



香港大學
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG



cedars
Centre of Development and Resources for Students
學生發展及資源中心

SUPPORTING TERTIARY STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER



SEN
SUPPORT

SUPPORTING TERTIARY STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER



What is ASD?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) encompasses a range of mild to severe deficits in social communication, information processing and behaviours. Students with ASD may have the following features:

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

- ▶ Difficulties in reciprocal social interaction (e.g. maintaining conversation, sharing of emotion, etc.)
- ▶ Difficulties in understanding non-verbal behaviours
- ▶ Poor understanding of subtle social rules and conventions across social contexts
- ▶ Difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships
- ▶ Anxious in or avoidant to social situations

INFORMATION PROCESSING

- ▶ Rigid thinking style (e.g. black-and-white or perfectionistic thinking)
- ▶ Longer processing time in comprehending abstract terms or concepts (e.g. moral, emotions)
- ▶ Longer time in understanding complex sentences (e.g. metaphors, double negatives)

BEHAVIOURS AND INTERESTS

- ▶ Insist on keeping a routine and reluctant to change their ways of doing things (e.g. strict sequence of answering questions)
- ▶ Spend extra time in attending to details
- ▶ Intensive focus on their interests
- ▶ Abnormal sensory sensitivity (e.g. hypersensitive or hyposensitive to noisy environment, physical contact, etc.) that may create distractions or cause anxieties

What support do students with ASD need in university life?

Given the above difficulties, reasonable accommodations and support may enhance their learning and adaptation in different aspects of university life, examples of which include:



LEARNING

- ▶ Elaborate complicated concepts with visual aids (e.g. diagrams)
- ▶ Early announcement of changes in class (e.g. lecture/ tutorial schedule)



ASSESSMENT

- ▶ Separate examination venue to reduce distractions and anxieties
- ▶ Extended time for assessments to accommodate the need for longer processing time in some cases



SELF-MANAGEMENT

- ▶ Observe people's interactions in different social contexts in university
- ▶ Enhance social skills through practices



How can I interact with students with ASD?



TIPS FOR TEACHERS/TUTORS



Use concise and explicit wording to communicate with the student (e.g. avoid using metaphors)



Talk slowly or write points on paper



Break down instructions into steps

TIPS FOR PEERS



Take initiative to engage the student in conversation



Assist the student in adjusting to the social context (e.g. alert the student of social cues)



Be patient when communicating with them



Your Support Makes a Difference



I seldom express myself and engage in group conversations or activities, but I am thankful that my peers have been very understanding and would invite me for group projects as well as gathering in leisure time.

Year 2 student



Volunteer with Us

All HKU students can contribute to building an inclusive campus. Volunteer opportunities include:

- ▶ Offering academic support (e.g. note-taking, study skills coaching)
- ▶ Providing social skills coaching
- ▶ Organizing activities to promote inclusion and diversity
- ▶ Working with people in recovery of mental illness
- ▶ and many more!

Get in touch with us to find out more.



Available Support for Students with ASD

CEDARS Counselling and Person Enrichment (CoPE) Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support

We are committed to supporting students with disabilities or Special Educational Needs (SEN) in overcoming barriers and achieving successful university education. The support provided is meant to “level the playing field” without undermining academic core requirements of a course.

The listed suggestions are not exhaustive and the support needed by students varies individually. Students with special needs are encouraged to meet with us for needs assessment and advice.

For enquiries, please contact us at:

📍 Room 123, 1/F, Main Building

☎ (852) 3910 3200

✉ cedars-SEN@hku.hk

🌐 <http://www.cedars.hku.hk/cope/sen>

For community resources available for students with SEN, please visit <http://wp2.cedars.hku.hk/sen-resources/>

To learn more about other types of SEN, please visit www.cedars.hku.hk/cope/sen-leaflets