

**Good Practice Guide:**  
**Inclusive Teaching for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Asperger's Syndrome)**

**Why make your teaching more inclusive, why make reasonable adjustments?**

- The School's Strategic Objectives<sup>1</sup> encourage departments to "...lead in the provision of excellent disciplinary and interdisciplinary education", (ensure) that "...graduates are well informed, critical, analytically sophisticated and globally employable", and (ensure) that "...students and staff interact to build a dynamic learning community that reflects the School's distinctive identity."
- Reflecting on inclusion and reasonable adjustments in your teaching provides an opportunity to refresh your practice ensuring it is accessible to students with diverse study experiences as well as disabilities.
- Meet the needs and requirement of diverse student body including disabled students ensuring the School meets its legal 'anticipatory' duty to students under the 'Equality Act (2010)
- "... in the midst of rapid change in higher education, a crucial priority is to ensure that our students have the benefit of great teaching and a rewarding educational experience." Dame Minouche Shafik.

**Autism Spectrum Disorder [ASD] (Asperger's Syndrome)**

People diagnosed with ASD will have difficulty in; i) social communication, ii) social interaction iii) social imagination. The term Asperger's Syndrome<sup>2</sup> is used to refer to the type of autism which has implications for social communication but does not affect intelligence or language development. ASD is characterised by inflexible thinking, rigid behavioural patterns, and a lack of social and communication skills. Individuals with ASD can find unexpected changes extremely stressful due to their strong adherence to rituals and routines. How ASD impacts on an individual and the strengths it provides differ on a person by person basis.

**Impact on Study**

- Students with ASD have often developed very good coping strategies but transition to University is likely to pose particular challenges. These may include struggling to make friends, relate to others, or express and regulate emotions.
- Students with ASD may find it hard to communicate ideas effectively or know when/how to assert their opinion or ask questions during lectures, classes and small group tutorials, leading them to interrupt frequently, talk over others, or not speak at all.
- Students with ASD may have difficulty with the use of metaphor, simile and sarcasm and may interpret communication literally.

**Who can I work with to help my teaching and what resources are available to me?**

- Your Department's dedicated Teaching and Learning Centre departmental adviser listed at <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Teaching-and-Learning-Centre/Support-for-LSE-Departments/Support-for-LSE-departments>
- Make use of the 'Assessment Toolkit' at <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Teaching-and-Learning-Centre/Assessment-Toolkit/LSE-Assessment-Toolkit>
- To discuss **My Adjustments**, seek advice on reasonable adjustments and **Central Exam Adjustments** contact the Disability and Wellbeing Service <https://info.lse.ac.uk/current-students/student-services/disability-and-wellbeing-service>

**FOR EXAMPLES OF REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND INCLUSIVE TEACHING EXAMPLES SEE OVER**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lse.ac.uk/about-lse/Image-assets/PDF/Education-Strategy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Its use was superseded in 2013 in professional diagnostic circles in favour of Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

### **Inclusive Teaching examples**

- Structure contact hours strongly, opening with an outline, flagging changes in topic, offering recaps and concluding with major points. This helps students follow the logic of the session, and if their concentration slips they can more easily resume their engagement.
- Maximise consistency for contact hours where you can; use a similar structure each session, and explain changes (such as the presence of observers).
- Communicate deadlines well in advance, and clearly describe academic tasks.
- Provide clear written feedback even when a face-to-face feedback discussion takes place. Students can thus avoid having to record feedback while discussing it and can have a helpful point of reference for later.
- Proactively manage group discussions; offer clear tasks (you could specify student roles) and outcomes. This can help students understand when and why to make a contribution.
- Offer ways for students to contribute during contact hours other than by speaking spontaneously (e.g. try turn-taking, or collect questions on Post It notes). Online discussion may be more productive than face-to-face.
- Providing resources in different media (audio, graphics, video) may be useful (although background music in video can be a distraction).
- Timetable should take account of fluctuating impacts throughout the academic year and enable students to access support.
- Avoid penalising or making judgements because of disability related absences.

**‘inclusive learning and teaching recognises all student’s entitlement to a learning experience that respects diversity, enables participation, removes barriers and anticipates and considers a variety of learning needs and preferences’ [HEA]**

### **Reasonable Adjustment examples**

- Provision of reading lists and lecture/teaching materials (includes handouts, notes, slides, and articles for discussion) in advance to allow the student adequate time to prepare in light of their disability.
- Reserved seating in lectures.
- Permission to record lectures or take notes on a computer, and access to lecture capture.
- Additional preparation and support for group work so that the social interactions involved do not overwhelm the learning activities involved in the task.
- Library adjustments including extended loans.
- Give clear information in advance about field work, study abroad and proactively offer named staff to help with ensuring access.
- Examination adjustments: such as extra time, use of a computer, or rest breaks and consideration for quiet or environments that prevent sensory overload..
- Proactively ensuring students are aware of Office Hours provision and Disability and Wellbeing Service so as to keep relevant colleagues informed of issues (if any) and to enable difficulties to be addressed prior to reaching a crisis.
- Signpost to the Disability and Wellbeing Service for mentoring and study skills support - to develop good planning, efficient and appropriate study strategies and coping strategies.