

Asperger's Syndrome

What is Asperger's Syndrome (AS)?

From the UK National Autistic Society:

- Asperger syndrome is a form of autism, which is a lifelong disability that affects how a person makes sense of the world, processes information and relates to other people.
- Asperger syndrome is mostly a 'hidden disability'.
- People with AS can have difficulties in three main areas. They are:
 - social communication
 - social interaction
 - social imagination.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about-autism/autism-and-asperger-syndrome-an-introduction/what-is-autism.aspx> - Accessed 08/03/2013

What difficulties may be experienced by students with Asperger's Syndrome?

- Difficulties with social skills and empathy can make the student appear blunt or rude without that intention
- Difficulty with verbal and non-verbal communication can make the social side of university life very difficult to engage with.
- Group work can be very difficult because of the challenges of meeting and working with new people.
- Difficulty with grasping abstract theories or concepts due to a tendency to take language literally.
- Difficulties with change can make the continual process of meeting new classmates and teachers very difficult.
- High sensitivity to sensory stimuli can make loud events difficult to endure.
- Difficulties with time management and organisation

What can you do to support these students?

- Ensure that students know exactly what is expected of them for assignments and other assessments.
- Some students may be very uncomfortable with giving presentations. Offering to listen to the presentation privately or allowing the student to complete an alternative assessment can be very helpful.
- Group work can be particularly difficult
 - Speak to all students about how to communicate effectively while working with a group.
 - Give students a template which allows them to complete all steps of the group work.
 - Try spending some time working with the groups so they start in a structured way.

Useful Resources

- www.apsireireland.ie
- www.aspergersyndrome.org
- www.autism.org.uk