Guidance for Higher Education Institutes

- Compassionate pedagogy
- Consider the hidden curriculum i.e. behaviour, social expectations
- Avoid pathology-based language such as mild/severe, low/high functioning
- Use the first person i.e. is autistic
- Neurodiversity should be seen as a strength not a weakness
- Clarity of terminology
- Avoid sarcasm, euphemisms or implied messages
- Consider font and font size
- Use exemplars
- Sensory friendly, or sensory adaptive environments
- Consider previous experience in education
- Ensure assessments are neurodiverse friendly

References

Walker, N. (2024) Neuroqueer: The writings of DR. Nick Walker. [Online] Available from: https://neuroqueer.com/neurodiversity-terms-and-definitions/.[Accessed 27 September 2024].

Word Bank

Disability Inclusion at University and Beyond

Jayde Lane, Lecturer, University of Bolton.

Other acceptable words

- **Accommodations** or **reasonable adjustments**
- **ADHD** acronym or in full
- **Autistic** rather than person with autism
- **Autism** not ASD, people who are autistic don't see it as a disorder
- **Characteristics/traits** not symptoms
- **Co-existing** or **co-occurring** not co-morbidity
- **Differences** not deficits
- **Disability**
- **Lived experience**
- **Support or adjustments**
- **Spectrum**

NOTE: Always ask the individual how they wish to identity and what support, if any, they need.

About this resource

Jayde Lane, a passionate advocate for inclusivity at the University of Bolton, began working on a project to create a word bank that supports neurodivergent students. While researching, Jayde found numerous resources on respectful language for discussing neurodiversity. However, she noticed a gap - there was very little guidance on specific academic terms that are neurodivergent-friendly. Most of the available resources focused instead on general ways to make higher education more accessible and inclusive for neurodivergent students.

As part of the LEAP Online project to raise awareness on Disability Inclusion, Jayde aims to fill this gap, providing suitable language to support students that are autistic at Bolton and beyond.

Jayde Lane

Neurodiversity

Work by Walker (2024) originally penned in 2014, described the following acceptable neurodiversity basic terms:

Neurodiversity: a biological fact, describes the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning.

Neurodivergent: one person with one neurodiverse condition.

Neurodiverse: a group of people, or one person with more than one neurodiverse condition.

Neurotypical: opposite of neurodiverse.

Neurodiversity includes but is not exclusive to the following:

- ADD/ADHD
- Autism
- Brain injury
- Development co-ordination disorder
- Developmental language disorder
- Discalculia
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Epilepsy
- OCD
- Tourettes
- Trisomy 21

Neurodivergent students prefer first person, i.e. the student is autistic NOT the student has autism.

Neurodiversity has neither positive or negative connotations and it should not be used as a euphemism, if someone is autistic, say they are autistic. Therefore, it is advisable that when applicable, the condition name is used.

Neurodiversity overlaps but is not synonymous with disability, the neurodiversity paradigm is moving away from the medical model and more towards support and nurture.