



Educational Implications

It is important to understand the idiosyncratic nature of Asperger's and to consider problematic behaviors in light of characteristics associated with this disability. Following are some general characteristics as described by Williams (1995). This excerpt was taken from:

http://www.autism-society.org/site/DocServer/LWA_Behavior.pdf?docID=4181

- ✓ Insistence on sameness: easily overwhelmed by minimal changes in routines, sensitive to environmental stressors, preference for rituals
- ✓ Impairment in social interactions: difficulty understanding the “rules” of interaction, poor comprehension of jokes and metaphor, formal speaking style
- ✓ Restricted range of social competence: preoccupation with singular topics, asking repetitive questions, obsessively collecting items
- ✓ Inattention: poor organizational skills, easily distracted, focused on irrelevant stimuli, difficulty learning in group contexts
- ✓ Poor motor coordination: slow clerical speed (note taking), clumsy gait, unsuccessful in games involving motor skills
- ✓ Academic difficulties: restricted problem solving skills, literal thinking, deficiencies with abstract reasoning
- ✓ Emotional vulnerability: low self-esteem, easily overwhelmed, poor coping with stressors, self-critical

Instructional Strategies

- ❖ Provide a detailed course outline (with deadlines) and adhere to it as closely as possible
- ❖ Use visual supports—graphs, charts, lists, pictures – to enhance your lectures
- ❖ Post lecture notes and course changes clearly on Blackboard
- ❖ Arrange seating away from windows or other sources of distraction
- ❖ Be concise and direct in your instructions
- ❖ Encourage the student to ask for clarification or to rephrase instructions as needed
- ❖ When asking questions in class, allow extra “wait time” before expecting a response from the student - address the student by name, and then ask a question
- ❖ Provide specific, concrete feedback
- ❖ If the student engages in repetitive questioning that interferes with classroom instruction, engage the student in developing individual strategies - Strategies may include suggesting that the student writes down their questions for discussion after class (If this does not work, you may wish to incorporate a visual cue or signal as a reminder that they have asked enough questions for that class)
- ❖ Address behavioral concerns with the student after class and reinforce with clear expectations
- ❖ These students tend to be left out and have difficulty making social connections - when group projects are a must, foster cooperation and partnership by assigning students to groups or encourage students to work in pairs
- ❖ If there are areas of concern, consult with the student's Learning Skills Advisor – AccessAbility Services



Student Services

A Guide to Diagnosed Disorders Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Academic Accommodations

Students with disabilities are expected to accomplish the “core competencies” of their programs. To achieve this, accommodations are provided to minimize or eliminate any disadvantage their disability presents. Accommodations are unique to each individual keeping in mind that multiple conditions can co-exist with these students. **AccessAbility Services** makes these recommendations based on confidential documentation that the student provides to the college. Some of the most commonly provided academic accommodations to students with an ASD include:

- Note taking services
- Reduced course load
- Access to word processing or assistive technology software (text to voice, voice to text, mind mapping)
- Access to alternative format material
- Digital recording of lectures – Live Scribe/Smart Pen; Note Taking Express; digital recorder; cell phone
- Extra test time (As determined by AccessAbility Services)
- Private or distraction reduced environment
- Access to word processing with spell check, thesaurus, grammar check
- Clarification with lecture materials and/or test and exam questions
- Calculator
- Breaks
- Memory aids

Overview and Definition

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological disability which impacts social communication and social interaction to varying degrees. Individuals with an ASD may have difficulty with:

- Understanding nonverbal communications
- Initiating and responding to social interactions
- Reciprocity in conversations
- Developing, understanding, and maintaining relationships

Persons with an ASD may also have restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, and activities which may include:

- Insistence on sameness with routines and schedules
- Highly fixed skill and/or interests in one particular area

In addition, students with an ASD often show:

- A lack of poor motor coordination
- Adaptability
- Flexibility
- Sensitivity to sights, sounds, touch, smells

Asperger's syndrome is considered to be on the high functioning end of the Autism Spectrum Disorder. Although identified in 1944 by Hans Asperger, it was not until the 1990s that the disorder was given widespread attention. Asperger's can generally be distinguished from other forms of autism by two areas of relative strength: more normal language function and higher cognitive abilities.



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However, with average to above average intelligence, students with Asperger's, given the appropriate accommodations and a supportive environment, can succeed at the postsecondary level. Other conditions can co-exist with an ASD, for example, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD), learning disability (LD) as well as anxiety or depression.

Seen as an invisible disability, ASD/Asperger's tends to present itself as a nonverbal learning disability with deficiencies in social skills and interaction. Individuals with an ASD/Asperger's have a great deal of difficulty reading nonverbal cues (body language) and often have difficulty identifying proper personal body space. Adults with an ASD/Asperger's generally have extreme difficulties expressing frustration, anger, and/or fear, therefore reactions tend to display as outbursts that are typically inappropriate. It is important to remember these individuals perceive the world *very* differently. Therefore, behaviours that seem odd or unusual are due to those neurological differences and not the result of intentional rudeness or bad behaviour.

Resources – please contact *AccessAbility Services* for further information

Understanding Asperger Syndrome: A Professor's Guide (Part 1):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=233-3jtEZck>

Understanding Asperger Syndrome: A Professor's Guide (Part 2)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmv-KA5VQBE>

Autism Ontario <http://www.autismontario.com/>

Autism: See the Potential. This video, which features the incredible Michael McCreary, is a wonderful introduction to autism spectrum disorder. The video was created to support customer service professionals when they provide services or support to people with ASD; however the positive response from the general public has been overwhelming. This video is so accessible and entertaining, it offers something for everyone. <https://vimeo.com/144769608>

Heather, a student at Western University, provides insight into her experiences with Asperger's Syndrome. <http://www.accessiblecampus.ca/mental-health/student-profiles/heather/>

Autism: Sensory Overload Simulation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcS2VUoe12M>