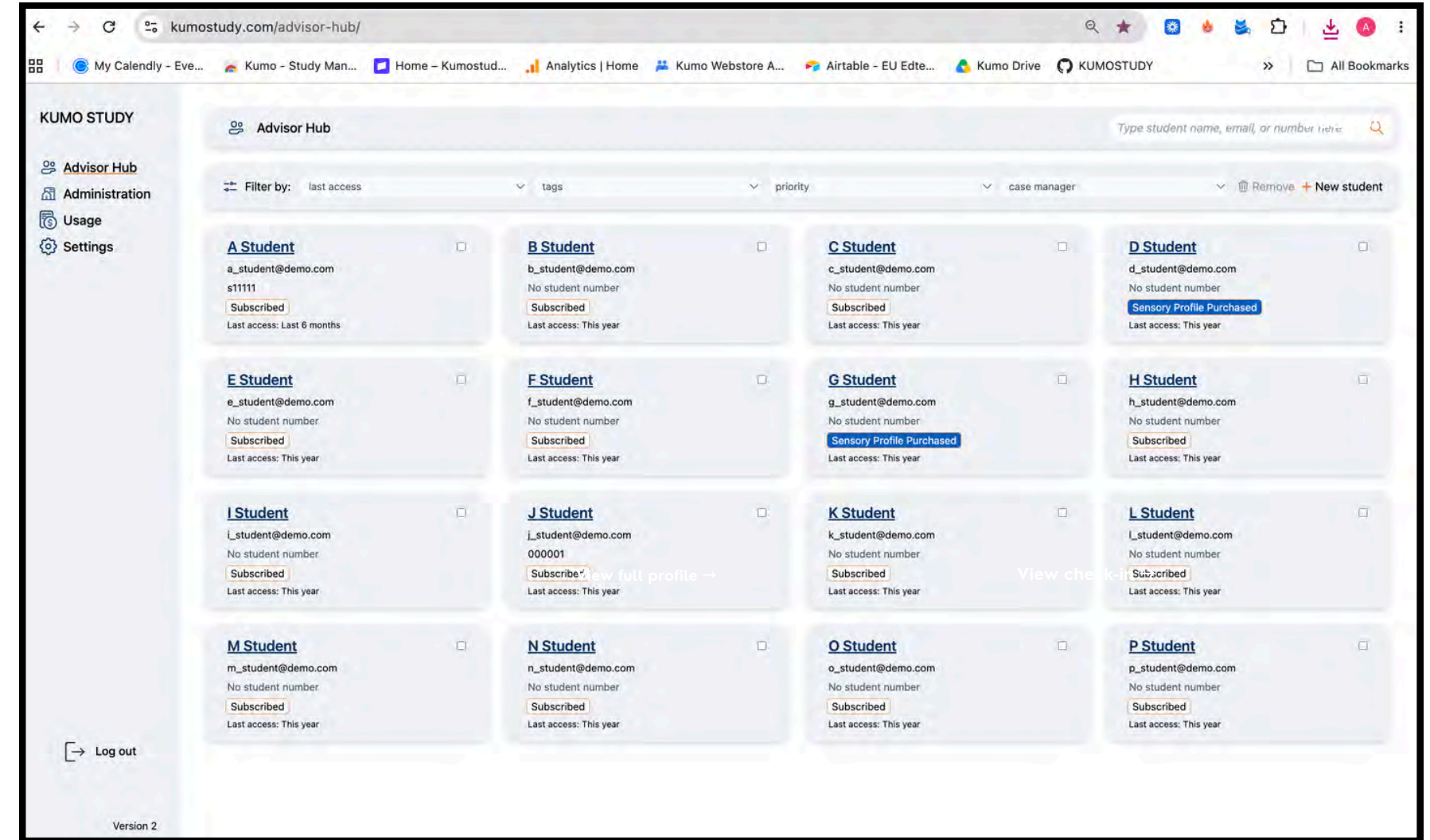
Accommodations, sensory profile, habits, all in one place



Mid-sem check-ins built into the workflow



Suggested assistive tech based on real data



White-labelled L&D resources for staff, under your brand



Shared visibility between advisors, no gaps



The Customer Advisory Board

Building Kumo's future, together.



Genuine co-design



Input sessions & early access



Real influence for equity

“

The people who understand this problem best are the ones living it every day.

Real equity in shaping the tools your students rely on

”



thank you



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