



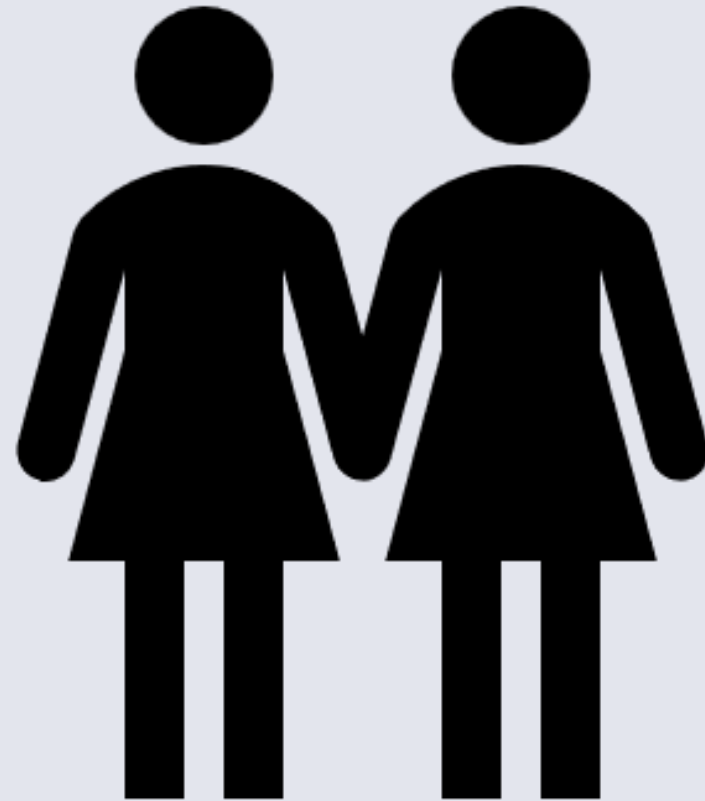
University of
Central Lancashire
UCLan



Understanding Neurodivergence in Higher Education.

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The student I will never forget



