

# THE HIGH ACHIEVERS<sup>1</sup> PROJECT: an independent study of the extent of support provided for students with autism at university in the UK

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## FINAL PROJECT REPORT, 26 MAY 2016

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<sup>1</sup> Our survey and Freedom of Information Act requests were badged 'Higher Achievement'. We subsequently changed the project title to 'High Achievers' to reflect the University of Cambridge's point that students with Asperger syndrome at university 'are by definition very high achievers' (Hastwell et al., 2013, p. 4).

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 12 for brief biographies of the co-authors.



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### *Note on use of terms*

Disability studies scholars generally prefer person-first language such as ‘individual with autism’. Adults on the autism spectrum usually prefer disability-first terms such as ‘autistic individual’. Although preferring the latter, we choose to use both forms of address.

## *Introduction*

We had two specific objectives in mind for our survey to better understand the current level of good practice support for students with autism studying at UK universities. Firstly, we wanted to understand the extent to which universities in the UK comply with disability discrimination law as regards students with autism by making necessary reasonable adjustments. Secondly, we thought that in doing so we might also identify examples of best practice and develop recommendations aimed at raising standards across the HE sector in the context of autism. Underlying this was a view that an autism-appropriate approach to supporting students with autism would better enable them to fulfil their academic potential, improve their university experience, and move on in their lives successfully after university. Such an approach would enhance the reputation of a university, leading to recruitment of more students with autism with the potential to make a significant contribution to raising standards of academic attainment (Hastwell et al., 2013).

There is no shortage of advice and guidance on supporting autistic students in further and higher education. In many cases, but not all, the same advice and guidance will be suitable for both college and university. Guidance specifically focused on students at university has been produced by the Autism&Uni Project<sup>3</sup> in three versions: for managers and senior academics; for lecturers and tutors; and for other professionals both within and outside HE (Fabri, Andrews, and Pukki, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). Members of the Autism&Uni Project have also made various conference presentations (Fabri et al., 2016; Merino, Lancho & Garcia, 2016; Montes García, Stash, & De Bra, 2015; Various authors of articles from the peer-reviewed autism literature have focused on support for students with autism in college and/or university (Breakey, 2006; Chown, & Beavan, 2012; Gelbar, Smith & Reichow, 2014; MacLeod & Green, 2009; Madriaga, 2010; Smith, 2007; VanBergeijk, Klin & Volkmar, 2008; Welkowitz & Baker, 2005; Wenzel & Rowley, 2010; White, Ollendick, & Bray, 2011). Guidance on supporting students with Asperger syndrome is available direct from the National Autistic Society (NAS) website<sup>4</sup>, and includes a reading list (Al-Mahmood et al., 1998; Ambitious about Autism, 2015; Attwood, 2006; Brown & Miller, 2004; Deudney, 2004; Fleisher, 2003; Harpur, Lawlor & Fitzgerald, 2004; Hughes et al., 2009; Jamieson & Jamieson, 2004; Martin & Ilic, 2011; Mowat, Cooper & Gibson, 2010; Powell, 2002; The NAS, 2014). Our aim was to investigate the extent to which the available guidance is actually implemented in practice. Although we would not necessarily expect all the support items included in our questionnaire to be deployed by all establishments (e.g., it may be impractical for a university with a very large campus, or multiple campuses, to ensure that a student will never have to change classrooms) the list collated from the questionnaire responses at Table 1 is a basic ‘gap analysis’ of items considered to be critical for students with autism.

We now explain the initial ‘key’ decision-making, and our approach to data collection (including questionnaire design) and analysis, before setting out our findings, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of current provision identified by our respondents.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.autism-uni.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.autism.org.uk/professionals/teachers/fe-he/aspergers-support.aspx>

## *Methods*

To avoid the risks associated with generalising from a sample to the total population, we decided to seek contributions to our study from *all* UK universities other than non-UK owned campuses (to maintain a fully UK focus). We also excluded colleges that grant degrees. We decided on a questionnaire survey rather than interviews given the logistical ‘impossibility’ of interviewing representatives of about 160 establishments. (We aim to undertake a follow-up study involving interviews subject to obtaining the necessary funding<sup>5</sup> to facilitate this.) A two phase data collection stage was adopted involving the submission of a questionnaire to university disability support teams followed by the submission of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to universities that did not complete the questionnaire. The question set was deliberately left unchanged for the second phase, despite the opportunity to make changes, to enable like-for-like comparisons. As respondents to the initial survey would be volunteers, but there was a legal requirement to complete FOI requests, we decided to analyse the data in three stages – the first phase data set, the second phase data set, and the two sets combined – and identify any significant differences between the first two data sets. Finally, we undertook a ‘pilot’ exercise with a couple of university disability officers to test out the original questionnaire design, making minor changes to reflect feedback received.

We undertook the FOI phase of the project in accordance with the FOI Act 2000, the FOI (Scotland) Act 2002, the guidance for using FOI Act requests in an academic context issued by University College London (UCL) (Bourke, Worthy, and Hazell, 2012), and the guidelines issued by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). We ensured Data Protection Act compliance. As privately owned establishments are not subject to the FOIA, we could not submit requests to all the universities contacted during the first phase. Due to receipt of claims of copyright in their responses from a small number of universities, and requests to submit our final report for vetting prior to publication, we delayed publishing this final report while we took the necessary action to ensure that we were acting appropriately.

We now turn to the design of the questionnaire. All researchers using the questionnaire survey method wrestle with the need to balance the wish to ask questions with the risk of discouraging participation. This issue assumed a greater priority for us because exemptions in the FOI Act enable organisations to avoid responding either to individual questions or to an entire request. Refusal is justified if it would cost too much or take too much staff time to deal with a request, or if a request is considered vexatious. It was therefore essential to keep the number of questions in the FOI request to a necessary minimum to manage the risk of requests being refused. As we had decided to use the same question set for both data collection phases, this imperative did not just affect the design of the FOI requests. We decided to ask no more than 20 specific questions. In most cases, questions were our approach to seeking information relevant to matters referred to in the Final Project Report of the Cambridge Asperger Syndrome Student Project, 2009-12 (Hastwell et al., 2013).

We were especially interested to investigate: (a) the extent to which universities employed their own in-house autism specialists; (b) the approaches adopted to obtain and act on feedback relating to autism support; (c) training in autism provided to new disability support staff, other non-teaching staff, and academic staff; (d) support for transitioning from school and college; (e) arrangements for raising awareness of autism amongst non-autistic students; (f) university policy; (g) graduation rates, retention rates, and rates of post-graduation transition to employment, education, and training; and (h) involvement of university autism

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<sup>5</sup> This study was undertaken by a group of independent scholars on an unfunded basis.

lecturers and researchers in general autism-awareness raising across their establishments<sup>6</sup>. We also provided space for respondents to provide additional freeform comments.

### ***Lessons learned***

During the course of the FOI phase of our data collection activity, we learned various lessons which we describe here briefly as they may assist other academic researchers who decide to use FOI requests as an academic research tool.

We were initially unaware that the chosen online survey tool did not have the facility to enable universities to retain a copy of their online submission for subsequent reference. This

proved to be an issue as recipients of FOI requests are required to retain a copy of their responses in their records in accordance with section 8(1)(a) of the FOI Act<sup>7</sup>.

We sought to reflect the guidance issued by the ICO and UCL in undertaking the FOI phase of our data collection exercise. As the sheer scale of the survey prevented us from building a relationship with each university FOI officer, we decided that the least we could do to assist them was to provide them with advance notice of our intention to submit an FOI request. This approach proved very useful to some establishments.

One respondent explained the position regarding data protection vis a vis FOI requests undertaken for academic research purposes: 'While it may not be your intention to publish data which could be used to identify individual members of staff, all disclosures under FOI must be considered as disclosures to the general public and not to an individual'.

We strongly recommend academic researchers using FOI requests to trial their request as they would any other survey to ensure, as far as possible, that it will not fall foul of any of the exemptions within the FOIA. Whilst an FOI request has the advantage of statutory backing, so response rates should be close to 100%, a high response rate may only be achievable if researchers ensure that they comply with the terms of the FOIA and avoid the possible application by recipients of one of the exemptions built into the Act.

### ***Results***

We received responses to the survey from 99 establishments which represented about 60% of the total number of universities in the UK. Individual universities did not always respond to all questions, hence the total number of responses to a question is often less than 99.

The responses to the narrative questions from the 52 establishments which provided online responses are included in appendices (see pages ii and iii). Responses in the hard copy forms provided by the other 47 respondents are not included as we do not have the time to type them all up or the funds to have them typed up for us (this is unfunded research). However, we have uploaded, to the 'High Achievers' website, duly anonymised, scanned copies of all responses from establishments which have given us permission to re-use their data.

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<sup>6</sup> We hypothesised that, with a few honourable exceptions, academics involved in autism teaching and research would generally not have a direct role in raising understanding of autism across their establishment.

<sup>7</sup> Section 8(1)(a) of the FOIA states that information provided in response to an FOI request must be: 'in a form which, by reason of its having some permanency, is capable of being used for subsequent reference'.

*How many students declared an autism spectrum diagnosis to the university during each of the previous five academic years?*

Of the 99 respondents to the survey, 84 provided figures in response to the question asking how many students declared an autism spectrum diagnosis during each of the previous five academic years, but not all respondents provided figures for each year. Although the totals

cannot be exact<sup>8</sup> (e.g., some ‘rounded’ figures were likely to be estimates), we now know that approximately 4,668 students had declared a diagnosis of autism in the academic year 2014/15 to the 84 establishments that responded, which is a substantial number. There are 55 students with autism on average in each university, although the numbers reported varied from one to ‘approximately 200’ per establishment with ten universities having more than 100 autistic students on their role in 2014/15 and another 24 establishments having between 50 and 99 students in that same year. The number of establishments reporting figures between 2010/11 and 2014/15 varied substantially (from 47 to 84) so that direct comparisons between all these years were not possible. However, the variation in numbers of establishments reporting from 2011/12 to 2013/14 was only three (70, 72 and 73) so the percentage increase in the number of students over these three years of 53% (2,045 to 3,129) was for almost directly comparable university numbers. On the basis of a pro rata increase from 2010/11 to 2011/12, and a pro rata increase between 2013/14 and 2014/15, we estimate that the student population declaring a diagnosis of autism increased over the four years from 2010/11 to 2014/15 by 124% *on a like-for-like basis*<sup>9</sup> which is a substantial change over a relatively short period (especially when considered in the light of the 77% increase in the three years to 2010/11 reported by Hastwell et al. (2013)). This suggests that the overall percentage increase from 2008/09 to 2014/15 in numbers of students with autism in HE may have exceeded 200%. The actual numbers of autistic students attending UK universities will be significantly greater than the figures reported to us as some students will not have declared their diagnosis and others may not know that they have autism.

Of the establishments not providing student numbers, 12 stated that they do not hold the information at all, do not hold it in the form requested (e.g., their data holdings are insufficiently specific), or that a physical search of individual student files would be necessary. A further university was unable to provide the data as they were transitioning student record programs. One university stated that the cost of locating and extracting the data would exceed the FOIA cost threshold which implied that this establishment did not hold the data requested online. Another university wrote that the provision of this data is exempt under Section 40 (2) of the FOIA because the low numbers of students involved would risk identifying individuals so that disclosure might breach data protection principles.

