1. **Students with Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC), specific learning difficulties and mental health conditions**

- Be aware that students with autism spectrum conditions, specific learning difficulties and mental health difficulties can be affected in a range of ways by their disabilities and with differing degrees of impact. If you are unsure what the student needs ask them.
- Offer the student a choice of on-line learning by audio only, or by audio with video (and the addition of text via the chat function). Please be aware that audio with video may be highly anxiety provoking for some students with ASC in particular and so audio (with supplementary text) only may be preferred.
- Some students with ASC may find it easier to communicate if they can’t see the supervisor’s face and knowing that the supervisor cannot see theirs. However, other students with ASC prefer to see the person they are talking with as that helps them to understand the conversation better. Provide these as options for the student to make their own choice.
- Provide a way for the student to end the call if they are feeling uncomfortable.
- Conduct the on-line learning and teaching in a quiet environment; otherwise the student can be distracted by trying to work out if background noises are someone speaking (especially if it is audio only). Be aware that for some students in the current circumstances may struggle to find a suitable location.
- Please be aware that answering on the spot can be challenging as it can place a burden on the working memory, sequencing, speed of processing and concentration of a student with SpLD, ASC or mental health conditions. Provide adequate time for the student to assimilate/process questions and make notes/sequence ideas before being required to respond to a question.
- Students with SpLD may also experience some difficulties with word retrieval and so supervisors should be mindful that the student may need time to mentally search for the word and allowances should be made if it cannot be instantly recollected.
- To help relieve the burden on working memory and the requirement to understanding non-verbal communication (including inference), please use straightforward and unambiguous phrasing where possible and avoid multiple parts to questions, insofar as possible. These additional parts could be asked as separate questions. Repetition may be necessary.
- Provide questions in written as well as verbal form.
- The student may find it helpful to use the live captioning function.
- Where students have signed the recording agreement, please allow them to record.
- Please recognise that the answers to questions given by students with ASC, SpLD or mental health conditions may not appear to be as well organised as the answers of non-disabled students.
- Supervisors should indicate to the student when they have answered the question/responded to the required extent.
- Be aware that students with ASC may not have identified the gist of a question, and may instead focus on an aspect of detail in their response.
- Anxiety may be heightened due to the on-line nature of teaching and learning as anxiety (including social anxiety) can be aggravated by stress. Please look out for signs of heightened anxiety and offer a break if the student shows increasing levels of anxiety during a supervision. If necessary, stop the supervision to avoid further deterioration in wellbeing.
- Allow the student to read back/clarify any questions, if necessary, to ensure that all the points that were being raised have been noted. The student then, as needed, should be allowed to make some notes on the answers, as opposed to having to think instantly ‘on the spot’.
- Supervisors should be made aware of any student who has a diagnosis of SpLD, ASC and/or a mental health condition and the negative impact on this can have on processing incoming information at speed.
2. Students with physical and sensory impairments and long-term health conditions

- Be aware that disabled students with hearing, visual, physical impairments and with long term health conditions can be affected in a range of ways and with differing degrees of impact. If you are unsure what the student needs, ask them.
- Ensure that lighting is good and highlights the face of the supervisor/participants.
- Ensure the picture quality is as high as possible so that the image is clear.
- Ensure that the audio quality is of a standard that the student is able to hear all participants clearly. Test this at the start of the session.
- Make sure there are no shadows falling onto the supervisor’s/students faces as this will make it difficult for the student to lip read or pick up information from facial expressions.
- Keep the background lighting even and not too bright as this will throw the participants face into silhouette, making it difficult for students who rely on lip reading or picking up information from facial expressions.
- Keep hands and fingers away from the face and look directly into the camera so that the face can be seen clearly.
- Speak clearly, check that the student can hear at intervals. Be prepared to repeat words or sentences and let the student know this is acceptable.
- Use a plain background behind the supervisor (or use the blur my background function, in Teams, for example) so there are fewer visual distractions.
- Keep all background noise to an absolute minimum. Background noise is distracting and can be picked up by hearing aids/ radio aids at the same volume as speech. It is difficult to ‘cancel out’ background noise, when using such devices.
- Make sure the doors and windows are shut to reduce external noise.
- Be aware that there is likely to be ‘echo’ sounds if teaching place in a room with no carpet/curtains/soft furnishings.
- If there are more than two people in any supervision, ensure that only one person is speaking at any one time and explain/verbally indicate when another person is due to speak. For example, ‘I will now hand over to X’.
- Participants can indicate they wish to speak by indicating using the chat function.
- Or, if someone wishes to speak when others are talking, indicate this by raising a hand (but be aware that some people cannot raise their hands). This will help the student to ‘place’ the person who is speaking.
- Where possible, wear plain clothes with no patterns as this will be distracting to the student if they are to concentrate on hearing and lip reading, or need to focus on the speaker’s face or audio.
- Check if live captioning is available (this is available in Teams, but not all other options) and activate this if the student would find this helpful.
- Be aware that if students are required to refer to any textual information, they may be required to access screen reading software such as Jaws or NVDA. It will be useful for students to have been sent any materials in advance in an accessible format.
- For most students with visual impairments the most accessible documents are Word documents which have been set up with proper headings, titles and tables.
- Be aware that the student may not be able to follow non-verbal clues/facial expressions.
- Ensure there is good contrast between the participants and the background for e.g. plain white background and plain dark colour clothes to aid visual clarity.
- Where students have signed the recording agreement, please allow them to record.
- Be aware that some disabled students will have conditions which lead to fatigue and they may require rest periods.
- Be aware that some disabled students may be using ergonomic equipment and assistive technology to access their learning and be mindful that this may lead to delays in responses.

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