

# ADHD Toolkit for Staff

## What is ADHD?

ADHD is a neurological condition that impacts the parts of the brain that help us plan, focus on, and execute tasks. It is not a disability, it is a different ability.

## ADHD in Adults

- **No time to stop** - difficulty relaxing and have a constantly busy mind.
- **Organised, then overwhelmed for a bit** - due to the extra effort required to be organised when one has ADHD.
- **Severe procrastination** - Putting things off to an extreme degree.
- **A poor sense of time** - Underestimating how long things will take.

## Challenging the myths

ADHD is not a lack of willpower. Students with ADHD are NOT lazy. ADHD is not a shortage of attention. ADHDers pay too much attention to everything. Most people with unmedicated ADHD have four or five things going on in their minds at once. The hallmark of the ADHD nervous system is not attention deficit, but inconsistent attention.

## Emotional Wellbeing

Adults with ADHD (diagnosed or not) carry negative messages with them from childhood (on average 20,000 more negative messages by the time they are 12). "Could try harder" "Not reaching potential". Try not to add to the negativity.

## ADHD Superpowers

There's a lot to love about ADHD — and all the creativity, empathy, tenacity and special talents it brings! Here are a few Superpowers: Perseverance, creativity, hyperfocus, endless energy, multi-tasker. The success of a lot of people with ADHD is due largely in part to their ADHD!

## ADHD and Motivation

Students with ADHD have an **interest based nervous system**. They get in the zone when the task interests them, there is an element of competition, novelty or do or die deadline. Encourage students to focus on the when and how they do things well and try and get them to create those circumstances from the outset.



# Tips for College Staff

## Red Flags

The student has difficulty meeting deadlines, missing lectures or forgetting to do assignments. Often appear spacey, disinterested, bored, anxious, restless, chaotic, disorganised, late for class. Trouble coping with transitions such as overwhelming new schedules or continuous changes in lecture locations. Fails to study on time for exams leading to exam or even year repeats.

## Reasonable Accommodations

Students registered with the Disability Support Service are entitled to exam accommodations such as extra time and a smaller exam venue. Other accommodations include assistive technology, access to lecture notes / slides and written rather than verbal instructions.

## What ADHD students say they find helpful

For assignments and essays provide multiple smaller deadlines along with the final deadline to help the student keep on track. Exemplars are extremely helpful. Spoken and unspoken information can be conveyed more simply by showing an example of what is needed.

## Clear Instructions

Make instructions clear, in a written format, broken down into small steps and numbered the order that they should be completed. Guided reading lists and essential reading/tasks with prioritised reading marked would help ADHD students.

## Doing another activity while learning

Understanding that some people learn better and are more comfortable if they have their eyes closed or undertake another activity (such as crocheting) as this keeps them in the moment and prevents them from zoning out, which can often happen.

## UDL

Use multiple means of engaging students (UDL) board, talking, visual, practical. Adoption of a relaxed pedagogical approach (Acton and Huijg) allowing for more breaks during teaching, the opportunity to stand up and walk around and being sympathetic to individual needs including that attendance may not be consistent but that this does not mean work is not being completed.

## IADT Supports

- Refer the student to the **Student Learning Centre** for additional support with academic or organisational skills.
- Refer the student to the **Disability Support Service** if they have an official diagnosis and have queries about Reasonable Accommodations or Assistive Technology.