

ASD Reference Guide for Faculty & Staff

University of California, Berkeley

Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD is a neuro-developmental disorder that can generate barriers to communication and social interaction for students. Due to the diversity and complexity of ASD, strengths and challenges will vary for each individual. Understanding these characteristics and support strategies will assist in the prevention of misinterpreted behaviors and can generate a more accessible and inclusive learning environment for all students.

| Common Strengths | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Above average to superior intellect ★ Strong sense of equality and justice ★ Strong pursuit of knowledge within areas of interest ★ Direct communicators ★ Independent, logical thinking ★ Fine attention to detail | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Diligence with routine work ★ Strong memory ★ Drive for perfection and order ★ May excel in technical subject areas ★ Visual thinking and processing ★ Non-judgemental listening ★ Innovation in problem solving |

| Potential Challenges | Recommended Strategies |
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| <p>Executive functioning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Shifting attention from topics of interest ❖ Auditory processing delays ❖ Prioritization of tasks ❖ Time management <p>Social and communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perspective taking & reciprocal communication ● Self-advocacy ● Communicating effectively in groups ● Poor or unusual eye contact ● Understanding social norms ● De-escalation strategies <p>Restrictive and repetitive behaviors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Preoccupation with given topics > Managing changes to schedule > Hypo/hyper sensitivity to sensory environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provide a detailed and structured syllabus ❖ Break down projects and papers into major components and completion timelines ❖ Imbed visual learning tools into lecture ❖ Provide a preview of lesson objectives and lecture breakdown to all students ❖ Offer frequent check-ins for progress monitoring ● Find alternative methods to cold calling; allow for additional response time to oral prompts ● Avoid using sarcasm, idioms, metaphors ● Consider assigning group members ● Write down key points of discussion during 1:1 check-ins and include written action steps ● Utilize concrete language when giving instructions and offering feedback ● Validate feelings of distress and offer 2-3 options for problem solving > Enable for movement breaks for regulation > Assist with preferential seating > Allow for use of non-disruptive fidget objects > Attempt to mitigate sensory barriers in the teaching environment (i.e. scents, persistent sounds, loud noise, bright lights) |