

Student Disability Service



Guidelines for 'Named Contacts' for students with Attention Deficit Disorders

The School is asked to name a suitable person from the School to take on this role. This could be the personal tutor, a student support officer or another person in the School who is in a position to advise the student on academic matters, and to check in regularly with the student to discuss progress on the course and ensure the student is on track.

Please contact the Student Disability Service (SDS) with the name of the named contact as soon as a person in the School has been allocated to the role. This is vital, as we need to know the name of the named contact, as we may need to contact them. This will then be recorded in the student's file. Please email: disability.service@ed.ac.uk

Student Disability Service
The University of Edinburgh
Third Floor, The Main Library Building
George Square
Edinburgh
EH8 9LJ
Tel: 0131 650 6828

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

The role of the “Named Contact”:

Role of the Named Contact	Why is this important?
To act as part of the team within the institution, helping to keep the student on track with their studies.	Regular liaison with staff of the Student Disability Service will help the Named Contact manage any issues or concerns arising if they are uncertain of appropriate actions to take. Practical help with understanding of course requirements and university routines is vital.
To contact the student regularly– by email, or in person, weekly, or at least monthly, as agreed with the student.	Due to difficulties outlined above, students find it especially difficult to organise themselves and keep on track with their work. They may also not reveal that they are struggling until the end of the year. Therefore regular contact/support can be vital in helping to reduce anxiety and ensure that the student stays on track with their studies.
To listen to the student’s concerns non-judgementally and respond appropriately.	Students are aware of their difficulties and lack of organisation and planning their time. Offering reassurance or directing students to further supports can be vital.
Ascertain how a student might be managing coursework and deadlines and monitoring progress	Reminders of work due and dates for submission can greatly help to keep students ‘on track’.
To provide support reliably, as agreed	It is important to follow up actions within agreed timescales.
To give some assistance with organisational skills and reminders of deadlines	If the difficulties are thought to be significant, further study skills support can be arranged through the SDS to help the student improve their skills.
To act as a familiar point of contact to whom the student can turn regarding course related concerns.	This may mean clarifying questions regarding study expectations, wording of an assignment, management of group work, anxiety about fieldwork, practicalities regarding exam arrangements.
To liaise with other academic staff, as necessary	To help reduce sources of confusion and improve communication.
To manage personal boundaries and signpost the students to other sources of support, as required.	Staff should not feel overburdened by their interactions with students and further supports are available. The SDS advisors and the SDS website are useful sources of information in this regard.
To help monitor attendance and course work submissions during the year.	Students with AD(H)D may not demonstrate obvious signs of stress but changes in behaviour may be noted and further advice sought within the university.

In terms of personal qualities, ideally we suggest someone:

- who is non-judgemental in their attitude
- has an awareness of disability related issues, ideally AD(H)D, or is willing to learn more about it
- who is calm and patient, but can also be firm
- who is aware of managing boundaries and signposting students for other supports. The idea is NOT to overburden one individual unnecessarily, but to recommend other support as and when required. That said, a reduced mentoring load is often suggested as good practice to allow for the more regular contact and liaison work.

Is training required to be effective in this role?

- Being open minded and patient is just as important as awareness of AD(H)D
- The Student Disability Service advisors are happy to be contacted to discuss any concerns and offer guidance as required.
- Training can also be offered by the Student Disability Service. Please contact us if this is required.
- There is excellent information online e.g. <http://aadduk.org/symptoms-diagnosis-treatment/>

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact Gael Campbell on 0131 650 9163 or email: gael.campbell@ed.ac.uk

March 2015