

How does a neurodiverse condition affect a student's exam performance?

Extra time (25%) is usually allocated for neurodiverse students in exams to allow for the additional time it will often take to read and reread exam questions, to structure work, and to check spelling and punctuation. Students may also use a PC in exams. Despite additional time however, the standard of presentation is not likely to be as good as it would be for course work. Inconsistencies in written expression (possibly in syntax, punctuation, spelling and presentation) can be present in exam scripts which are produced under timed conditions, and these can even be present if the student is using a PC and has extra time in an exam. The ability to 'see the bigger picture' and make connections between ideas is often a strength which is reflected in contributions in class and course work. Under exam pressure it is harder to demonstrate these obvious abilities and a higher than typical degree of anxiety can make this worse.

Typical errors can include:

- bizarre and/or inconsistent spellings even of 'common' words, eg said, what, when
- incorrect use of homophones, eg hear and here, there and their
- omission or transposition of letters, syllables, words and phrases, eg causal and casual
- tenses used incorrectly and inconsistently

Please note: The assessment criteria for individual courses should apply to the marking of a dyslexic or neurodiverse student's scripts.

How can staff help?

- Clearly written exam papers and exam instructions minimise confusion
- Marking should focus on ideas, understanding and knowledge and the coherence of the argument and markers should avoid being distracted

by errors they may find irritating. These errors are not reflective of the work that the student is able to produce when not operating under exam conditions

- Allowances need to be made for presentation in a high pressured exam situation as handwriting is very likely to deteriorate under pressure.
- Don't penalise for errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation as these are likely to occur under pressure