*Do you have an autism expert/specialist on staff to provide your staff with advice on supporting students with autism (academically and pastorally)?*

*If you have in-house autism expertise/specialist support, is this full time or part time?*

<sup>8</sup> For instance, one university provided figures for the years from 2010/11 to 2014/15 of between 19 and 25 but a figure of 59 for 2015/16. The latter figure could imply under-reporting in the earlier years.

<sup>9</sup> Our like-for-like calculation is similar to retail groups which declare like-for-like differences in annual sales figures by deducting sales for shops opened over the period since the previous annual report.

All but one of the 99 respondents answered our question asking if they have an in-house autism expert/specialist to provide their staff with advice on supporting students with autism (both academically and pastorally). 40 (40%) of the respondent universities had no in-house autism expert/specialist<sup>10</sup>, 28 (28%) had one in-house specialist, and a further 31 (31%) had more than one in-house specialist. Of the 59 respondents who had at least one in-house autism expert/specialist, 37 (63%) employed their specialist(s) on a full-time basis<sup>11</sup>, 17 (29%) employed them on a part-time basis, and five (8%) had both full-time and part-time staff. There is a clear preference (71%) for employing at least one full-time autism specialist.

*If you have in-house autism expertise/specialist support, please provide details of their qualifications and experience*

A further question requested details of the qualifications of autism specialist(s). Three universities withheld responses to avoid the individual being identified. One respondent referred to data protection as justification for not responding to this question. Another establishment provided a link to their website showing their adviser's qualifications; needless to say, the individual concerned is highly qualified (doctorate, chartered psychologist etc.). A further university wrote that 'There is little in the way of formal qualifications in this area [autism]'. Other respondent universities employed autism specialists with formal HE level qualifications in autism and/or Asperger syndrome from at least four different establishments. We counted 12 individuals with a Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate in Autism and/or Asperger Syndrome, one Doctorate, two with a Masters in Autism, and one BPhil in Autism. In addition, a further respondent employed a number of advisers with both a PG Cert in Autism from one university and a PG Cert in Asperger Syndrome from a second university, although it was unclear how many advisers they had. In total, there appeared to be about 18 individuals qualified in *autism* across the 63 establishments employing in-house specialists<sup>12</sup>. We conclude the comments on the matter of qualifications by quoting the establishment which defined its academic requirements for autism specialists as follows: 'The specialist roles listed ... require at least a first degree or equivalent, knowledge and understanding the needs of disabled students, relevant and significant experience of delivering advice and support, and working within a FE/HE environment' but there is no mention of *autism*.

*If you do not have an autism expert/specialist on staff, what arrangements do you make when you need access to specialist expertise in autism?*

We also asked what arrangements are made when a university requires specialist expertise in autism but does not have an autism expert/specialist on staff. Responses included: 'We ask the student (and involve other agencies if necessary) what is going to work best for them'; accessing services from the National Autistic Society, regional autism organisations, or via the National Association of Disability Practitioners; and using the services of a local autism specialist. One respondent university – and bear in mind that this question related to

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<sup>10</sup> A couple of respondents were in the midst of recruiting a full-time autism specialist.

<sup>11</sup> Full-time coverage may be provided by a single member of staff or on a job sharing basis. Where a respondent had both full-time and part-time autism specialists we recorded them as a 'full-time' establishment.

<sup>12</sup> One establishment recruiting their first autism specialist when responding to the survey kindly provided us with the person specification and job description for the new post. The person specification required education to degree level and 'evidence of continuing professional development in the field of disability support with particular reference to Autism Spectrum conditions' but did not require an autism-specific qualification.

universities *without* an in-house autism specialist – stated ‘we get external support where necessary (esp for staff training) but to be honest we find the external “experts” are not always much more knowledgeable or experienced as ourselves’.

*What training and refresher training in autism do you provide for all new disability support staff and student mentors?*

*What training and refresher training in autism do you provide for all new academic staff?*

*What training and refresher training in autism do you provide for all new non-teaching staff other than disability support staff?*

We asked three specific questions concerning provision of training and refresher training in autism’, one relating to new disability support staff and student mentors, a second relating to non-teaching staff other than disability support staff and mentors, and a third relating to new academic staff. Responses to each question varied considerably. Only 12 of the respondents to the question relating to disability support staff training appeared to provide some compulsory training; as far as we could tell, only one establishment provided compulsory training for academic staff; and none of the respondents to the question relating to other non-teaching staff stated that any training was compulsory (although there were mentions of activities such as a ‘disability day’ at the point of induction, which we presume all staff are required to attend, we did not classify these as ‘compulsory training’).

One respondent provided training to their autism mentors via weekly mentoring group meetings. Many respondents referred to ‘offering’ training, training being ‘open’ to academic staff, to providing training ‘on request’, or to training being ‘available’. Some training was only provided online. In a few cases an establishment made achieving a Postgraduate Certificate in HE – which included a session on Asperger syndrome awareness – compulsory for all teaching staff. One establishment stated their position that working with academic departments in support of individual students was an effective approach. Another university’s response to the question relating to academic staff was ‘(the university) doesn’t do “mandatory”, which is a shame’. A further establishment stated that ‘training is offered to all academic staff but it is not mandatory so we have found that very few staff attend’. Yet another respondent stated that they had never been asked to provide training for their academic staff (why did they have to wait to be asked?). One university advised that training and refresher training in autism for staff supporting students with autism ‘is offered but not usually taken up’ which was of concern to us. A few responses mentioned ‘General disability awareness training’ and ‘general equality training’ which may include autism content.

A lecturer in autism at one establishment had provided autism awareness training as part of wider disability training for all three categories of staff for the past three years.

Specialisterne, a specialist recruitment and employment agency for people with autism provide training for support staff at one university.

*What form does support for students with autism take?*

All but one of the 99 respondents answered the question asking what form support for students with autism takes, although one response had to be excluded because it was impossible to interpret. The numbers of universities providing each of the listed areas of support, and the relevant percentages that the numbers providing support bear to the total number of included respondents (97), are shown in Table 1 below. We asked respondents to tell us which of 12 types of support they provided for their students with autism. We list the areas of support in percentage order (commencing with the highest percentage).

***Table 1: A basic ‘gap analysis’ of support provided for students with autism at university***

	<b>Choices (respondents can tick as many of these as apply)</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>
1	Can students stay in halls for the duration of their study?	89	92
2	Extra face-to-face tutorial time and/or email contact time with tutors/mentors?	88	91
3	Provision of scribes and/or audio recordings of lectures	87	90
4	Preference for halls of residence (if requested)	85	88
5	Extended submission deadlines	73	75
6	Support in accessing access learning centres and IT	70	72
7	Support for applicants with autism when attending for interview?	66	68
8	Assistance in travelling to and from different locations in the university	57	59
9	Befriending scheme <sup>13</sup>	47	48
10	Arrangements to ensure continuity of tutors between years as far as possible	38	39
11	Lectures/tutorials for courses with a high percentage of students with autism scheduled to take place in the same building/room as far as possible	27	28
12	Is there a dedicated section in the prospectus outlining support available for persons with autism and who to contact for further information? <sup>14</sup>	21	22

As expected, the support provision percentages were, for the most part, substantially similar between the responses to the original survey and the later FOI request responses. However, there were statistically significant differences between the respective percentages relating to: scribes and/or audio recordings of lectures (59% for the survey, 94% for the FOI requests); extended submission deadlines (53% / 78%); a dedicated section in the prospectus (35% / 19%); and for travelling assistance (29% / 64%). We cannot explain these differences.

*How do you obtain feedback on the effectiveness of the support you provide for students?*

There was no consistency between the universities responding to our follow-up question regarding the means used to obtain feedback on the effectiveness of the support provided for students with autism. Virtually all the respondents answered this question. Responses covered a range of mechanisms including: use of feedback forms; the National Student Survey; individually tailored disability support surveys; discussion during mentoring sessions; monthly reviews; 1-2-1 sessions; case reviews; an online student feedback system; an automated email campaign; a suggestion box; interviews of students going through the university’s specialist autism induction course; student focus groups (the university concerned is also trying to launch a disabled students’ forum); and verbal feedback through

<sup>13</sup> We included mentoring schemes in addition to befriending schemes.

<sup>14</sup> We included online prospectuses if there was a dedicated autism section, as well as those in hard copy form.

support workers. One university recruited a pool of students<sup>15</sup> who could attend their Disability Working Group chaired by a director. At the other end of the scale, the full response from another establishment was ‘Our Mental Health Coordinator<sup>16</sup> will invite students to come and discuss any issues that might arise on a regular basis’. This particular university did not know how many students with autism were enrolled, did not have an autism specialist on its staff, apparently fails to appreciate that autistic students may not want to call attention to themselves by going to see someone.

*How do you act on feedback to ensure that support continually evolves and meets the needs of the students?*

A further follow-up question asked how the universities acted on feedback to ensure that support continually evolves and meets the needs of the students. Almost all the respondents answered this question. Responses included: updating service level agreements based on

feedback received; feeding information into the content of training courses for staff; annual and ad hoc reviews of policies and procedures in response to feedback; building feedback into the university’s planning process; and a process of ‘constant’ evaluation and improvement. One university responded: ‘Peculiar question. How do you act on feedback? Hopefully by listening and adjusting provision’; the fact that they answered their own question rather suggests that there was a point to our question, and other establishments listed a variety of ways and means of adjusting support provision. One standout response, worth quoting in full was: ‘Feedback is monitored, analysed and reported to the Disability Working Group, which has the task of monitoring disability provision, and is fed into the Service's Operational Plan. Information on improvements is published on our webpages and in our Annual Review. Our feedback systems are aligned to the Matrix Quality Standard’. This is the same establishment that recruits students to attend their Disability Working Group.

*What arrangements do you make for new students on the autism spectrum transitioning from school?*

In response to the question asking about arrangements made for new students with autism transitioning from school or college, a significant number of establishments have extensive transition/induction/residential orientation programmes prior to a student’s arrival date, and it seems generally the case that many universities understand the need for support both prior to starting as well as during their stay. Some pre-entry events are open to the student’s parent or carer (which may be important for an autistic student). Apart from those establishments not offering undergraduate qualifications, only two universities stated that they provided no support at all to students with autism transitioning in from school (although there was a great deal of variation between responses). One minimalist response was ‘depends on student need - peer mentoring available (sic), Learning support agreements to make faculty aware, NMH

support front loaded to cover transition’ which appears focused on support in the early days at university with no specific mention of pre-arrival support. Another university referred to ‘transition arrangements’ without specifying what the arrangements were. Elsewhere,

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<sup>15</sup> The response did not specify whether they recruited students *with a disability* to attend the Disability Working Group, as they simply wrote ‘students’, but we suspect that they recruit disabled students.

