



Key Learning Support Strategies

Supporting students to access teaching, learning and assessment.



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General tips for teachers, assessors, in class support teams, and out of class support services

Those who feel welcomed, included, and valued perform best!

Read (or re-read) the Teaching Support Plan / Key information for staff on Promonitor or OneFile.

Start your interactions with a smile - set the right tone.

Encourage your students to acknowledge / identify their inclusion needs and risk/s and be active in mitigation.

Get to know your students, find out their key strengths, and utilise these.

You cannot go wrong with Maslow as your starting point.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Five Top Tips for Creating Accessible Learning Resources

- Use dyslexia friendly fonts such as, **Comic Sans MS** or **Century Gothic**.
- Always use a minimum font size of **14 or above**.
- When using colour, ensure there is good **visual contrast** between colours to support visual needs.
- Using **pictures, graphs and tables** can create visual interest and summarise information.
- Always ensure **Alt text** has been added, for any formats that cannot be read by a screen reader, such as infographics. Provide a plain text explanation for all information provided, with the support of visual aids.

Supporting students with Dyslexia

1. **Model** the use of software and assistive technology. For example, you can 'normalise' the use of technology for your students by showcasing how to create text using your voice in your sessions or using immersive reader when in browsers and Word.
2. **Enable students** to discuss **prioritising tasks** – what is essential and what can wait?
3. Provide clear and concise information. **Try to be consistent**. Use clear and concise language, when creating checklists and tasks. Avoid unnecessary language, therefore, students can focus on what they must do rather than not.
4. Use **flipped learning** – Make resources available in advance. **Ensure** self-management opportunities for students who work best with increased processing time.
5. **Accessibility of materials and presentations** - Check your font style / size, use background colours that reduce glare (or nightlight settings) and check your formatting and page alignment. Do not justify text in documents as this makes reading more difficult for people with scotopic sensitivity – use 'ragged right' margins as this makes it easier to track and keep place on the page.



Supporting students with Neurodiversity

1. **Support students** to manage their sensory needs. Remember, these needs can heighten or reduce, and students are their own best managers. Students may seek out or avoid certain sensations, helping them to feel more comfortable and emotionally regulated. Encourage students to explain what they need and adjust accordingly.
2. Use **clear and explicit language** to make sure that students understand what is expected. Reinforce instructions in the Teams chat or via shared written tasks – with explicit responsibilities identified for group activities.
3. Ask all students about their **personal interests** as this can help to change their mindset. It could help if you use their special interests to distract at times, to motivate or to engage in a task. (Probably best used in 1:1 teaching and support) – unless it is to enable presentations to a group of peers.
4. If a student is overwhelmed, **encourage a student to manage themselves**, direct them to take a minute, use quiet time or to engage in a calming activity and then reengage. Enabling and being supportive promotes emotional regulation and well-being, sustaining and encouraging engagement even when students struggle.
5. **Routine and structure** enable all students to manage their time and plan. Remember, when things change, students with autism can be thrown totally off course. When changes need to take place, let students have as much warning and information as possible and give them time to absorb and adapt to this.



Supporting students with Mental Health difficulties

1. Impact of medication

Medication can affect concentration, ability to think and the speed of responses. Students may require extra time to process information. Teaching Support Plans will have practical tips to support. For example, you could encourage a student to get up and walk around or leave the classroom for a few minutes or prompt students to use headphones to help concentration when working independently.

2. Self-esteem and confidence

- Positive relationships will have impact. Start with unconditional positive regard.
- Do not be afraid to use Microsoft Teams messages, emails etc., to make contact and ask them to advise you on how best to support them.
- Honest and compassionate feedback will help build confidence. Regular feedback, reassurance and positive reinforcement are crucial. Encourage all students to recognise their own achievements and successes.
- Students can have negative thought patterns; this interrupts their ability to process information and impacts on learning. Ensure past learning is on Moodle and Microsoft Teams. Using recorded sessions is invaluable. Prompt students to revisit learning to develop independence.
- For a limited number of students, time out enables them to feel more comfortable, and in control of the situation. Before a time out, encourage students to STOP:



Stop what they are doing

Take a minute to breathe

Observe what is happening

Plan what to do – rather than reacting without thought.

3. Managing anxiety

- Support students to organise their work – timetable / diary / calendar reminders / task and assignment reminders.
- Support students to consistently organise folders / session notes, etc. Electronic and paper notes.
- Support students with time management. Advise the student about using their Outlook calendar to plan time to complete tasks.
- When working with others – virtual / F2F. Think about how / who students are grouped / paired with.
- Encourage the student to use a sensory fidget as it may help them focus.
- Student anxiety can fluctuate; read the Teaching Support Plan and remind them to use strategies that can help.

My Mental Wealth Plan

The things I'm working on in College to be successful are:

Include information on diagnosis (inclusion need) and the effects on college life

Over the next ___ weeks I will take responsibility for my own success by:

Improving my routine in the morning to ensure I arrive on time, and I'm prepared to learn

Access support from the Welfare Team

Implement my catch-up plan to ensure I submit my work on time.

