Tips for teaching neurodivergent students

Queen Mary Academy

Disability and Dyslexia Service

Queen Mary
University of London

Before teaching: preparing for teaching
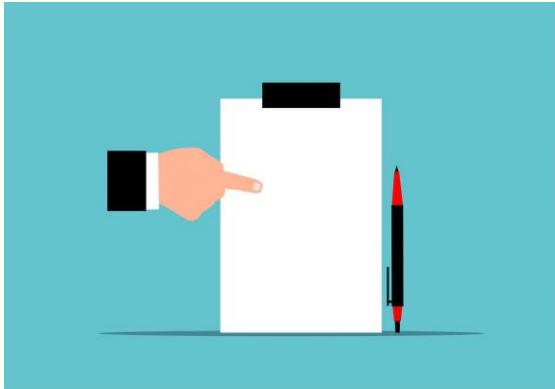
## Formatting learning materials

- Use plain, evenly spaced fonts such as Arial, Verdana, Tahoma, Century Gothic or Trebuchet

- Use font size 12 or 14 for printed materials

- Avoid underlining and italics

- Use cream or soft pastel colours for backgrounds to resources and lecture slides

- Use visuals such as images, charts and diagrams where possible

- Save digital materials - readings, lectures slides, handouts - in a text file such as a Word Document, Rich Text Format (RTF) or an accessible PDF so they can be read by screen readers

Activity design

- When setting a reflective task (written or oral), give students the option of producing a factual account and ask them reflective questions; alternatively, ask for a visual representation of the reflective account, such as a mind map, timeline or other form of representation

- Consider a range of different roles students can undertake within group activities

- Prepare an alternative task for all students (i.e. if Learning Outcomes can still be met). This will not single anyone out

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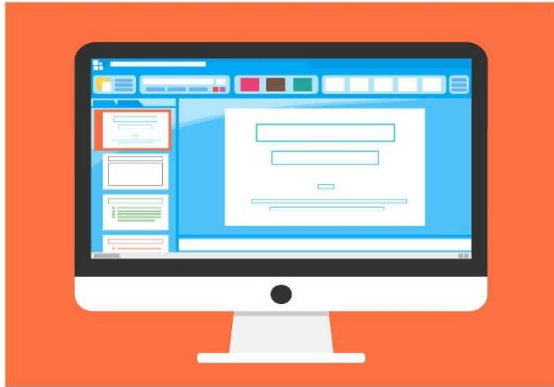
QM Plus

- Make your syllabus and other course materials available on QMPlus as early as possible before the start of the semester, including details on assessments and group work

- Ensure that assessment guidelines and deadlines are in a clearly signed place i.e. under the assessment tab or at the top of the module home page

- Include visuals, audio and video on pages

- Add captions to videos

- Reading lists - outline how long readings should take (be generous) and highlight essential readings clearly
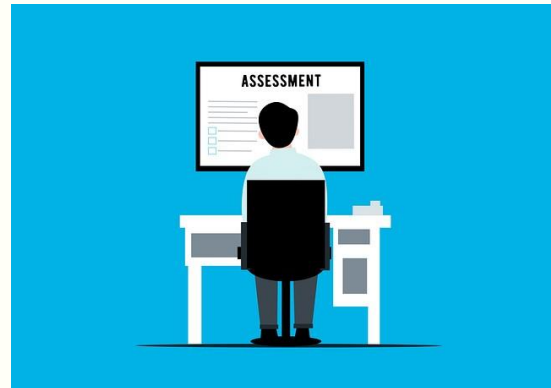
Assessment design

- Produce clear assignment briefs, with submission dates and times and example mark schemes

- Record a video on assessment criteria

- Consider incorporating assignment preparation and feedback sessions

Teaching environment

- Be aware of sensory differences and consider checking your teaching room for things that could cause issues e.g. fluorescent lights in the room

During teaching: delivering teaching

Introductory sessions

- As an alternative to ice breakers, consider an activity where students explore their own preferences for learning and difference amongst their peers, to reduce anxiety

- Explain how sessions will generally be delivered (i.e. a mixture of tutor-led sections with group work / discussion / questions)

- Let learners know what to expect

- Give clear instructions and check regularly during term


General tips

- At the start of a session, run through learning outcomes, when questions should be asked and what tasks are going to be undertaken

- Allow additional time between topic and task transitions

- Ensure task instructions are clear, simple and direct

- Have questions/instructions for tasks written down as well as delivered verbally so that the student does not have too much information to process at once

- Allow extra time to give a verbal answer

- Questions/discussions - set up anonymous ways in which people can feedback ideas to encourage more anxious students to engage (i.e. polls on Mentimeter)

- Encourage short breaks

- Normalise or encourage calming activities such as stimming

After teaching: follow-up and feedback

Follow-up

- Follow up any classroom announcements about something new in an email or online announcement

- Consider posting a brief summary of the course or discussion on QMPlus, to re-affirm Learning Outcomes, either written or audio. You could consider setting this as an activity to be shared amongst students
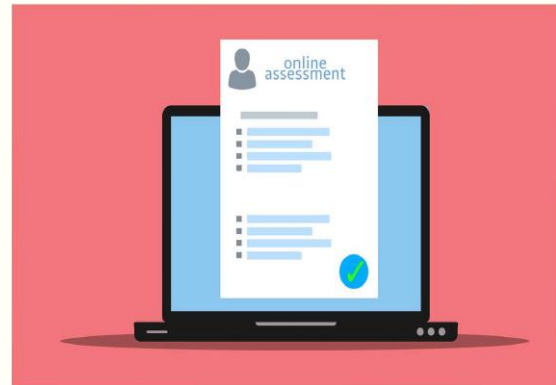
Assessment feedback

- Provide concrete examples and avoid generalising

- Avoid ambiguous language

- Provide constructive criticisms and give an example of how something could be improved in future

- Offer choices for how students demonstrate learning

- Lower the stakes by doing formative assessments

Further information

Advice for Teaching Students on the Autism Spectrum

This page provides advice for educators on how to support students on the Autism Spectrum

Further Guidance on Inclusive Practice from DDS

This page provides guidance on policy for inclusive teaching and practical advice on creating an inclusive learning environment from the Disability and Dyslexia Service

Inclusive Curriculum

A guide to the principles of Queen Mary's inclusive curriculum framework and related case studies

Queen Mary Assessment Toolkit

This guide aims to support educators to design innovative, inclusive and authentic assessments which support student learning

Queen Mary Academy CPD courses

This page provides access to a range of workshops on inclusive education for QM educators

Suggested Inclusivity Statement

We care about your learning experience and success on this course. Everybody learns in a different way, at their own pace. Respect other people's ways of doing things. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning, let us know as soon as possible how we can help.