<sup>16</sup> Autism is *not* a mental health issue, although it can lead to mental health issues.

transition programmes are said to be held over one, two or three days, and include open day events, campus visits, meetings with tutors/supervisors etc. Universities also mentioned provision of buddy support, enrolment prior to starting; 1-2-1 assistance for students with high anxiety 'during freshers' week', and setting aside a quiet room 'on the first day of fresher week' (it was unclear why this is only on offer on the first day but maybe students with autism are encouraged to attend that day only), working with schools prior to starting (when permission is granted), meetings with disability advisers, learning support agreements, regular emails over the summer with information and advice, and mentoring support. Some establishments encourage applications for Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) 'well in advance of starting the course to ensure all support is fully implemented before arrival' (to quote one respondent). One university mentioned the provision of a transitional learning contract where DSA is not in place from the start. One establishment set out the following long list of supports: 'A summer school is available prior to the start of term, campus tours with Student Ambassadors, a Settling-in (sic) Group, Meetings with the Disability Co-ordinator, a Learning Support Plan with details of adjustments/arrangements needed, meetings with Mentors'. Another example of an especially comprehensive response was:

Pre-offer/entry contact with applicants who have declared Autism on their application to set up support. Annual Summer School, 2 night residential free of charge to applicants to prepare them for the transition to University. This includes workshops for parents or other significant relationships We offer individual visits to site and tours Individual open day appointments Links with local Special Needs School. Students with autism who are moving into halls receive a letter providing a named contact and an offer to contact or visit frequently before they move into the accommodation Get Ahead Event – before main enrolment in September students can arrive early to Halls/enrol and a programme of preparatory workshops, including 1-1 meetings to arrange support.

One university's innovative approach to early 'transitioning' from school was to train a cadre of its students to mentor school pupils with university potential 'from Year 9+ onwards'.

*What arrangements do you have for non-autistic students to raise their awareness of autism?*

Although we referred to training in relation to raising awareness amongst university staff, we asked about *arrangements* in relation to the peers of students with autism, it being a matter of ongoing debate as to whether or not autism awareness training should be delivered to non-autistic students. One university stated that if a student wished their classmates to be aware of their autism the university would prefer that the student talked to their peers about their personal experience of autism, rather than that the university deliver training. Other establishments drew attention to the, often difficult, issue of disclosure of autism to peers, generally as a reason not to provide awareness training unless specifically requested by the student to do so. One respondent wrote 'Most (autistic students) do not want their autism discussed or highlighted to fellow students'. (Autism awareness training can be delivered without students being identified). In some cases, awareness arrangements were targeted at classmates or flatmates of autistic students living in Halls of Residence. Forty three of the respondents either had no provision at all or responded 'available on request' or similar. Generally speaking, establishments that did make arrangements often relied on raising general disability awareness. Autism-specific approaches included: a student autism society

working with the students union; an autism group having its own social media channels promoted via main channels; the university's students association taking part in an autism transition programme; awareness campaigns and events; awareness training for student mentors; buddy arrangements between an autistic student and a non-autistic student sharing accommodation; awareness events (some linked to World Autism Awareness Day);

publishing information on autism on their website; information leaflets; and including autism awareness questions in disability quizzes open to all new students. One university stated: 'Some training but not enough offered in this area'. Another said that it was a 'long term priority' to develop arrangements for raising awareness of autism.

*Do you have a specific university policy relating to autism?*

*If you do not have a specific university policy relating to autism, does the university's disability policy include any specific conditions relating to autism?*

Only one respondent stated that they had a specific autism policy. Six respondents said they had made specific provision relating to autism in their general equality/disability policy. On checking with the establishment that said they had a policy on autism, it became apparent that they were referring to a section regarding support available for students with autism on their website, and that this was not an official University policy. We reviewed the relevant policies for the establishments which said they had made specific provision for autism in their equality/disability policy and found no reference to autism in any of the policies. It was then clear to us that the nature of our questions relating to policy had been misunderstood by these seven universities. The strong indications are that no respondent had a separate autism policy or made provision specific to autism in their generic equality/disability policy.

*If you know what your graduation rate for students with an autism spectrum diagnosis is please provide the following:*

- (c) the graduation rate for students with an autism spectrum diagnosis*
- (d) the graduation rate across all your students.*

We hoped to be able to draw conclusions about graduation rates for students with autism in comparison to the total student body. However, we are unable to do more than draw attention to a few points because of the small amount of data provided. Of the 99 universities that responded to the survey, only 21 could provide graduation comparison data for at least one of the five years we were interested in and only eight establishments could provide figures for all five years. The 21 establishments gave us only a total of 57 individual years' worth of data. Over these 57 years, in 41 years the 'all students' graduation rate exceeded that for the students with autism, the situation was reversed in a further 15 years, and in one year the two graduation rates were the same. A small number of establishments had misunderstood the question and had provided comparison data relating to the achievement of a first, 2:1 or 2:2 degree<sup>17</sup>, or number of students). It appeared that the universities providing figures for the past five years had at least 50 students with autism in the year 2014/15, and, in most cases, substantially more. Whilst some establishments have too few students with autism for data

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<sup>17</sup> One university provided data relating to degree divisions. In two out of the three years covered, the students with autism achieved a substantially higher rate of 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1 degrees than was the case for 'all students'.

collection to be worthwhile in the context of comparison with other students, we think that not all universities who should be collecting this data actually are collecting it.

*If you know what your retention rate for students with an autism spectrum diagnosis is please provide the following.*

*(c) the retention rate for students with an autism spectrum diagnosis*

*(d) the retention rate across all your students.*

We are unable to do more than draw attention to a few points relating to retention rates due to the limited data provided. Only 29 of 99 respondents, provided retention comparison data for at least one of the five years we requested and only seven establishments provided figures for all five years. The 29 universities gave us only a total of 66 individual years' worth of data. Over these 66 years, in 42 years the 'all students' retention rate exceeded that for the students with autism, the situation was reversed in a further 21 years, and in three years the rates were the same. As with the graduation rate data, it appeared that the universities providing figures

for the past five years had at least 50 students with autism in the year 2014/15, and, in most cases, substantially more. Whilst some establishments have too few students with autism for meaningful comparisons to be drawn, it is again correct to state that not all universities who perhaps should be collecting this data actually said they are. In a small number of cases, an establishment quite reasonably stated that the time taken to gather the information would exceed the FOIA "appropriate limit" or risk breaching data protection principles. However, one university stated that it could not provide this information because 'Disclosure of the requested data would ... *be likely to be detrimental to the public interest by calling into question the success of the student experience at (the respondent university) and the University's ability to successfully recruit and then retain students on its degree programmes, this would be harmful to the University's reputation*' (our italics). In this latter case, we question whether disclosure of the data is not in the public interest; specifically, the interest of their potential future students.

*What percentage of students with an autism spectrum diagnosis go on to full time employment, education or training?*

We have little to report regarding our question concerning the percentage of students with autism who go on to full-time employment, education or training. This is partly because universities generally rely on the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey for this information which, in turn, means that the availability of the information is dependent upon the response rate to the DLHE survey. The small numbers of students with autism at many establishments is often reduced still further as some do not complete the survey. Fourteen universities provided the percentage of their former students with autism who had moved on to employment, further education or training as reported in the latest survey for which figures were available (2013/14). However, the numbers of students involved are generally too small for statistical analysis to be meaningful so we prefer not to report them in detail. For instance, one establishment with over 100 students with autism in 2013/14 provided figures for the years 2010/11 to 2013/14; in two of these years the percentage of former students with autism in employment, further study or both was substantially less than for all leavers, although in the other two years the percentages of leavers with autism actually exceeded the percentages for all leavers (by a small amount). We

want to conclude by giving an anonymous mention to the university which, after advising that they do not hold this information, added that they ‘work with students 1:1 either as case managers or mentors to help them manage the transition to post University life’.

*If you offer qualifications in autism, do those teaching these qualifications play any role in raising awareness and understanding of autism across the university?*

We asked those universities which offer qualifications in autism whether the staff teaching these qualifications played any role in raising awareness and understanding of autism across the university. Only five respondent universities had taught autism programmes. The teaching staff at one university offer autism training to staff, another wrote ‘Staff who teach on these courses have provided occasional developmental sessions for other areas of the University in response to requests’, and a third establishment stated that, whilst they did not involve their autism teaching staff in a wider role at present, they hoped to involve them in 2016. One other respondent wrote: ‘as far as I know the teaching staff do not have a role in staff development activities’. Lastly, a university with a major autism centre did not give a direct response to our question, but referred to their ‘ground-breaking scientific research’ in autism. We presume that if their autism team had a wider role they would probably have said so.

*Is there anything else you would like to add?*

In response to the final question asking if they had anything to add, the following key points were made (all the following points have been quoted verbatim from the survey):

1. The government’s proposed policy on DSA support will have a high impact on ASC [autism spectrum condition] students.
2. The Welsh Government suspended the Autism Strategy 18 months ago. We had links with (the Council’s) ASD Development Officer ... but believe this post has come to an end.
3. Having a dedicated AS specialist post has made significant impact on the development of support structures here.
4. [The university] had a specialist expert who left last year and hasn't yet been replaced.
5. Support requirements such as copies of lecture notes in advance, permission to record lectures and exam allowances are communicated to staff via a Learning Profile. We also have School Disability Contacts who can act as a point of contact and an advocate for students with ASCs.
6. We run a fortnightly social and support group for ASD [autism spectrum disorder] students which is well attended. The group aims to support the students in developing their social and communication skills ... We ask for written consent to liaise with a person chosen by the student (usually a parent) to enable us to maintain contact with those that can offer support ... We have a monitoring system to enable us to keep an eye on the progress and wellbeing of students we have identified as being of concern – this includes many of our ASD students ...
7. The amount of time you put into autism specific training depends on local resources and most particularly the staff:student ratio in specialist services. Even if I had the knowledge, would I have the time?
8. This year we are looking to set up a transition out of University scheme for students with aspergers to help them with this transition.

We conclude with an honourable mention for the respondent university that advised they were seeking accreditation under the National Autistic Society's Autism-specific quality assurance programme. We could find no university already accredited under this scheme out of the approximately 480 organisations that have achieved accreditation to date.

### *Discussion*

It is difficult to estimate the total number of students with autism at university in the UK. We suspect that a figure of 5,000 in 2014/15 would still significantly underestimate the total number of autistic students attending the 99 respondent universities. As there are in the region of 160 UK degree-awarding bodies<sup>18</sup>, there may be as many as 9,000 students with autism in total in UK HE, many of whom are high achievers (Hastwell et al., 2013).

Whilst it is encouraging that 60% of establishments had at least one in-house specialist, and that these are sometimes supplemented by other staff with experience of supporting students with autism, it is of concern that 40% of universities do not currently have any in-house specialist expertise in autism. It is acknowledged that some universities without their own expert employ external advisers; however, this is not necessarily a sufficient alternative to in-house provision as the following statement from one respondent university indicates 'No [we do not have an autism expert/specialist on staff] but we have a member from ASSIST (Asperger Support Signposting Information Services Team) *who comes in once a month, whom students can see*' (our italics). We consider it entirely inappropriate to expect a student with autism<sup>19</sup> requiring support to wait up to one month for it.

There are formal postgraduate qualifications in autism available in the UK – including a Postgraduate Certificate in Autism and Asperger Syndrome sponsored by the National Autistic Society – and, clearly, considerable scope for other establishments and individuals to follow the lead of those who have in-house autism-qualified autism specialists.