Parent

Spouse

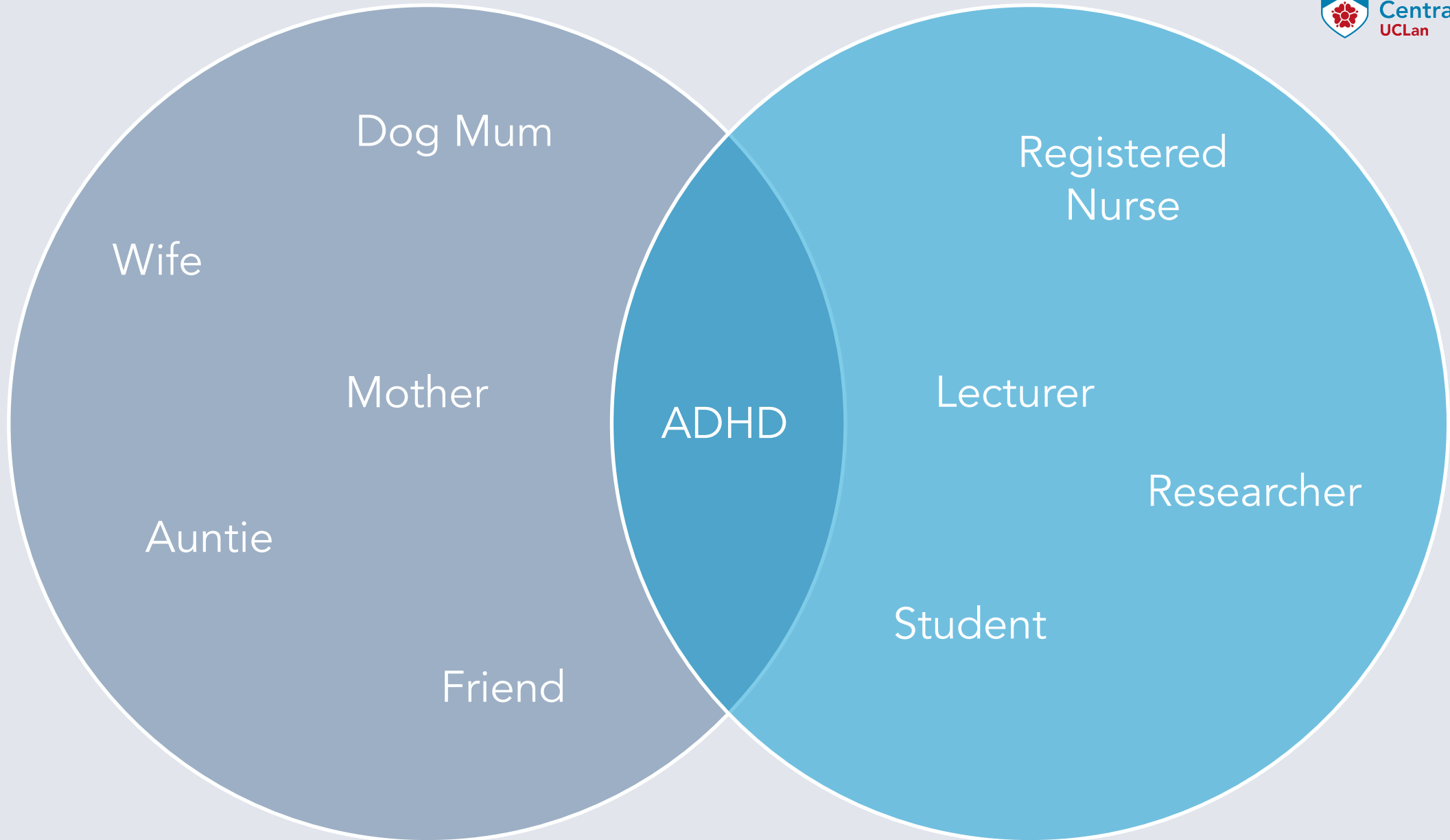
Employed

Student

Pet
Owner

Patient

Conference
Attendee



A brief history lesson...

University

- noun [yoo-nuh-vur-si-tee]
- From the Latin '*universitas*' meaning whole.

Alma Mater

- Noun [ahl-muh-mah-ter]
- From the Latin meaning '*nourishing mother*'



What is Neurodivergence?



First coined in 1999 by
Judy Singer

An umbrella term that
refers to an individual
with a neurology that is
different to typical
norms.

We are all neurodiverse –
no two brains think alike
therefore the term
'neurodivergence' is often
preferred.

Many of the labels
around a diagnoses are
classed as a 'disorder',
yet it is not an illness or a
disease and cannot be
cured.



Terminology

Neurodiversity – an umbrella term used to describe differences in the human brain with relation to range of functions.

Neurodivergence – a person whose brain ‘diverges’ from the majority can be described as neurodivergent.

Neurodiverse - characterises the variance in all brains – we are all neurodiverse.

Neurotypical – describes a person who does not have either a formal diagnosis or self-identifies as having a form of neurodivergence.

Disability – a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

Autism

- Occurs across a spectrum
- Differences in communication, abstract concepts and sensory stimuli.

Dyscalculia

- Difficulty in understanding number based concepts & symbols.

Dyspraxia

- Can affect movement and co-ordination.



ADHD

- Difficulties in concentration and organisation.
- Activity levels can vary

Dyslexia

- Differences in language processing.
- Can affect reading, writing and speaking organisation.

Tourettes

- Occurs across a spectrum
- Complex neurological condition characterised by involuntary movements and/or sounds called tics.

Why is it important?

Legal

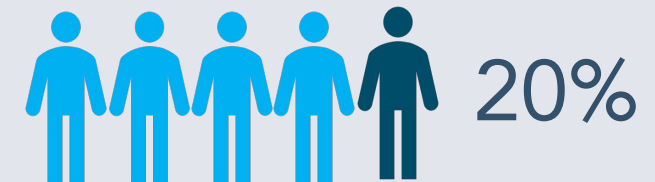
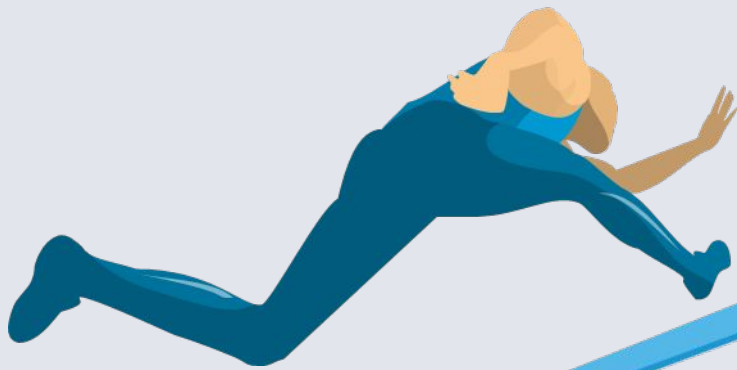
- Equality Act (2010) & The Public Sector Accessibility Regulation (2018).

Ethical

Essential for some, benefits for all.

Moral

Thriving, not just surviving in higher education.



Legal

15% of full-time undergraduate students and 18% of part time reporting disabilities, (OfS, 2022a)

Dyslexia, visual & auditory processing disorders and ADHD are among the most common, (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2022).

Course completion rates are lower for disabled students across the sector, (OfS, 2022a).

