

Your Neurodiversity Handbook

Key definitions from
Neurodiversity and Education



Access Arrangements

Guidance to schools about exam conditions, and what adjustments can be made for students who need additional support.

Accessible

Access to education is often hindered by the presence of barriers which can undermine the individual's opportunities to reach or obtain certain outcomes or goals. These can be experienced in the form of both physical barriers and attitudinal barriers.

Acquired Condition

A condition that is acquired during an individual's lifetime through trauma, gaining a medical condition, or environmental exposure.

Adaptation

The way in which a task, environment or process has been changed to become more accessible.

Allostatic Load

A term for the cumulative effect of stress and your body's response to stress over time.

Analysis Paralysis

Where someone feels unable to decide or commit to a single course of action because they find it harder to choose where to start or see too many possibilities and too many links.

Barrier

Something that gets in the way of optimising talents, participation accessing support and/or limits progress.

Belonging

A feeling of being happy, safe or comfortable as part of a particular group, e.g. within the family, in a class at school, with work colleagues. This may be as a result of mutual respect and recognition of similarities and differences within the group.

Biopsychosocial Model

A model used to consider the biological, psychological, and social aspects of an individual.

Cognitive

To do with thinking or conscious mental processes.

Command Words

Directive words used with specific meanings on question papers in assessments.

Desirable Skills

Skills listed in a job advertisement that a prospective employer considers as being useful but not essential.

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)

A common developmental condition with challenges associated with understanding, processing and using spoken and written language.

Diversity

Describes our wide range of human differences, e.g. physical traits, gender, race, class. In the context of this book, we emphasise cognitive diversity in recognition of the fact that we all think, learn and behave in a variety of ways.

Dual Coding

Using different types of stimuli to help learners encode information in their brains more effectively, e.g. using pictures and words together to aid understanding.

Ecological Systems Model

A model that considers the role that the wider environment of the student plays in shaping their past and present and their ability to access and be included in education.

Ecosystem

The environment (people and place) that someone is placed in and how they interact with this.

Equality

The right of different groups of people to have similar status, rights and opportunities and receive the same treatment.

Equity

The situation in which everyone is treated according to their specific needs rather than being treated equally in the same way as other groups.

fMRI Scan

Functional magnetic resonance imaging to evaluate blood flow in the brain and thus see which parts are activated by certain stimuli.

Formative Assessment

A method used in education through which feedback is given to students to help them improve their learning and simultaneously to teachers to help them improve their ways of teaching.

Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) Axis

The interaction between the hypothalamus, pituitary gland, and adrenal glands, which plays a key role in the body's response to stress.

Inclusion

The practices or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as neurominority groups.

Inclusivity

Creating the right environmental conditions in which all students are valued, respected and can thrive, regardless of their differences.

Interference

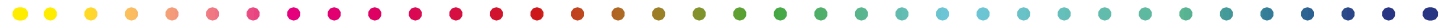
A barrier that prevents you from doing something as well as you could do.

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)

A framework promoted by the WHO for measuring health and disability at both individual and population levels.

LAMIC

Low and middle-income countries.



Medical Model

A way of looking at an individual's problems that places an emphasis on the 'deficit' within an individual, often leading to corrective interventions. Contrast with Social Model below.

Metacognition

When we plan, monitor and evaluate, and make changes to our own learning behaviours – often also referred to as 'thinking about thinking'.

Micro-Metacognition

A technique that enables students to be more conscious of their own learning choices at a more refined level and helps them move towards being reflective.

Mindset

An individual's way of thinking, and their opinions.

NEET

Not in education, employment or training.

Neurodivergent

Having or related to a type of brain that is often considered as different from a socially constructed or defined norm.

Neurodiversity

The different ways that we all think, move, hear, see, understand, process information, and communicate with each other. We are all neurodiverse.

Neurominority

A distinct group or groups of people who diverge from a social norm.

Neurotypical

Someone who generally thinks, moves, hears, sees, understands or processes information in one or more ways that fit in with the social and cultural norms of the day.

Patterns Beyond Labels

A model that encourages us to look at patterns of challenge or barriers to learning which exist across a group of learners with reference to physical, cognitive and cultural barriers.

Quality First Teaching

A model used in the UK for the delivery of education according to three waves describing students who have (1) no specific needs, (2) additional needs, or (3) more complex needs.

SEMH

Social emotional and mental health.

Social Model

A way of looking at an individual's problems, not as 'deficits' or 'disorders' but by the disabling barriers or interferences presented by society. Contrast with Medical Model above.

Special Educational Needs

A child has special educational needs if they have a learning problem or disability that makes it more challenging for them to learn via the often prescribed or standardised methods of teaching.

Spectrum

A range of different positions between two extreme points.

Spiky Profile

A profile that demonstrates the specific pattern of strengths and challenges and differences across a range of cognitive domains.

Summative Assessment

A means of evaluating student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against a standard or benchmark.

Synaptogenesis

The creation of brain cells and the links between them, and their eventual 'pruning' to strengthen and remove connections according to how much they are used or how useful they are in our lives.

Taxonomy

A classification system for naming and organising things into groups that share similar qualities.

Trait

A characteristic that can produce a particular type of behaviour.

Twice Exceptional (or 2e)

Gifted students who also have some form of challenge with engaging with learning or may have a specific disability.

UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Universal Design

A means of designing and shaping an environment so as many people as possible can access, participate and make progress, regardless of their age, size, cognitive or physical abilities.

WEIRD

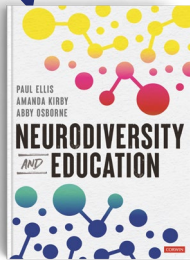
Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic countries.

WHO

World Health Organization.

Ellis, P., Kirby, A. and Osborne, A. (2023) *Neurodiversity and Education*, pp 144–149. London: Sage Publications.

GET YOUR COPY NOW



Explore your Neurodiversity and Education Hub