Of the supports achieving the lower percentages, the inclusion of a dedicated autism section in university prospectuses is surely a potential 'quick win' for those establishments yet to provide this support. The size and complexity of university teaching and tutoring arrangements, does make it difficult to ensure continuity of arrangements; however, with the inclusion of an 'as far as possible' proviso in our question, we expected higher response rates. Students with autism often have difficulty in finding their way around even one single large, complex building of the type that universities typically consist of, and it should not be difficult to provide such assistance (e.g., though a 'buddy' arrangement). So we were surprised that not much more than half of establishments provided assistance in travelling to and from different locations. The 'inter-campus bus service' response from one university rather missed the point, as did the establishment which stated that it is a single campus university. These responses stand in direct contrast to the university which referred to 'helping a student *to use the shuttle bus between campuses*' (our italics) as they clearly understood that assisting students with autism to find their way around requires more than just providing transport. Assistance in travelling within the university, support when

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/check-a-university-is-officially-recognised/recognised-bodies>

<sup>19</sup> This establishment was unable to tell us how many students with autism they have.

attending for interview, support for accessing learning centres and IT, extended submission deadlines, and a befriending scheme are all crucial aspects of support for many students with autism, as the provision of these supports by between 48 and 75% of respondents attests to; these may also be ‘quick wins’ for those establishments yet to provide them. Given that social difficulties are at the heart of autistic students’ university experience, we think that implementing a befriending scheme should be an especially high priority for the over 50% of establishments that did not report having such a scheme. One standout response to the befriending question referred to the ‘Socialeyes’<sup>20</sup> programme to:

help participants explore the social world and become more confident in social situations ... it does not tell learners how to change “inappropriate” social behaviour - but has been designed to help learners explore social interaction so that they can make

an informed choice about how they might respond in similar situations; it aims to help learners develop their own social response repertoire.

The provision of support for potential students when attending for an interview would provide the university with an early opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to supporting students with autism and could be a contributory factor in the choice of university.

The contrast between establishments which clearly understood the importance of effective transitioning from school or college and those that appeared not to was marked.

Few universities could provide retention, graduation, and post-graduation status rates. We think it is important for all establishments to know how these rates for their students with autism compare to their ‘all students’ rates. This is particularly the case for post-graduation outcomes, given the need to support students with autism into employment.

We asked ourselves whether we felt that a university should have a specific policy relating to autism, or, if not, whether there was any need to make some specific provision for autism in a generic equality/disability policy. None of the responding establishments had apparently seen the need to do either. We concluded that an equalities policy confirming a university’s commitment to meet its statutory requirements should be adequate with one important exception. Such a policy would not include compliance with the non-statutory recommendation in the Ministerial Foreword to the ‘Statutory guidance for Local Authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy’<sup>21</sup>. The Minister stated: *‘We recommend that other providers of public services, such as providers of services to support people into employment ... look to follow the guidance to help improve*

*the delivery of the services they provide to adults with autism: for example ensuring that staff who provide services to adults with autism have received autism awareness training would clearly be of value across all public services. This should lead to better outcomes for people with autism and make best use of public resources’* (our italics). Universities support people into employment and are covered by this recommendation. We concluded that a university equalities policy should include provision along the lines of the following example text

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<sup>20</sup> The ‘Socialeyes’ programme covers: starting a conversation, eye contact, personal space, taking turns in a conversation, keeping on topic, talking about interests, sensitive topics, and ending a conversation.

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/422338/autism-guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422338/autism-guidance.pdf)

(which also reflects our view that all universities should have a high-level autism working group reporting direct to their management board):

The University confirms its adherence to the recommendation in the Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy for other providers of services to follow the guidance to ensure that delivery of the services the University provides to its students with autism meet current good autism practice standards. A working group exercises oversight in this area and reports regularly to the University's management board.

Although not all universities offering qualifications in autism responded to the survey, those that did appear to focus on their research and teaching as one would expect. However, given their presumed expertise in autism we think there could be a valuable wider staff development role for the teaching staff, perhaps in a 'training the trainers' capacity.

We analysed our data in three stages to identify any significant differences between the two data sets as first stage responders (disability support teams) were volunteers whereas second stage responders (FOI officers) were legally obliged to respond. Although there were no significant differences in terms of results, second stage responders often gave a better account of their institution's situation than first stage responders, by providing more extensive data, providing unsolicited follow-up data, etc. This was the opposite of what we expected.

### ***Limitations***

We would have asked additional questions but wanted to avoid respondents being able to rely on FOIA exceptions (we were pleased to note that very few respondents relied on these exceptions in practice). We obtained responses from just over 60% (99 from c160) of the UK universities which, although a reasonable sample, still fails to account for a substantial number of establishments. For logistical reasons, only the online data (over half the 99 responses) was analysed by more than one team member; the other data was analysed by the lead researcher only. Because we are an unfunded team of independent researcher, and undertook this study in our spare time, we were unable to do everything we would have liked to do. For instance, for logistical reasons we have been unable include responses not provided via the SurveyMonkey software for both the original questionnaire survey and the FOIA requests. Because certain establishments claimed copyright in their responses, and required to vet our final report prior to its publication, we were forced to seek permission to include their data from *all* respondents to protect ourselves from potential legal action for breach of copyright. Not all universities gave us their permission to do so, which reduces the scope of the data provided within this report still further.

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## Appendix 1: The 'High Achievers' questionnaire

The project will much appreciate your responses to the following questions to enable us to evaluate and report on the extent of support available to students with autism at university in the UK.

All data will be kept securely and in all reports and publications the data will be fully anonymised to ensure complete confidentiality for the university.

If you are able to provide data for each of the previous five academic years in respect of the questions relating to retention and graduation rates, that will be of great help to us.

Question 1 refers to students declaring an autism spectrum diagnosis. These diagnoses include: autism spectrum disorder, autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder, Asperger syndrome, high-functioning autism, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified, and atypical autism.

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your feedback is important to the autism community.

1. Please state the name of your university here (we are only asking this so we do not 'chase' any university unnecessarily). All data in our reporting and other publications will be anonymised).
2. How many students declared an autism spectrum diagnosis to the university during each of the previous five academic years?
3. Do you have an autism expert/specialist on staff to provide your staff with advice on supporting students with autism (academically and pastorally)?

Answer choices:

We have no in-house expert/specialist

We have one in-house expert/specialist

We have more than one in-house expert/specialist

4. If you have in-house autism expertise/specialist support, is this full time or part time?

Answer choices:

Full time

Part time

5. If you have part time in-house autism expertise/specialist support, how many hours a week are worked?
6. What form does support for students with autism take? Please tick the box next to each type of support that you provide.

a) Support for applicants with autism when attending for interview?	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Is there a dedicated section in the prospectus outlining support available for	<input type="checkbox"/>

persons with autism and who to contact for further information?	
c) Preference for halls of residence (if requested)	
d) Can students stay in halls for the duration of their study?	
e) Extra face-to-face tutorial time and/or email contact time with tutors/mentors?	
f) Extended submission deadlines	
g) Provision of scribes and/or audio recordings of lectures	
h) Lectures/tutorials for courses with a high percentage of students with autism scheduled to take place in the same building/room as far as possible	
i) Arrangements to ensure continuity of tutors between years as far as possible	
j) Assistance in travelling to and from different locations in the university	
k) Befriending scheme	
l) Support in accessing access learning centres and IT	

7. How do you obtain feedback on the effectiveness of the support you provide for students?
8. How do you act on feedback to ensure that support continually evolves and meets the needs of the students?
9. If you have in-house autism expertise/specialist support, please provide details of their qualifications and experience
10. If you *do not* have an autism expert/specialist on staff, what arrangements do you make when you need access to specialist expertise in autism?
11. What training and refresher training in autism do you provide for all new disability support staff and student mentors?
12. What training and refresher training in autism do you provide for all new academic staff?
13. What training and refresher training in autism do you provide for all new non-teaching staff other than disability support staff?
14. What arrangements do you make for new students on the autism spectrum transitioning from school?
15. What arrangements do you have for non-autistic students to raise their awareness of autism?

16. Do you have a specific university policy relating to autism? (If you have such a policy, please email a link to it on your website or a copy of the policy to: npchownsveys@gmail.com)
17. If you do *not* have a specific university policy relating to autism, does the university's disability policy include any specific conditions relating to autism? (If there are such conditions please email a link to the policy on your website or a copy of the policy to: npchownsveys@gmail.com)
18. If you know what your graduation rate for students with an autism spectrum diagnosis is please provide the following:
  - (a) the graduation rate for students with an autism spectrum diagnosis
  - (b) the graduation rate across all your students.
19. If you know what your retention rate for students with an autism spectrum diagnosis is please provide the following.
  - (a) the retention rate for students with an autism spectrum diagnosis
  - (b) the retention rate across all your students.
20. What percentage of students with an autism spectrum diagnosis go on to full time employment, education or training?
21. If you offer qualifications in autism, do those teaching these qualifications play any role in raising awareness and understanding of autism across the university?
22. Is there anything else you would like to add?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO RESPOND TO OUR SURVEY.

## Appendix 2: Request to re-use data provided in responses to Freedom of Information requests

Good afternoon,

Earlier this year the 'Higher Achievement' Project issued a survey designed to evaluate the extent of good practice support for students with autism in UK higher education. We followed this up with Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests where necessary. We have received valuable data from 99 universities. Over 80% of our data (82 responses) is contained in responses to FOIA requests.

Our final report has been prepared. However, we have received a small number of claims of copyright from certain respondents in relation to data provided in response to FOIA requests. In these cases we have been asked to allow the university concerned to vet our report before a decision can be made on publication of their data.

We have placed the report 'on hold' for the time being while this issue is being resolved. Our resolution is to ask *all* respondents for their permission to re-use their data. Where permission is granted we will remove or redact the data to ensure that we are not exposed to legal action for breach of copyright.

May we please request your permission to re-use the information you kindly provided to us for academic research purposes. Be assured that all data will be fully anonymised and will only be used in the dissemination of our research findings. Our findings have the potential to enhance support provided for students with autism.

The question set from the survey was used for the FOI requests i.e. the type of data is the same.

Please accept our apologies for having to trouble you again.

Regards,

Nick Chown, PhD, MA Autism, PG Cert Asperger Syndrome  
for Higher Achievement Project

### Appendix 3: How do you obtain feedback on the effectiveness of the support you provide for students?

Survey.

Through student satisfaction data and survey

no formal feedback but students constantly access the service and feedback is obtained informally

Evaluation collected from disabled students twice yearly.

121 meetings and group end of term sessions

Case reviews with our NMH providers. We also run annual surveys with our students/service users.

We have a dedicated AS Adviser who works closely with students and academics. We have on-line student feedback system and also an automated email campaign to seek student feedback

Disability & Inclusion Team student survey. Monthly reports from support workers arranged through Number 6 Autism Initiatives. Regular reviews with students.

surveys Student disability reps focus groups suggestion box

we sometimes interview students regarding our specialist (ASC) induction course. Informal feedback, review degree outcomes

Student focus groups. We are also trying to launch a disabled students' forum

annual student feedback survey for Student Services. Also local feedback on projects.

Questionnaires and discussion with students at reviews and during mentoring sessions.

