SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH AN
AUTISM SPECTRUM
DISORDER

Student Wellbeing Centre

UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterised by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviours, speech and nonverbal communication.

Suggested Strategies (General)

• Provide as much **predictability and reliability** as possible, for example detailed course information and requirements, schedules and assessment expectations.

• Be aware of the **anxiety created by sudden changes and altered routines.** Where possible, notify students clearly and in advance of any expected changes and what alternative arrangements have been put in place.

• Be as explicit, unambiguous and clear as possible and explain intention if this has been misunderstood.

• **Mediate** where appropriate **in group situations** but ensure you **keep confidentiality** regarding their diagnosis, unless the student has given you permission to share information with the class.

• **Be intolerant** of **undermining comments** or behaviour **from other students or staff** - without drawing attention to the particular individual concerned.
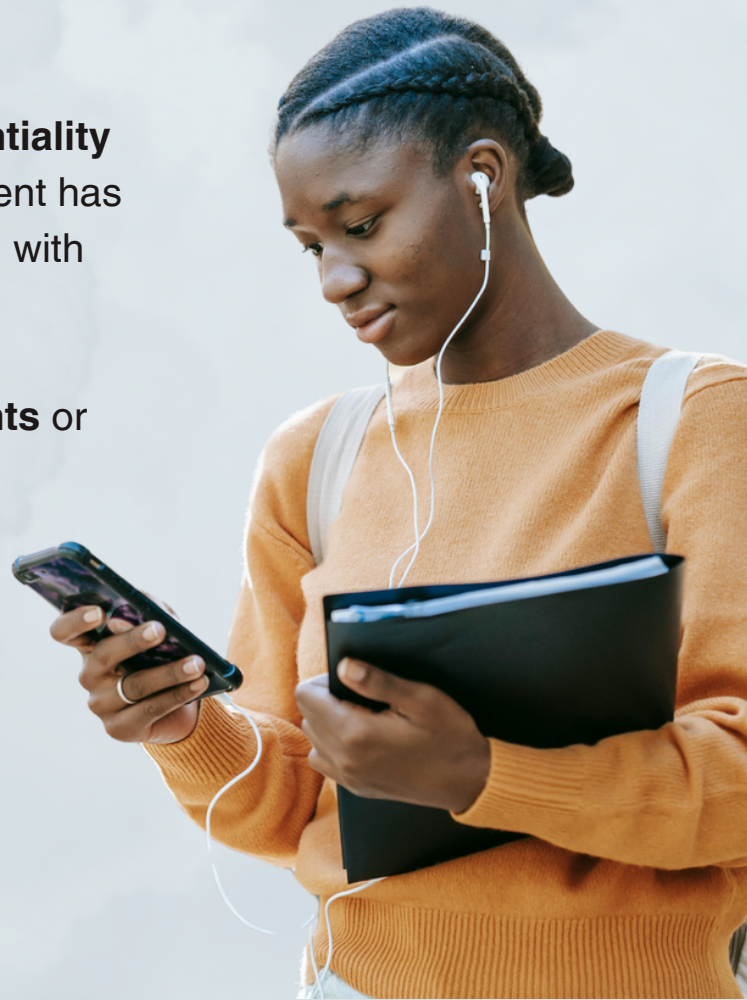
Suggested Strategies (Teaching)

• **Discuss with the student** any teaching strategies that have proved helpful in past learning situations to ensure support is provided in a way that suits their needs.

• **Speak in a clear and consistent way** and allow time to process what has been said. Avoid ambiguity and give explicit instructions and directions.

• **Explain at the beginning of the lecture** what the structure and main points will be; providing a written summary in advance if possible.

• **Summarise regularly** and build in regular stopping points to check understanding.

• **Say if something specific should be noted.** Highlight key points, topic changes and new vocabulary and concepts.

• **Be aware of potential difficulties** with interpreting verbal and non-verbal language such as gestures or tone of voice and potential difficulty fully understanding some jokes or irony.

• **Make it clear** when it is appropriate to ask a question or make a contribution to the class discussion.

• **Allow an open exit policy** so that students can leave the lecture if they feel stressed and return when they have recovered.

• **Be aware of potential sensory sensitivity** for some students and the increased anxiety this may cause. For example, an autistic student may find background sounds, which other people are able to ignore, unbearably loud and distracting.

• **Use the full accessibility features** of Microsoft where necessary to aid learning.

• **Where possible share files** rather than using the screen sharing function as sharing files is accessible to screen readers

Assistive technology

Students with ASD may also be able to access assistive technology available on all University networked PC's, such as:

- **TextHelp:** Text to speech software (shows as 'Read and Write 10')
- **Inspiration:** Easy planning software

(These programmes can be found on University computers in: Start > Programmes)

Library disability support

Some assistive technology may be available for students to loan, (such as Digital Recorder) if they are awaiting support through Disabled Students' Allowance, please encourage the student to speak to the Student Wellbeing team if they have any questions.

Helpful resources

The Student Wellbeing Centre has created a number of useful resources including workshops, podcasts, and self-help guides. These are an excellent tool to recommend to your students.

Click here to go to our resources web page

Useful contacts for students

Student Wellbeing Centre
01522 886400
studentwellbeing@lincoln.ac.uk

Student Support and Advice
01522 837080
studentsupport@lincoln.ac.uk

International College
01522 886102
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University Library
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