

# KNOW YOUR STUDENT

FACT SHEETS TO GUIDE THE  
LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT  
OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS



## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

### Definition

ADHD is a neurological disorder that affects the transmission of chemical messages (known as neurotransmitters) to certain parts of the brain. ADHD causes the brain to deal with activities, information and feelings in ways that may affect the way that the learner thinks, plans, organises their life and focus and directs and monitors their thoughts and activities.

Learners with ADHD in a classroom environment can often appear distracted, or disinterested. Many learners with ADHD will struggle to sit for long periods of time and be less able to manage lengthy presentations or PowerPoint style education delivery. Maintaining focus and concentrating on a singular topic are the two most difficult components of living with ADHD. Often individuals with ADHD need to burn energy more frequently and are more effective learners when presented with the opportunity to practically engage in learning, such as discussing topics.

There are three subtypes of ADHD:

- Predominantly inattentive – the inability to initiate, sustain and shift attention appropriately;
- Predominantly hyperactive/impulsive – excessive activity without fully considering circumstances or consequences;
- Combined – combination of inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity.

Learners with ADHD may have associated conditions such as:

- poor self-esteem;
- poor social skills;
- learning disorders;
- conduct disorders;
- neurological disorders;
- depression and anxiety;
- speech and language impairment.

## **Impact on training and assessment**

ADHD affects learners in different ways. The training environment, the nature of the learner's situation and the way the Teacher engages and responds to the learner will contribute to how successful the learner is.

The training environment often requires skill in areas where learners with ADHD have most difficulty, such as attention, executive function, and memory. As a result, the following learning tasks and processes may be difficult:

- problem solving;
- organising tasks and activities, especially multi-step tasks;
- understanding and following through on work instructions;
- completing tasks and maintaining sustained attention;
- interacting effectively with other learners;
- impulsiveness and unpredictability.

## **Delivery and assessment strategies**

The following strategies are suggestions. Each student with ADHD will have their own individual support and learning needs and it's recommended as a first step, that you ask them and/or their family or support network (if such a network is present and accessible) what the best ways to support their learning is.

When liaising with anyone other than the student directly, ensure you maintain confidentiality, as per TAFE Queensland Privacy Policy.

## **Presenting and communicating information**

- Aim to provide a range of different presentation formats that provide different sensory stimuli - handouts, overheads, worksheets, films, flow charts, hands-on experience and diagrams.
- Set clear learning expectations. State what learners are expected to learn during the lesson and on completion of course.
- Highlight key points in course structure, assessment requirements and practical arrangements in both oral and written form.
- Enable (and even encourage) students who have identified themselves as living with ADHD, to take a break and go for a walk, get a drink, do something physical for a moment, or engage an alternative activity which helps them realign their focus and stay on track.
- Review previous lessons.
- Simplify instructions, choices and scheduling.

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- Make course material engaging for learners by linking it to personal stories, visual images and sounds.
- Provide multiple options for students to engage with information. This might include researching online, reading, engaging in discussions with others, role-plays, scenarios or any other mode of learning which may be appropriate in the circumstances. Be aware that many students with ADHD will struggle with long, monotonous presentations of information and will cope better with shorter periods of intensive information, broken up with breaks, role-plays and other activities.
- If the student is struggling with lecture-style presentations, switch to discussions about the topics being facilitated and encourage their participation in this mode of learning.
- Help learners break assignments and reading tasks into smaller, less complex tasks.
- Help learners develop good time-management and organisational habits, by suggesting they write themselves reminders and lists and keep a diary.
- Assist learner to develop a consistent study routine.
- Develop a communication dialogue with students which enables them to speak with you when they need a break, or let you know if there's something you could do to increase the effectiveness of the delivery of information.
- Provide reading lists as early as possible and inform learners of additional resources that are available.
- Provide a list of common terms and acronyms used in training modules/material.
- When presenting training content, repeat and emphasise important information.

## **Utilising technology to maximize student engagement**

- A reader/scribe can assist learners with reading and writing material.
- Learning materials and information can be converted into formats that are accessible for the learner e.g. audio files (such as MP3 format), Braille (a tactile reading and writing code, which is read using the fingers) or large print.
- Screen reading software such as Job Access With Speech (JAWS) reads electronic material aloud to the user. It provides audible access to electronic information, software applications and the internet.
- Electronic magnification devices are available in portable, transportable, desktop and laptop based forms. They magnify or scan print based materials and objects.
- Magnification software (e.g. Microsoft Magnifier, ZoomText) enlarges the whole computer screen including text and application buttons / navigation.
- Anti-glare screens and reducing the brightness or changing the contrast of computer screens can benefit.

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- Connect (also referred to as Desire2Learn) has numerous options to increase accessibility to information provided within Connect. Options such as screen readers, keyboard-only navigation, colour contrast accessibility features and zooming options are all available within Connect. Educators can access information about these options at <https://connect.tafeqld.edu.au/shared/help/student/content/en/Accessibility.html>.
- Audio recording of training delivery or note taking (a person or digital note taker such as the Neo Notetaker) to assist learners with handwriting difficulties and / or with mishearing and misquoting.
- A Disability Coach or Disability Support Worker can assist the learner with planning and organizing. The benefit to requesting a Disability Coach/Support Worker is that they may be able to look holistically at the support and learning needs of the student and provide some helpful ideas regarding software, or education strategies to help increase the student's understanding, participation and engagement.

## **All of the delivery strategies may be of assistance for assessment**

- Eliminate or reduce frequency of timed examinations.
- Provide a quiet location for assessments to eliminate distractions.
- Perform ongoing learner evaluation in a range of different formats rather than one end of semester assessment.

## **References**

- Australian Disability Clearing House on Education and Training, <http://www.adcet.edu.au>
- Pierangelo, R. and Giuliani, G (2008) Management Techniques for Students with ADHD. Corwin Press

## **Further Resources**

- Australian Government Website, <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/people-with-disability>
- Tourette Syndrome Association of Australia Inc, <http://www.tourette.org.au>
- Behavioral Neuropathy Clinic, <http://www.adhd.com.au>