Speaking regularly to the students. Figures show a slight increase in grades for students with a disability v those without, suggesting that the support is appropriate and working

Annual questionnaires

annual student survey, comments and complaints, verbal feedback, through support workers

The University employs a number of strategies to gain student feedback, including course reps and module evaluation. Disability Service actively encourages student feedback, on our web pages, newsletter articles, snapshot monitoring questionnaires following appointments etc. We also recruit to a pool of 6 students to sit on the Disability Working Group, chaired by the Director of Student Experience. Students are invited to attend lunch-time meetings beforehand to look at agenda items and to have the opportunity to become familiar with the terms of reference etc. so that they feel supported in attending institutional meetings. They

are awarded [*reference to university removed to ensure anonymity*] Employability Award credits for their involvement. We also run Socialeyes modules. Support workers are encouraged to proactively gain feedback and we have end of semester evaluations.

Through the National Student Survey(NSS), and meeting with the professional support funded through the DSA

annual student satisfaction survey

Via email questionnaire and day to day conversation

No specific feedback methods in place, currently respond to student comments / review meetings.

The service has much management/audit data which is frequently analysed. Also the service is in the process of developing a robust student satisfaction survey

Various surveys (online and paper-based), focus groups, informal feedback and review meetings.

Through annual postgraduate student survey, through student representation on committees and fora and via informal/immediate feedback in small college (1200).

Evaluation form at the end of the academic year and during student appointments

The University uses surveys for large scale feedback, but also seeks information in focus groups or 1:1 depending on what the support is. Within Disability Services we have a yearly survey on satisfaction.

Survey is sent out twice per year to students accessing DSA Specialist Mentor support. Research project - An evaluation of a programme of transition support for students with Autism at the [*reference to university removed to ensure anonymity*] – April 2015

We don't collate anything but review individual student support by offering review meetings and making contact with students. Students are also invited to feedback at the Disabled Students Network (DSN) sessions.

See response to question 8 [*This establishment's response to question 8 was as follows.*  
• *Engagement survey information disaggregated by disability type* • *Annual review of disability services provided to each student* • *Discussions with key academic departments to plan support and review after each academic year* • *Close contact with Students' Union and their disability advocacy group* • *Close liaison with Resident Tutors*]

Various Surveys (via SurveyMonkey) The National Student Survey (NSS)

There are ongoing opportunities for students to provide feedback to their Disability Officer, or their School Disability Advisor (an academic member of staff allocated responsibility for being a point of contact for students with disabilities, and communicating support needs to members of staff). There is an annual survey of disability support, and opportunity for each student to have an annual review of their support needs with their Disability Officer. The

University also conducted a research project in 2014-15 highlighting the impact and effectiveness of disability support for students. This formed the basis for service objectives in 2015-16.

Our Mental Health Coordinator will invite students to come and discuss any issues that might arise on a regular basis.

In house questionnaires eg after advice appointments, pre entry meetings, invite feedback or review meetings of adjustments NSS, and other University annual feedback mechanisms

We survey all students with disability-related support and students with autism would have regular meetings with a disability adviser and mentor.

We obtain feedback on the effectiveness of our support from advisers via feedback forms and evaluate the effectiveness of specialist mentoring support via measuring outcomes with the student of how much more confident/skilled they feel in key areas of impact that they have worked on.

In academic year 2014/15 we introduced feedback fortnight twice per year as a way of obtaining feedback from students. Historically we have issued electronic questionnaires. In academic year 2016/17 we will be reintroducing electronic questionnaires as this has yielded a better response rate than our current feedback fortnight. Since academic year 2012/13 we have undertaken an audit of specialist study skills for those students receiving this support within our service. External non-medical providers update us with surveys they have undertaken.

Through the annual student survey and sometimes individually tailored 'Disability Support' surveys

Through on line surveys and through support review meetings.

#### FEEDBACK FORMS FEEDBACK FROM SUMMER PROGRAMME AUTISM AND ASPERGERS SUPPORT NETWORK

All students are offered a 1-1 appointment with a disability adviser. Students are contacted after their appointment and are given the opportunity to provide feedback. Feedback is also collected via comment forms, general feedback to the department and a service questionnaire sent to all disabled students. We offer review appointments where this is needed and all disabled students are given a named caseworker who the student can contact in person, e-mail or via phone.

we seek feedback from all disabled students registered with the service in annual surveys

Annual disability Services student satisfaction survey, and questionnaires asking them about their 1-1 support.

Annual service survey, alongside larger university-wide surveys and regular informal feedback from students

Surveys including Bi-annual survey to all of our Disability registered students, regular University wide surveys, Forums such as the Staff/Student Liaison committees, Student Reps/SU etc, Student Experience Council, Diversity Forum (open to all), regular face to face support of students 1:1 ensures good communication.

Have in the past used survey monkey - poor uptake. Direct feedback asked from mentees and social groups.

Overall Disability Service survey, Support Worker Service survey, face-to-face feedback, event-specific feedback, Disability Champions (disabled students who are recruited and paid), some of whom are on the spectrum, also available as 'focus group'

surveys and face to face feed back

Annual exit surveys are conducted with students from all programmes. Students are able to provide written feedback on all aspects of the student services on offer.

On-line surveys of disabled students' experiences. feedback from meetings with students. Disabled students' forum. Liaison with Disabled Students' Officer, Students' Union. Statistical data.

conversations in one to one sessions questionnaires focus groups

## Appendix 4: How do you act on feedback to ensure that support continually evolves and meets the needs of the students?

Review and add to operational plans for implementation.

The feedback is analysed and, where needed, changes are made.

casework weekly team meetings. Also take into account informal feedback during sessions

We are a small university and treat all our students as individuals. We are student-centred and hold review meetings as necessary.

Make changes where suggested. Implement recommendations if appropriate

Regular support reviews that feed into updating our Service Level Agreements.

Information is fed back into content of our training courses for staff and forms part of the advice given to staff on a 1-1 basis by the AS Adviser. Guidance also exists on our website and internal on-line training materials

Make appropriate changes to support and reasonable adjustments. Arrange Autism Awareness Training for staff.

annual and ad hoc review of policies and procedures in response to feedback and any issues that have arisen

meet as a team to discuss feedback and this feeds into future support mechanisms

We liaise closely with Programme Directors and Schools Support staff to promote a 'joined up' approach

Peculiar question. How do you act on feedback? Hopefully by listening and adjusting provision.

Over the summer when there are less students present the service is reviewed and new initiatives developed to drive the provision forward.

Build it into the planning stage for development.

Look at initiating change from feedback received in questionnaires.

we are constantly evaluating the service and looking for ways to improve based on feedback and knowledge of best practice

Feedback is monitored, analysed and reported to the Disability Working Group, which has the task of monitoring disability provision, and is fed into the Service's Operational Plan. Information on improvements is published on our webpages and in our Annual Review. Our feedback systems are aligned to the Matrix Quality Standard.

Regular reviews of the service and feedback

annual service plan

Implement changes suggested if possible and reasonable.

Make any relevant adjustments where appropriate.

Feedback is encouraged and used to support annual planning process.

Review/analyse all student feedback and plan priorities to take account of feedback received.

We consistently seek to develop our services to ensure they meet the needs of students.

Analyse the feedback, liaise with the student and relevant other parties and amend practice as appropriate

We provide a you said we did on the feedback we can act on and also aim to answer some of the questions raised which we can't act on. This is provided on our website and digital signage.

Acting on recommendations of the Research Project, and *[word removed just in case it could identify this establishment]* Survey, and support review documents.

We have regular team meetings where we discuss any issues and how to address them for the future. We liaise with external providers about any Student Support Worker issues to ensure that they are not impacting on the student. We also liaise and provide training to Faculty staff.

- Engagement survey information disaggregated by disability type
- Annual review of disability services provided to each student
- Discussions with key academic departments to plan support and review after each academic year
- Close contact with Students' Union and their disability advocacy group
- Close liaison with Resident Tutors

1-1 through Disability Advisers Drop-in Sessions Team meetings to discuss improvements

Disability Services provides bi-annual reports to the University's Disability Forum outlining feedback received and actions taken. Staff also meet, on an ongoing basis, with representatives from the Students' Union to discuss relevant issues.

Our Mental Health coordinator will act on behalf of the student to resolve any issues that may arise on a case by case basis

Actions plans

By continuously reassessing and responding to needs as/when identified on an individual basis (over and above the 'standard' provisions that would be put in place initially)

We act on all feedback - either by addressing issues individually when they arise and/or via discussions in team meetings and through consideration of an annual report which is compiled from measuring outcomes.

All feedback is presented to our senior management group within Student Support and Guidance and actions, changes are discussed and agreed.

As part of annual service review

The Service Manager reviews the feedback and makes decision on what improvements can be made immediately and those where further resources are required and submissions made during the annual budget round.

#### REGULARLY SEEK FEEDBACK AND ADAPT

All feedback received is reviewed and reported through an annual report. Findings and trends are looked at as a service and we have an annual 'operational planning day' where we reflect on the previous year and use feedback to identify developments for the next year. Development tasks are shared amongst the team.

Continually review and monitor feedback, both from annual survey and from one-to-one appointments with students. We also liaise regularly with our Students' Union Disability Officers, to gain further insight into the experience of our disabled students and amend our policies, procedures and approach where appropriate.

Produce a report stating outcomes. Post outcomes on notice boards - you said we did. Implement changes as part of service plans.

We review and respond to individual student feedback as we plan service provision for the year ahead.

Review survey and anecdotal data/feedback, work closely with disabled students and Student Union, also ensure we speak to other staff, eg support workers and listen to their concerns/comments. Enact changes based on student/staff feedback wherever possible.

Annual review

Collect, discuss and build into future plans

we regularly review the comments and feedback that all students provide our service

Formal action plans are developed in response to student feedback provided with the annual exit survey. Actions plan progress is monitored on a quarterly basis.

Feedback is sent to academic departments, discussed at team meetings and with Students' Union officer to identify relevant actions. For example, this year the Learning Support Team's performance review actions include visiting other HEIs to help develop good practice in support students with ASDs.

feedback rolls over into departmental/university planning

## Appendix 5: If you have in-house autism expertise/specialist support, please provide details of their qualifications and experience

Collectively 60 years experience of specialist support - 4 staff all teacher qualified with SpLD diploma qualification and additional autistic spectrum training

NAS training courses and in excess of 10 years of working with ASD students

PG Cert in AS, 6 years direct AS experience, 10 years disability in HE experience.

staff member worked for a well established ASD charity that supports people with ASD and assists them with accessing work

We do not have ASC specialists, but experienced disability advisors with a lot of knowledge in this area

15 years experience of supporting students with autism on a 1:1 basis, Doctorate in Educational Disadvantage and SEN with a dissertation in adapting CBT to suit the needs of students with autism; Post Graduate Dip-loma in CBT; Bsc Psychology

Specialist Mentor with 24 years as teacher for pupils with autism in Helen Allison School. Disability manager with 12 years experience supporting autistic students + PG Cert Asperger Syndrome from Sheffield Hallam. Specialist Mentors with background in teaching / counselling / Attendance for staff at autism training conferences (NAS, Research Autism).

Professional Doctorate in Education (currently studying) x 1 MSc - Autism x 1 Postgraduate certificate in autism x1 Teacher training x 2 Dyslexia training x1

The support includes students with Autism amongst others. The mentor co-ordinator is a qualified counsellor and has attended National Autistic Society training. DSA funded mentor also work with the students one to one and have similar backgrounds.

