STUDENTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM STUDYING ONLINE: LEARNING APPROACHES

WHAT IS THE AUTISM SPECTRUM?
The autism spectrum is a neurological variation which affects, among other things, the way an individual relates to his or her environment and their interaction with other people.

COURSE CONTENT

Over 35% of students on the autism spectrum had problems identifying which parts of the online content are most important.

Tip: When designing your course, be clear which tasks are optional/extension tasks and which ones the students should focus on. Ensure that you are describing how the key elements in the course fit together and work towards the course learning outcomes.

Over 66% of students on the autism spectrum reported they prefer having information presented in small chunks, for example short videos (ideally 5-8 minutes) which they can pause to take notes at their own speed.

Tip: Design your course content (text, reading or videos) so that each segment links to the next, but can be worked on independently if required. Provide summaries and opportunities for reflection in your videos where students can stop and take notes.

ASSIGNMENTS

20% of students on the autism spectrum do not use the instructions or criteria when structuring their assessments.

Tip: When introducing and discussing the assessments, highlight how students can use the instructions, criteria and academic achievement standards (e.g. rubric) to check they are doing what is required for each specific assessment piece.

Over 40% of students on the autism spectrum report having difficulties with taking responsibility for monitoring their own learning.

Tip: Providing small, formative tasks, such as short quizzes on key concepts, can provide students with opportunities to monitor their own learning.

PLANNING

Over 40% of students on the autism spectrum reported having problems with managing their time each week and planning their time effectively across the trimester.

Tip: Help your students plan their workload in advance by listing the requirements (number of videos, readings and activities) for each module. Install the Blackboard Progress Checklist or equivalent for your course to help your students visualise the progress they have made and what is left to complete.

Students on the autism spectrum like the flexibility in pace offered by online learning, but 30% find it difficult to independently keep up with the course schedule.

Tip: Use announcements to give students weekly check-in points for sufficient and good progress through the course materials.

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