The 2010 Equality Act states that a Higher Education Institution must not discriminate in 'the way that it provides an education', (Equality Act 2010, S.91).



Accessibility Commitment

- International Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1)
- Content must be accessible to everyone, (W3C, 2018; HM Government, 2022)
- Launched at UCLan in 2023.

Designing for diverse learners

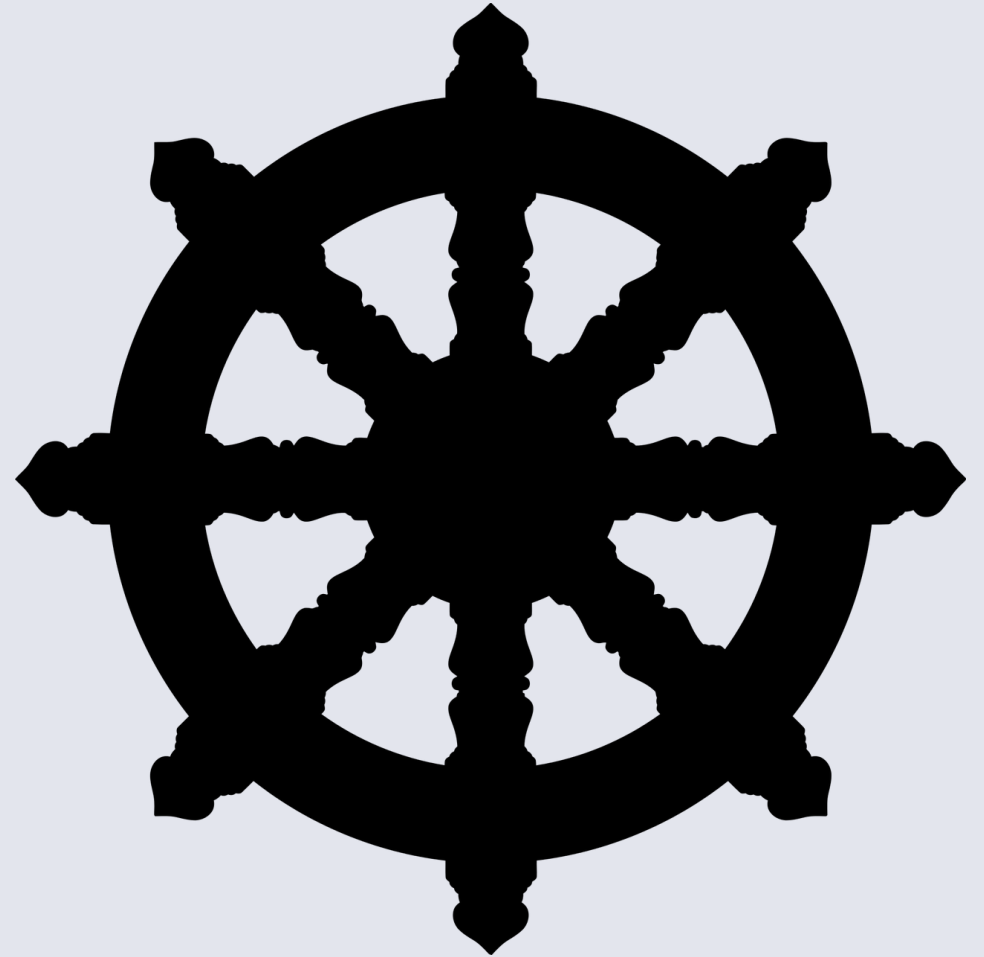


Always...	Avoid...
Always use a readable font, sentence case and a suitable font size - at least 12pt for print and 1 em for web. 	Avoid difficult to read text. Do not use as all capitals, small font sizes and cursive or script fonts. 
Always use left-aligned text and 1.5 line spacing. 	Avoid centre or right text alignment and full justification. 
Always break up information. Use meaningful headings, sub-headings and one-level bullet lists. 	Avoid complex and cluttered layouts. Do not use multi-layered menus or complicated lists. 
Always use heading styles, tags or other formatting features for headings and sub-headings. 	Avoid manual formatting text to convey headings, meaning or structure. 
Always make important information clear and easy to find. 	Avoid the use of all capital letters, underlining and italics for heading styles or emphasis. DON'T DO THIS
Always write descriptive and meaningful hyperlinks and use a URL shortener if required. Contact us	Avoid using uninformative hyperlinks and never use 'click here'. Click here
Always use a combination of colour, shapes and text to convey meaning. Start	Avoid the use of colour or shape as the only way to convey meaning. 
Always ensure sufficient colour contrast from foreground and background elements. 	Avoid low colour contrasts and the use of text over images or patterned backgrounds. 
Always provide multiple means of representation. Add meaningful alternative (alt) text to all images, diagrams and tables. 	Avoid using one means of expression, especially when using media or explaining challenging concepts. Avoid unclear or overcomplex alt text. 
Always provide transcripts or captions for audio and video. Narrate video descriptively. CC	Avoid providing audio and video without an alternative representation. 
Always allow user control for media and navigation. Ensure all content can be navigated with a keyboard. 	Avoid automatically playing media content and forcing control by use of a mouse or touch screen alone. 
Always use accessibility checkers where available. 	Avoid assuming your content is accessible without testing it. 