Disability Adviser 1: Has worked in the ASD field since 1999. Trained as a Socialeyes facilitator in late 2013, was a member of the [words removed to ensure anonymity]University Health Board Steering Group and has been running Socialeyes groups for 3 years. Disability Adviser 2: Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Behaviour Analysis and has worked in the ASD field since 2001. Contributes to the running and development of the Socialeyes programme. Disability Adviser 3: 13 years' experience, and has attended various ASD related CPD events throughout that time, including events run by the NAS. Has CPD certificates in Understanding the Support Needs of HE students with ASC, and Assessing & Supporting students with ASC. Contributes to the running and development of the Socialeyes programme. Mental Health Advisers: both are RMN trained, have a special interest in ASD and undertake ongoing CPD.

The autism expert is an OT and is fully trained in carrying out ASD assessments

BA (hons), PGCE, PG certificate in autism and Asperger syndrome. 11 years in teaching, 11 years in disability support (8 in autism)

This information is personal data and is withheld in accordance with Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 because disclosure would breach the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

See (3) above. *[The response to question 3 was 'We have one in-house expert/specialist'.]*

Many years experience supporting students with a range of disabilities in the FE and HE sector but particularly those with ASD. Attendance and numerous CPD events, including those delivered by NAS.

n/a

NA

We have DSA funded specialist mentor- qualifications= Msc Psychology, PG Cert in Asperger's syndrome. All Disability Advisers have received training in understanding the needs of people with autism/asperger's syndrome including NAS training sessions, support from *[word removed to ensure anonymity]* Autism Spectrum Service (who we have a good working relationship with) and conference and seminar events.

There is a team of approximately 20 including Specialist Mentors/Mental Health Practitioners, who work support students with autism as part of their caseload. All staff have several years' experience of supporting students/ people in education and statutory services. Qualifications include: Post graduate certificate in autism, Post Graduate in Mental Health/Psychotherapy, Qualified in Social Work, Nursing, Psychology and Teaching. Training provided regularly.

Our team of advisors do not have formal qualifications in autism but we have several years of experience of working with students with autism/ Aspergers' Syndrome.

*[This establishment kindly provided a link to the qualifications of their autism specialist on their website. We have not included the link here to ensure the anonymity of the university and of their member of staff. Needless to say, the individual is well qualified.]*

20 years+ experience across the team.

Not applicable.

N/A

Relevant qualification or significant experience of assessing, supporting students with ASCs.

Our disability advisers have attended training sessions on supporting students with autism. One disability adviser used to work for the National Autistic Society. In addition, we use specialist mentors from a local specialist provider.

The specialist advisers have to have a degree in psychology/health/education related field, experience of working with people with autism and membership of an appropriate professional body.

Our AS Adviser has over 15 years experience working with people with autism/Asperger's and/or mental health conditions. They are qualified to postgraduate level and have extensive CPD training. They also want to add that they are also a person who is on the autistic spectrum.

N/A

n/a

Whilst we do not have an "expert" in Autism, one of the team is a lead for Autism. That individual holds a Post-Graduate Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring and undertakes continual CPD and training in Autism.

MSoc Sci - Social Work BSoc Sci - Social Policy CQSW 7 years exp as freelance ASD mentor Dis Coordinator at a University for 9 years Social work for 10 years in variety of posts, mainly learning and phys disabilities incl ASD.

Speech and language therapist with over 35 years experience

Numerous courses on autism. 20 years experience.

MA in Autism Education Experience in various autism-specific services, including employment support, residential, FE, HE and school

various levels of qualification and experience

The disability service at *[identity of the establishment removed to ensure anonymity]* is provided through *[words removed to ensure anonymity]*, with students having access to all resources available at *[words removed to ensure anonymity]* has two in-house ASD mentors, both of whom are qualified Speech and Language Therapists.

n/a

Masters, residential home, teaching

## Appendix 6: If you do not have an autism expert/specialist on staff, what arrangements do you make when you need access to specialist expertise in autism?

All Disability Advisers are adequately trained and experienced to work with students with autism. If additional expertise was required, we would contact BAS.

We have links with an Autism Training and Consultancy company and we seek advice and training from them as needed.

n/a

We ask the student (and involve other agencies if necessary) what is going to work best for them. We have good working relationships with local relevant organisations.

Our Disability Advisers are skilled and experienced in both delivering and coordinating support for students with autism. Our specialist non-medical help is provided by Spectrum First (<http://www.spectrumfirst.co.uk/index.html>) who also consult on complex cases. Spedctrum First is managed by Christine Breakey, MA Autism.

Contact Number 6 Autism Initiatives, The National Autistic Society or *[words removed to ensure the anonymity of the respondent]*

we get external support where necessary (esp for staff training) but to be honest we find the external "experts" are not always much more knowledgeable or experienced as ourselves

We set up support with the National Autistic Society (NAS)

all Disabled Student Advisors work with students with any disability including autism

N/A

In addition, we have a local arrangement with *[words removed to ensure the anonymity of the respondent]*, who specifically support our students with ASC

Links with a clinical psychologist for referral and consultation

N/A

N/A

n/a

-

Via external providers.

Contact with NAS, specialist colleagues within the sector and advice from professionals about individual students as appropriate

We have a lot of experience within our team and are able to work successfully with students with autism. Where we need further input we seek advice from *[words removed to ensure the anonymity of the respondent]* (NHS).

We work closely with the National Autistic Society (NAS) if a student needs ongoing specialist mentoring. We have also received training from NAS previously.

Not applicable

Not applicable

Disability Services has relationships with a number of individuals who are experts in the field of Asperger's and Autistic Spectrum, including many who are Asperger's Tutors for students. The University also works with local charities, such as *[words removed to ensure the anonymity of the respondent]* and the National Autistic Society.

Students on the Autistic Spectrum are supported through external specialist agencies (e.g. specialist mentors) as and when appropriate.

We use the services of a local specialist provider

N/A

We utilise the National Autism Society website, in addition we email named contact on National Autistic Society website Rosalyn Lord and now Brett Aspden. Finally we regularly read specialist email forums.

We have 3 full time disability advisers who all have knowledge and experience of working with students on the AS, they work closely with Mental Health Advisers and other services both within and out with the University

N/A

Use specialist mentor provision from external Agencies

*[Identity of respondent removed to ensure their anonymity]* work in partnership with Access Summit. Access Summit carries out assessments for all disabled students and provides support workers to the three institutions. The main tutor Access Summit provides *[words removed to ensure anonymity]* for students on the autistic spectrum arranges to meet students on *[words removed to ensure anonymity]* premises (same room for the purpose of consistency for the student) at least 2 days per week. His experience includes 21 years' experience working exclusively with people on the spectrum. This has included working as Family Support Worker, Assistant Manager of Day Services, Employment Consultant and Aspergers Mentor. The tutor has a degree in Languages and has completed numerous autism related courses dealing with issues such as Autism & Challenging Behaviour, Autism & Sexuality, Delivering Asperger Awareness Training, SPELL Method of support, Working With Adults With Aspergers, Autistic People In Further & Higher Education.

We liaise with the National Autistic Society, local support groups and GPs.

If needed additional expertise would bring it in from a local Autism organisation.

n/a

Working closely with the NAS when required. Accessing specialist support for the roles staff do with students with autism, eg our Tutors would work through the BDA etc

N/A

n/a

We contact the *[words removed to ensure the anonymity of the respondent]*, part of the NHS *[words removed to ensure anonymity]*, or the ASD specialist at the office of our primary NMH support provider for advice.

our dylsexia specialist covers

## Appendix 7: What training and refresher training in autism do you provide for all new disability support staff and student mentors?

Autism awareness training provided.

A Disability induction session is provided and staff are advised to request any specific training when needed.

External training available to new ALS staff and annual in-house training for all staff.

General disability awareness training. We have held two conferences focusing on autism. Some of our autistic students have given training talks to our learning support assistants.

NAS training

This is managed by our external providers (Spectrum First and Neuropartners/Keyfort). They have robust quality assurance measures and have compulsory training events termly.

Mentors are required to attend mandatory training each year.

Some Autism Awareness Training is arranged most years for staff. This is open to new and continuing staff.

awareness session offered annually to all university staff funding provision for disability staff to attend specific appropriate training to develop awareness and skills

We put on ASC training each year, for any staff across the University to attend. We go on external courses ourselves and sometimes give specific training to departments if requested

This is offered but not usually taken up

Weekly autism mentoring group supervision.

Intro training session. Recurrent training once a year. Access to advice and support all year round.

NAS courses

An external trainer comes once a year to provide training to our disability support staff.

previously training from local organisation on 'what is autism' and recently from NAS on mentoring students with autism

We buy in training from NAS. All mentors and Disability Advisers are Mental Health First Aiders. Mentors undertake our PGCertHE in Support Work and are assessed by a reflective portfolio.

CPD, identifying courses, seminars, conferences and belonging to professional bodies such as NADP

currently on line training

Disability awareness annually for new mentors and staff mentoring students with Autism Spectrum Conditions

None at present.

We have a team of ASD mentors who are experienced in providing support – these are our key service providers to students with autism. We don't routinely provide additional training in disabilities.

Provided in-house by disability service team and also utilising external expertise e.g. NAS

n/a

Disability staff are recruited having had experience of working with students with autism in the past. There are no student mentors at LSE. Specialist mentors are provided by the NAS.

Student mentors receive training from *[words removed to ensure the anonymity of the respondent]* as well as in-house training on being mentors. Disability Services admin staff receive in house training from experience disability advisers and all received *[words removed to ensure anonymity]* training summer 2014. Disability Advisers all attend CPD events including on autism from a variety of trainers.

Autism Awareness delivered by *[the identity of the person concerned has been removed to ensure the anonymity of the respondent university]* has been a regular part of our Equality and Diversity Training Programme for all staff for the past 3 years. We have had training from the NAS and our last Wellbeing Departmental Away Day was focussed on working with students on the Spectrum. Discussion forums/ CPD sessions include at least one per academic year, in relation to Autism.

We, with external service providers provide training to student mentors. The training session includes information about Autism. The NAS also provide training to disability support staff.

In-house training as part of induction for new staff and annual conference attendance.

Conferences HE networking Peer Monitoring

New Disability Support staff are provided with appropriate training based on their previous qualifications and experience, which may include attending training with the National Autistic Society and Specialisterne, a specialist recruitment and employment agency for people with autism.

The Mental Health coordinator provides awareness training to all disability support staff, the in house Learning Achievement Mentors (LAM's) and the Learning Assistants (LA's) as and when required. We also have awareness training from external suppliers (e.g. prospects).

For all Disability Service staff external adhoc training has been arranged eg NAS/ASSET. There is also peer sharing of good practice and support.

We access nationally-provided training events

Specialist mentors receive half a day's training on the definition of ASD and the triad of impairment and looks specifically at the impact this condition may have on our students. We use some resources from the National Autistic Society. Refresher training is offered in staff meetings as required/requested based on a culture of ongoing reflective practice and mentoring outcomes.