I know my plan is working because:

My attendance will increase

I have a clear plan for progression

I feel in charge of my success

I have submitted my work that is outstanding

Strategies I use to support my mental health:

Attend my weekly CAMHS appointment

Listen to music with permission from teachers when the classroom becomes overwhelming

Use my fidget when needed

Plan my time to reduce anxiety

Seek support from my key team at College

My key team around me at College:

Progression Coaches

Welfare Officer

Inclusion and Support Service

Safeguarding Team

My key team around me outside of College:

CAMHS Professionals

Social Workers

GP

Therapist

Housing Support

Any Other External Support Agencies

Plan completed with:

Student Signature Staff Signature

Date Date of Review / Next Meeting

Supporting Deaf / Hearing impaired students

1. Accessing Communication

- Remember to always speak directly to the student who is using a Communication Support Worker (CSW).
- The CSW will interpret all interactions into British Sign Language – be encouraged to get to know some key technical or instructive signs too!
- Organise a Deaf Awareness session for the whole group.
- Flexible support is offered to non-signers, repeating session content, or taking notes.
- Students using Radio Aids will need their teacher to wear a microphone and to silence it when not addressing them.
- In virtual sessions remember to invite the CSW and prompt all students to use the chat rather than “chatter”.

2. Accessing Learning Resources

- Use Plain English and supporting images in handouts and PowerPoints to reinforce key language / information. www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html
- Share copies of PowerPoints prior to the session with the student and CSW. Include direction, specify what activities will happen in the session and, where possible, what the student will be asked. Share the plan for the session and timings too if you can.
- Check and show subtitles on videos and allow CSWs the opportunity to watch in advance.
- Supply glossaries of technical terms to students and CSWs.

3. Inclusion in Lessons

- In face-to-face sessions, make sure you discuss and facilitate the best seating position for the student.
- Manage background noise levels and encourage turn taking for speakers.
- Arrange for Deaf Awareness session from the Deaf Access team.
- Build in space for the student to have quieter time in sessions for reading and have breaks from listening / watching signing.

4. Managing Learning and Assessment

- Make regular individual checks on the student’s understanding.
- Break tasks down into clear steps.
- Deaf students first language is often BSL therefore they may need support from their CSW with expressing their knowledge in written English.



Supporting students with ADD/ADHD

1. To help with concentration/focus: **Reduce noise and excessive movement** in class (both virtual and face to face). Break tasks into chunks. Work in short, focused bursts.
2. In virtual sessions, students need **clarity and timed activities** to help focus. Sharing session plans with in-class support can often help.
3. Make information **accessible, structured, and sequential**. Summarise key points frequently and check understanding. Direct support staff to do this with their students via chat in virtual sessions.
4. Provide **subject specific vocabulary** and do not assume vocabulary used will be understood.
5. Having information in **visual and written** forms can help **students to focus** on listening.
6. Give guidance on **how long a task should take**.
7. **Promote the use of fidget device /movement breaks**. Think where students are seated in face-to-face sessions.
8. **Be aware medication can impact performance**. Handle inappropriate interruptions empathetically and discreetly.



Supporting students who have English as a second language (ESOL)

1. **Visuals will help** students with context and develop an understanding of what is being taught. Try to use pictures, diagrams, videos and real-life examples of objects and concepts being studied all help.
2. Provide opportunities for students to **practise speaking and listening** to English. Listen out for errors and build into self-correction exercises afterwards. It helps if you model the correct use of vocabulary and grammar, speaking clearly.
3. **Small group work** can help; students often feel less worried about making mistakes in more informal activities.
4. Be clear and let students know at the beginning of the lesson what they will be expected to do and learn. **Check students' understanding of tasks** set by asking questions or getting them to explain rather than asking 'Do you understand?'
5. Get into the habit of **introducing new vocabulary** at the beginning of the lesson, especially if there are new words students need to know.
6. Build thinking time into remote teaching and after asking questions; many students need time to process and compose their responses.
7. If students are unsure about a task or instruction, encourage them to **clarify with you**; get into the habit of repeating or re-explain using clear, simple language. Students may also benefit from more time for homework assignments and assessments.

Supporting students with Visual Impairments (VI)

1. Review the student's **Inclusive Teaching Plan**. The student is the expert on how their condition affects them. It is important to know that a visual impairment can affect a student differently throughout the day.
2. Encourage the student to **differentiate for themselves** as much as possible. Ensure all materials are adapted / in an accessible format to meet their needs.
3. Use the **modifications service**. Remember, each condition can affect each person uniquely.
4. Where possible provide videos, slides, or PowerPoints in **advance**, so, the student can pre-learn / prepare. It can be helpful to 'pause' on important points when the student is viewing the resource in class with others. Record sessions where possible.
5. Offer further verbal input to support visual information. Verbalise what is written on the board and on PowerPoints. Talk through any calculations as they are made or procedures as they are carried out. Read any printed information and describe any charts or graphs being used. Speak clearly.
6. Always face the class when speaking. Suggest students pin the teacher / support in virtual sessions. State verbally when you are entering or leaving the students space. Try to ensure only one person at a time is talking. This will help students follow the conversation. When possible, identify the speaker verbally, especially in virtual sessions.



Supporting student with Physical Impairment (PI)

1. Always start by asking **what the student will find most useful**.
2. Read and use strategies in the Teaching Support Plans.
3. Tiredness can affect students' focus and performance. Build in extra time for physical tasks and differentiate.
4. Think about how tasks are set; **communicate adjustments** for students to them clearly and diplomatically.
5. Some students with PI are impacted by frequent or constant pain. Regular breaks or changes in tasks can help a student refocus.
6. In face-to-face sessions, think about room layout and discuss what is needed. Anticipating a student's need and removing obstacles should be routine.



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