

**Guidelines for staff working with students with attention deficit disorders**

Students with Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (AD(H)D) are often some of the brightest students at university, yet can experience a variety of barriers affecting their progression in education.

The difficulties that students with AD(H)D can experience overlap with many of the other more familiar ‘specific learning difficulties’ (i.e. dyslexia, dyspraxia and also autistic spectrum conditions).

In particular students with AD(H)D are likely to experience:

* A short attention span or being easily distracted
* Restlessness, fidgeting, edginess or over activity
* Impulsiveness
* Concentration issues, where they can either ‘hyper focus’ on a task to the point that it can be hard to move on, or struggle to concentrate at all at other times
* Organisational difficulties, affecting time management and making it much harder to be in the right place at the appointed time and with the relevant materials
* Making careless mistakes
* Appearing forgetful or losing things
* Being unable to settle or stick to tasks that are tedious and time consuming
* Difficulties listening to instructions and carrying them out
* Procrastination and starting new tasks before completing others.

However, AD(H)D is a highly individual condition or spectrum. Therefore, supports need to be carefully coordinated.

Some additional issues which may affect students with AD(H)D include:

* Being unable to sit still for long periods
* Talking over others or finishing others’ sentences
* Acting without thinking – risk taking
* Overcoming difficulties takes excessive effort – at the expense of other things and can cause fatigue
* Interrupting conversations
* Lack of attention to detail – which can impact on proof reading of work
* Inability to focus or prioritise
* Mood swings, irritability and can have a quick temper – low tolerance of frustration
* Low self esteem
* Difficulties dealing with stress/heightened anxiety/depression
* Impatience
* Racing thoughts and ceaseless mental activity – resulting in exhaustion
* Negative assumptions and expectations about ability to cope or succeed.

All of the above can have a significant impact on educational achievement and social interaction

**Some of the positive features of ADHD may be:**

* Sense of self- efficacy and underlying belief in their potential
* Resilience – if at first you don’t succeed – try and try again - motivating them to seek new opportunities and achievement
* Can be entrepreneurs, if can define own structures and boundaries
* Creative
* Arty
* Witty and entertaining
* Can establish an area of expertise/excellence by drawing on specialised skills

Some companies actively seek out employees with AD(H)D due to the positives associated with AD(H)D behaviours

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact the Disability and Learning Support Service disability.service@ed.ac.uk.

**August 2024**