All NMH staff are required to undertake on-line disability training modules provided by our external NMH agency this includes a module on Autism. We provide termly good practice sessions that cover all impairments/disability this would include autism/Asperger's syndrome. Members of Disability Team have attended external conferences on Autism.

We provide training for mentors at the start of their engagement and top up throughout the year

Our AS Adviser provides in house autism awareness training for all staff within the disability team, the support workers and mentors and the Student Advisers in the Student Life Centre.

in house by disability team

Where required, we arrange for our specialist tutor to offer this training.

Autism training is included within induction training for new members of staff. This training covers a range of disabilities and is not specific to autism. However, each summer our support workers attended a two-day training programme which covers an area of disability in more detail. Specific autism training has been included in this for the past two years (due to the number of students with autism, registered with the service).

*[Words removed to ensure the anonymity of the respondent]* have provided a stand at our Disability Awareness Week for last 3 years. Available to talk with staff and students. Other awareness training provided through *[words removed to ensure anonymity]* or in house specialist as required.

Training requests supported as and when identified

Access to specialist training/awareness workshops for our Tutors, usually would have to be run by NAS or other creditable organisation.

Covered by general disability training

Inhouse one-to-one or group training from disability adviser - has been, and continues to be, delivered to admin/reception staff, other advisers (including Mental Health Advisers), and mentors

If necessary we provide training for new staff and we off an Autism Awareness Session as part of our People Development Programme

None



NMH workers have training delivered by their employer, not by the University. Members of the Learning Support team would attend relevant external training.

Access to in-house staff development and upskilling training for all staff Input on PGCertHE

none

## Appendix 8: What training and refresher training in autism do you provide for all new academic staff?

Autism awareness training offered.

A Disability induction session is provided and new staff are advised to request any specific training when needed.

Annual autism awareness training available to all new staff but not compulsory at present

General disability awareness training.

as above [*The response to the previous question was: 'NAS training'.*]

We offer annual autism training events to all academic departments delivered by Disability Services with external support providers including Spectrum First. We also host termly awareness events that are well attended by staff. In these events are often presented by visitors and students with the condition being addressed. We also arrange additional events as requested by academic departments.

Academic staff can book onto AS specific courses. Some colleges and departments request bespoke sessions. Cambridge doesn't do 'mandatory', which is a shame

Some Autism Awareness Training is arranged most years for staff. It may be targeted at particular Schools within the university and is open to new and continuing staff. Attendance is voluntary.

As above - training is offered to all academic staff but is not mandatory so we have found that very few staff attend [*The response to the question referred to was: 'awareness session offered annually to all university staff funding provision for disability staff to attend specific appropriate training to develop awareness and skills'*]

see above, new staff are not specifically targeted; those who are expecting to have ASC students on their course are. [*The response to the question referred to was: 'We put on ASC training each year for any staff across the University to attend. We go on external courses ourselves and sometimes give specific training to departments if requested'*]

None unless requested

Never been asked to do this.

1/2 day introductory course - non-compulsory.

This is incorporated into the 'Disability Day' training at the point of induction but specific in house training can be given as and when requested.

We provide bespoke training as requested but this is not part of the automatic training for new academic staff.

general equality training - unsure of if individual faculties offer anything else to academic and support staff

All new academic staff undertake the PGCertHE. Inclusive teaching is embedded into this programme. Staff are advised of disability provision at the University and are encouraged to maintain a dialogue with Advisers regarding strategies and reasonable adjustments in students' Personal Learning Support Plans

Awareness training, workshops run by the Equality and Diversity staff

Disability awareness training - not compulsory

On demand as and when they have Autism Spectrum Condition students in their departments.

Workshop available in supporting disabled students in teaching and learning covering Aspergers and ADHD. Information is also available for staff via the Disability Services webpage.

None

As Q11 [*The response to question 11 was: 'Provided in-house by disability service team and also utilising external expertise e.g. NAS'*]

We have a disability adviser who works with academic staff to advise on a range of support issues including autism.

Bespoke in response to individual needs within a department

Nothing standardised. Individual briefing sessions provided to academic schools where they are supporting students with specific needs.

Autism Awareness delivered by [*reference to a member of staff removed to ensure the anonymity of the university*] has been a regular part of our Equality and Diversity Training Programme for all staff for the past 3 years.

We offer training on request. We are currently developing new online resources with advisory information for academic staff on how to support students with disabilities.

Disability awareness training for all new academic staff using case studies (including Autism/Asperger's).

Dis-Ability Confident Mental Health Awareness Supporting Children and Vulnerable Adults

A session on disability and Asperger's awareness is included in the curriculum for the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education, a mandatory qualification for all new staff who will be teaching students.

As Above [*The response to the previous question was as follows: 'The Mental Health coordinator provides awareness training to all disability support staff, the in house Learning*

*Achievement Mentors (LAM's) and the Learning Assistants (LA's) as and when required. We also have awareness training from external suppliers (e.g. prospects)'.*

to date offer staff opportunity to come and talk to an adviser to gain some basic grounding, we also have a leaflet about tips/steps to take in their teaching and learning and communication with students with ASCs. The University is looking to buy in external trainers to run sessions open to academic staff as the feedback from academic staff is that they want more understanding.

We access nationally-provided training events

New staff (academic and non-academic) do not automatically get training in autism but they get training in equality and diversity at induction. However, all new staff are given information about the staff development portfolio of activities they can participate in including a session about autism awareness which is delivered by a specialist adviser.

The university has a corporate induction where a general overview of disability is presented, this would include information about Autism and Asperger's Syndrome. Our annual Diversity Festival has had sessions on Autism/Asperger's Syndrome particularly academic year 2014/15 and all staff may attend this. 2013/14 our Equality Forum had a guest speaker on Autism and Asperger's this is an open forum so all staff may attend this. Historically specialist sessions by external providers have been provided. Staff within Disability Support have delivered awareness raising to academic departments. The Learning and Teaching Institute have provided training a session on Autism and Asperger's Syndrome and new staff would have the opportunity to attend this.

None officially

No specific training is delivered to academic staff. The As adviser provides written guidance for tutors on working with AS students and making the classroom more accessible. The AS Adviser also provides 1:1 advice and guidance to any academic if requested.

on request

We can arrange for our specialist tutor to offer this training. The disability adviser can also recommend this to a department.

We offer a training session via our staff development programme, but this is not compulsory. We have found that a better approach is to provide training tailored to each course/department, particularly those course with a high proportion of autistic students

*As above [The response to the question referred to was: '[removed to ensure anonymity] have provided a stand at our Disability Awareness Week for last 3 years. Available to talk with staff and students. Other awareness training provided through [removed to ensure anonymity] or in house specialist as required.']*

We run 1 hour training each term via Centre for Advancement of Learning & Teaching entitled 'Supporting Students with Asperger Syndrome'.

No specific autism training however Equality & Diversity module (incs disability awareness) which all staff must complete.

'Supporting the Supporters' session - 2 hours - runs twice annually

We offer an Autism Awareness Session as part of our People Development Programme. All staff can seek advice and guidance from the Disability Advice team.

None

All staff complete training in Equality and Diversity. Learning Support Team offers workshops on disability issues, but not specifically on autism.

as above

none

## Appendix 9: What training in autism do you provide for all new non-teaching staff other than disability support staff?

Autism awareness training offered.

A Disability induction session is provided and new staff are advised to request any specific training when needed.

n/a

General disability awareness training.

This is conducted as part of the PG Cert. When required individual training for those courses with higher percentages of students are undertaken

Same as 10 & 11. *[The previous response was 'NAS training'.]*

This is an area for development - provided on request or staff can book on some courses

Some training sessions are open to non-teaching staff, both new and continuing. We are seeking to expand our training opportunities to enable a wider range of staff to become more aware.

As above *[The response to the question referred to was: 'training is offered to all academic staff but is not mandatory so we have found that very few staff attend']*

As above *[The response to the question referred to was: 'We put on ASC training each year, for any staff across the University to attend. We go on external courses ourselves and sometimes give specific training to departments if requested']*

None unless requested

Staff training is occasional but not structured timetable.

1/2 day introductory course - non-compulsory. Not to all university staff.

As 11. *[The response to the question referred to was: 'This is incorporated into the 'Disability Day' training at the point of induction but specific in house training can be given as and when requested.']*

We provide bespoke training as requested but this is not part of the new automatic training for non-teaching staff.

general equality training - unsure if individual faculties offer anything else to academic and support staff

This is not systematically available to all staff. An online equality training programme is compulsory to all new staff and this is managed by HR. Training is delivered in response to

requests by Heads of Central Services e.g. Library, but in addition training is delivered on an annual basis to the Wardens team. Mental Health First Aid training is available to all staff.

Awareness training, workshops run by the Equality and Diversity staff

Disability awareness training - not compulsory

On demand as requested by the library. Estates have their own training officer and so on.

No set training, option to attend above workshop if they wish. The university is looking to develop a Disability Awareness Day.

None

As Q11 [*The response to the question referred to was: 'Provided in-house by disability service team and also utilising external expertise e.g. NAS'*]

n/a

Bespoke in response to individual needs within a department

Same as above. [*The response to the question referred to was: 'Nothing standardised. Individual briefing sessions provided to academic schools where they are supporting students with specific needs.'*]

Autism Awareness delivered by [*reference to an individual member of staff removed to ensure the anonymity of the university*] has been a regular part of our Equality and Diversity Training Programme for all staff for the past 3 years.

We offer training on request. NAS have come in and held sessions with student services staff.

Targeted depending on role e.g. Resident Tutors receive disability awareness training for all new academic staff using case studies (including Autism/Asperger's).

Dis-Ability Confident Mental Health Awareness Supporting Children and Vulnerable Adults

Briefings relating to supporting students with Asperger's are delivered on an ongoing basis, in partnership with local charitable organisations. These have been delivered to staff across service areas, such as accommodation and library services, and are offered to all other areas. Specialisterne, a specialist employment and recruitment company for individuals with autism, has also provided training to a range of non-teaching support staff.

As Above [*The response to the question referred to was: 'The Mental Health coordinator provides awareness training to all disability support staff, the in house Learning Achievement Mentors (LAM's) and the Learning Assistants (LA's) as and when required. We also have awareness training from external suppliers (e.g. prospects).'*]

None.

We access nationally-provided training events

See response for question 12. *[The response to the question referred to was: 'New staff (academic and non-academic) do not automatically get training in autism but they get training in equality and diversity at induction. However, all new staff are given information about the staff development portfolio of activities they can participate in including a session about autism awareness which is delivered by a specialist adviser.']*

Support staff are able to attend Diversity Festival and Equality Forum events. Disability Support staff have provided information and awareness when requested by support departments. Learning Teaching Institute within the University provided a training session in 2015 open to all staff. Information sheets available on-line. The Learning and Teaching Institute have provided training sessions on Autism and Asperger's Syndrome and new staff would have the opportunity to attend this.