Created by Dr Lee Fallon, Dr Elle Davison, Gemma Spencer, Tom Tomlinson, Sue Wadding, Kate Wright with input from the HigherEd community. Based on the Accessibility Poster Series from the Home Office Digital (CC-BY-NC-SA) **Poster v4.0** 

Moral

- University is a key transition period for exploring individuality from adolescence to early adulthood (Marine & Nicolazzo 2014 & McKendry & Lawrence 2017).
- Initial appearances, classroom experiences, staff attitudes and behaviour towards neurodivergence impact on academic and personal outcomes (Sherman et al., 2008 & Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015a).



Ethical

Study &
organization skills
training.

Instructions

Open discussions

Disabled Students
Allowance

Promote
Independence

Strengths based
approach

Over to you...

What support is
available?

At what point is it
implemented?

How is it
accessed?

Is it visible?

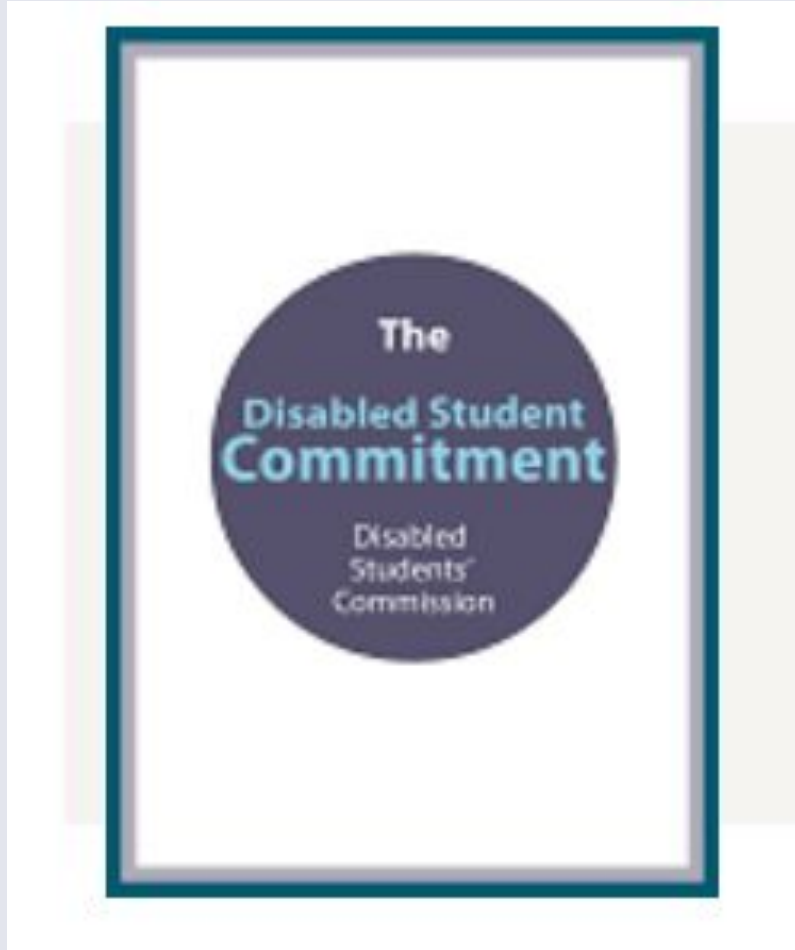
One key action
point/idea.

Support at UCLan



- Achievement coaches
- Personal Tutors
- Inclusive Support
- Wellbeing
- Student's Union.

Disabled Student Commitment



Key Messages

Higher Education Institutions have legal, moral and ethical responsibilities to support students in their learning.

Transition to Higher Education can be tough, particularly for diverse learners.

Supporting learners to disclose early is key for timely support.

Accessing support does not mean personal failure.



“In diversity, there is beauty and there is strength”.

Maya Angelou

Further Reading

- [ADHD Foundation website](#) has lots of information and resources about all forms of Neurodivergence).
- [Designing for Diverse Learners Guidelines](#) for accessible learning material design.
- [Disabled Student Commitment – Advance HE.](#)
- [L&T Chatshow Podcast](#)
- Neurodiversity & Education by Paul Ellis, Amanda Kirby & Abby Osborne.
- NeuroDiversity: The Birth of an idea by Judy Singer.