Attention Deficit/Hyperactive Disorder Fact Sheet

What is ADHD?

ADHD is usually described as being made up of three core behaviours:

- Predominantly inattentive type - problems of attention, distractibility, short-term memory and learning.
- Predominantly hyperactive type - impulsive, poorly self-monitored behaviour.
- Combined type - most individuals with ADHD/ADD fall into this category.

How is a student's college experience impacted by ADHD?

Difficulty	Possible impact in College
Accessibility of teaching and learning material & environment	- Difficulties **maintaining effective levels of attention** making following classes and discussions problematic. **Easily distracted** by varying stimuli which can be problematic during lectures, exams, etc. **Poor short-term memory** resulting in difficulty retaining information and can lead to difficulty, or inability, with notetaking during classes/lectures. **Poor attendance** due to forgetting about classes/lectures. **Difficulty managing a varied workload** – problems with focusing on more than one task. **Completing academic tasks** may take significantly longer, particularly if students need to **spend extra time going back over content.** - Difficulty **keeping up with lectures** that use large quantities of written/visual content. - Difficulties **expressing knowledge in verbal or written form without given time to plan/structure ideas**. Often students with ADHD find it challenging to impose order on their ideas. - Reduced **reading comprehension skills** affecting performance in class and exams due to concentration difficulties. - Difficulties getting to **new places** on time.

Exams/ Assignments	• Difficulty with **finding the most relevant or useful information** for assignments or examinations • Difficulty understanding question in timed exams – **misinterpreting question**. • Difficulty **managing time in exams** – focusing and allocating too much time on one element of question and not on others. • Difficulty **managing time prior to assignment submission** leading to late submission or grade penalisation. • Difficulty **remembering important times and dates** for submission of assignments or class tests.
Managing Assistive Technology (AT)	• Although AT has significantly enhanced the participation of students with ADHD, **learning to use new AT can initially take extra time**. • Types of AT which students may use include **applications to support memory and focus (Todoist, Kanbanflow, Google Calendar), screen reading software, voice recognition software, recording devices, mind-mapping application etc.** • Using AT **may slow the student's speed of work** making it more difficult to complete assignments and perform under the time pressures of exams.
Other difficulties	• Students who have been **recently diagnosed may experience emotional difficulties** and/or difficulties with practical tasks. Furthermore, this can affect a student's **self-esteem** and **confidence**. • Difficulties following a conversation which may lead to **behaviour deemed inappropriate** – interrupting others and talking during lectures and classes. • Students entering college straight from secondary school may not be used to the classroom or exam supports as these may differ from those previously experienced throughout their second-level education. Those recently diagnosed may not have experienced any supports previously. • Students with ADHD often experience difficulty with **organisation** which can lead to ineffective **time or work load management** (meeting deadlines etc.).

How can you support a student with ADHD?

1. **Student-Centred Approach:**
   - If you are in doubt about how to support a student at any time, **ask the student** – they are the experts of their own needs!
   - Create a space for students to **feel comfortable approaching you with any issues** (e.g. provide contact and student office hour details etc.).
   - Implement any [classroom](#) and [exam](#) accommodations which were determined at the **student's Needs Assessment.**
   - Ensure the student is aware how they can best contact you and all your **contact details are easily accessed** and identified early in the semester.

2. **Teaching and Learning:**
   - **Design course material so that they can be produced in an accessible format** on request. Following the [Guidelines for Accessible Documents](#), which provides guidelines for Word, PDF, websites and PowerPoint slides.
       - **Microsoft Word files can be easily manipulated** by the student into a format that suits them.
   - Be guided by [Universal Design principles](#) when designing coursework.
   - **Encourage a Kinaesthetic approach to teaching –** practically engaging and involving the student as much as possible in tasks or conversation to help maintain focus.
   - **Provide lecture notes, in a suitable format, in advance of the class.** Providing notes/slides before lectures helps students to focus and engage in class rather than becoming stressed and overwhelmed with note-taking. This will also ensure that the student will have time to go over the content prior to the lecture if attention levels drop during class.
   - **Provide reading lists in advance and assistance with prioritising readings.** Producing a prioritised, annotated reading list can help students to focus on the most important readings. This is particularly important as students' reading speeds/ability to maintain concentration can be greatly reduced.
   - **Provide a clear schedule of assessment** for the module. Providing a detailed guide to how the course is assessed will help students to understand what is expected of them. **Providing sample answers or templates** for assignments is also extremely helpful.

- **Permit the student to use Assistive Technology** in the classroom.
- Consider the student's needs when **planning field trips, placement or other activities**.
- Consider the **exam needs of the student for in-class or mid-semester exams** (e.g. does the student require a computer/assistive technology/reader/scribe?).

3. **Communication:**
   - Ensure all material presenting on slides/whiteboard is **communicated verbally involving the student in conversation where possible**. Less emphasis on written content and more on verbal communication can increase attention span and lessen the pressure on a student to scan written content on slides in a short time frame. Furthermore, this will allow students to allocate more **focus on understanding** the content of the lecture.
   - Provide a **brief orientation** at the start of each module, regardless of year of study, to show students how to access material on Blackboard, how to use relevant library databases and how to find other useful resources.
   - **Giving feedback** on draft assignments can help students to improve their understanding of what is to be expected of them. Guidance on addressing the question, proofreading, editing and structure can be particularly useful.
   - Regularly remind students of important dates and support the student if they have **difficulties meeting deadlines.**
   - Following up meetings with **emails noting the main points/commitments** discussed can prevent students from forgetting about what was discussed.

To find out more, please visit:

- https://www.ahead.ie/inclusiveteaching
- www.hadd.ie