Disability Liaison Officers in each school receive training and regular meetings each term

No specific training.

on request

There is a training session that the disability service offers which covers all disabilities

As above. *[The response to the question referred to was: 'We offer a training session via our staff development programme, but this is not compulsory. We have found that a better approach is to provide training tailored to each course/department, particularly those course with a high proportion of autistic students']*

As above *[The response to the question referred to was: '[removed to ensure anonymity] have provided a stand at our Disability Awareness Week for last 3 years. Available to talk with staff and students. Other awareness training provided through [removed to ensure anonymity] or in house specialist as required.']*

Above training is open to academic and non-teaching staff. *[The training referred to was: 'We run 1 hour training each term via Centre for Advancement of Learning & Teaching entitled 'Supporting Students with Asperger Syndrome'.']*

No specific autism training however Equality & Diversity module (incs disability awareness) which all staff must complete.

None

'Supporting the Supporters' session - 2 hours - runs twice annually

We off an Autism Awareness Session as part of our People Development Programme. All staff can seek advice and guidance from the Disability Advice team.

None

All staff complete training in Equality and Diversity. Learning Support Team offers workshops on disability issues, but not specifically on autism.

as above [*The response to the question referred to was: 'Access to in-house staff development and upskilling training for all staff Input on PGCertHE'*]

none

## Appendix 10: What arrangements do you make for new students on the autism spectrum transitioning from school?

Opportunity to visit university before course commences, early needs assessment and support plan implemented prior to course starting.

A summer school is available prior to the start of term, campus tours with Student Ambassadors, a Settling-in Group, Meetings with the Disability Co-ordinator, a Learning Support Plan with details of adjustments/arrangements needed, meetings with Mentors.

AS Induction programme over 3 days prior to starting at Surrey. Familiarisation of campus during the summer. Also buddy support

met with students on an individual basis (and their support workers if appropriate) and discuss how best they feel they will be supported. They are able to attend the campus as many times as they wish prior to the start of the year. On the first day of fresher week we set aside a quiet room in case any disabled student requires its use.

We have a member of the REACH project and her role is to work with local schools to ensure there is a clear pathway as early as possible. All other applicants to the University work with our Transitions and Retention officer to ensure a smooth as possible transition. We also offer a new to DMU event which is a 3 day residential for any ASD student to attend in the September before their enrolment.

Campus visits and meeting with their tutors/supervisors. We launch interim non medical help (if not already approved via DSA) from early summer to help the student prepare and make the transition. Students can also move into their accommodation early.

We run transitional events prior to term starting. Students (and their parents) can attend (optional). We also offer college/departmental visits and 1-1 meetings with disability advisers

We run a Transition Programme across two days before the start of the new academic session in collaboration with Number 6 Autism Initiatives. We also meet with new students during the summer to assess their support needs, get support set up and help them to apply for DSA. We liaise with Accommodation where appropriate.

We offer a transition day for ASD students and their parents / carers to attend; 1:1 appointment with a Disability Adviser; liaison with school / college support and teaching staff (if consent given)

A 3 day pre induction course

Opportunity to visit the site / intended School of study and face to face discussions with the autism lead during quiet times. If local, we will visit at their current place of education

3 day Residential orientation programme. One to one assistance for students with high anxiety during Fresher's week. Mentoring support provision.

Events where students can come and find out about provision, view the campus, get to know key members of staff. Opportunity to enrol and collect cards etc. before the main start date

for other students - therefore avoiding very busy times. Regular emails over the summer with information and advice from the DO to prepare them for their arrival. Website with information about what to expect. 6 page 'Getting Started' guide emailed to the new students letting them know what to expect in the first few weeks of term.

Open day visits and one to one visits to the University Disability Service as required.

We offer taster days across all campuses to equip students with the information they may require when they start on their courses. They get introduced to key members of staff and are provided with local information such as bus timetables to go shopping and where they can catch the free bus etc.

depends on student need - peer mentoring available, Learning support agreements to make faculty aware, NMH support front loaded to cover transition

As Q6 we work very closely with prospective students and the Disability Tutor in the academic school in identifying support requirements, reasonable adjustments and ensuring that learning outcomes are attainable. Learning Support Plans are drawn up and relevant information is shared with teaching staff and appropriate central services staff e.g. Wardens team. We offer the Socialeyes programme to all students on the autism spectrum.

Liaison with local colleges, open days and HUG

students who disclose are allocated a disability advisor

Transition visits with schools and families to identify support needs. Liaise with assessment centres with regard to DSA support.

Option to attend a Moving On Up event (pre-registration) and option to join connect at *[name of establishment removed to ensure its anonymity]*. All students are sent information about DDS, potential support and advice on applying for DSA.

Such students are invited to seek assistance and support from our AccessAbility advisers

Meetings prior to arrival with student, school, and parents as appropriate, to discuss and identify support.

We are postgraduate only.

Preliminary visits, liaison with key staff in departments, residences and support services

We have a strong pre-entry process. We provide advice and information at open days and post offer events. Disability Advisers also provide tailored advice and guidance to applicants to help prepare them. This includes arranging joint visits to accommodation, Disability Services and academic school.

Pre-offer/entry contact with applicants who have declared Autism on their application to set up support. Annual Summer School, 2 night residential free of charge to applicants to prepare them for the transition to University. This includes workshops for parents or other significant relationships We offer individual visits to site and tours Individual open day appointments

Links with local Special Needs School. Students with autism who are moving into halls receive a letter providing a named contact and an offer to contact or visit frequently before they move into the accommodation Get Ahead Event – before main enrolment in September students can arrive early to Halls/ enrol and a programme of preparatory workshops, including 1-1 meetings to arrange support.

We offer students meetings during the summer and offer to show them around the campus so they can become familiar with surroundings. We may also arrange a meeting with a member of the teaching team. We also provide orientation support with a Student Support Worker in the initial weeks of university. We also do sessions about the support we provide at pre-entry events specifically aimed at students with disabilities, care leavers, and students that are the first generation in their family to attend University. We also plan on having a specific day in early September before induction week for students who have autism/ Aspergers' Syndrome to provide an opportunity for them to ask questions about support in smaller groups and for students to meet.

Summer school provision and an adapted induction programme with the offer of a peer mentor.

Arrangement for support is provided via a Learning Support Plan for an individual student. The autism specific arrangements are:

- Tutors asked to give advance warning of any lecture cancellations (etc), where possible to reduce student's anxiety from changes to routine
- Tutors asked to give task guidance in clear, unambiguous language, and to ensure student is absolutely clear from the start about any task.
- Tutors asked to give reading lists that identify key chapters, not just book titles
- Tutors asked to monitor group tasks involving student, to reduce student's anxiety about working with others
- Tutors to be aware that student may not voice any concerns about tasks, group work etc. Student may internalise concerns and seem withdrawn.

For the full list of terms used in Learning Support Plans please see: *[Link to the university's website removed to ensure their anonymity]*

In addition to the range of open days, events and talks provided for students with disabilities, prospective students with Autism/ASD are invited to attend a 'Taster' event at *[name of university removed to ensure its anonymity]* in April each year. The event, which is organised by Disability Services, provides students with information on the types of support available to them as a student at the University. Students and their parents also get an opportunity to meet staff from Disability Services, visit the *[words removed to ensure anonymity]* and attend presentations by academic colleagues and an officer from the Students' Union. As part of the transition to higher education, students with Autism/ASD will also be supported to meet with members of staff in their academic department in advance of their studies beginning. Students who declare they have Autism/ASD through UCAS or on their Postgraduate application, and who receive a conditional/unconditional offer of a place of study at *[name of university removed to ensure its anonymity]*, are invited to attend a Needs Assessment with a Disability Officer as soon as possible. Assessments for new students are carried out from July onwards each year. During this Needs Assessment, the Disability Officer will consider individual support requirements and reasonable adjustments for the student. Medical evidence and previous support, eg at School, will be considered. Funded support through Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) will also be discussed and agreed. Students are not restricted to disclosing their disability prior to or during Enrolment and Registration and can contact Disability Services at any time during their academic career at the University. All new students with Autism/ASD and their parents/guardians are invited to attend an Induction

Event before Welcome Week each September. Disability Services staff provide guidance on what to expect within the first few weeks of University e.g. larger class sizes, less structured timetable, group work and reading lists. Students are encouraged to get involved in Clubs and Societies at the University. Important contact details e.g. Disability Services and DSA Officers at each Education and Library Board, are provided. Students who need support during the transition to studying at *[name of university removed to ensure its anonymity]* may be offered a Campus Assistant to help them become familiar with the University campus and complete enrolment and registration. Once enrolled on their course, all students with Autism/ASD are invited to attend the Asperger's Social and Support Group at *[name of university removed to ensure its anonymity]*. The Group provides an opportunity for students to meet in an informal environment where they can develop friendships, discuss any difficulties which they may experience at University and receive support both from their peers and the Group facilitators (two Disability Officers).

1. Invite applicants to come in and see the Mental Health Coordinator to register with the service prior to the commencement of studies.
2. Draw up Teaching and Learning Support requirements (TLSR) on an individual basis which is sent to the students school to distribute to individual lecturers; part of these requirements provide information on interactions.
3. Encourage Students to come to campus for a orientation of the Campus prior to the commencement of studies.
4. Provide a 'Buddying' system to help integrate into student life.
5. We also have a formal mentoring scheme for students on the Autistic Spectrum.

Pre entry meetings with applicant, programme leader and disability adviser to explore needs and make a plan before they arrive. There are also Wellbeing practioners in the University accommodation to help with transition and work with individuals and new flatmates. There is also a social group at the University for these students to join if they wish.

For students in the local vicinity, a disability adviser will offer to visit them and relevant staff in their school in advance of their transition to University. Students/applicants from further afield can arrange a visit to campus at any time. In addition, new students who have disclosed being on the autistic spectrum are invited to attend a 2-day, residential transition event a few weeks before the start of term, to meet key staff and familiarise themselves with the University and with key systems.

All applicants who declare autism are automatically contacted by Student Services to discuss their transition into University. We adopt a tailored and individual approach to this.

We have two disability support officers available on University Open Days. We have one disability officer available for all Wednesday applicant days. When invited disability officers have attended schools/Sixth Form Colleges to meet with applicant, teacher and parent to facilitate transition. We encourage applicants to meet with a disability officer and member of academic department prior to starting with the university. Disability Support Officers facilitate meetings between students and non-medical helpers. Disability Support Officer appointments with students. Disability Induction within Induction Week.

An opportunity to meet the school they are applying to and discuss any support they may require, we draw up an agreed schedule of support that is shared with them in due course.

We run an annual autism summer school for applicants to the University who have an AS diagnosis. We also offer 1:1 meetings with potential applicants to discuss their support needs

at the earliest opportunity. We invite the course tutors and any other relevant staff to this meeting with the consent of the applicant.

run a summer programme in August when students can attend with family and/ or friends and gain insight into *[university acronym removed to ensure its anonymity]*, support available and assistance with DSA applications. Can also visit partner student accommodation

We work closely with the Widening Participation Team and the Disability Service contributes to pre-entry events. The disability service holds a specific pre-entry event for disabled students and we specifically target students on the autistic spectrum as we have the specialist tutor available on the day. The event is for both student and parent/carer. We can arrange for a peer mentor to be set up (this would be with another disabled student) to help with transitioning to HE and throughout the first year of study. Regular meetings take place and a social event is normally planned at Christmas e.g. bowling. We also put the student in touch with the specialist tutor.

One-to-one appointments, mentoring, earlier arrival where needed, orientation of local area/university.

All disabled applicants who are offered a place are sent a questionnaire about their support needs. Students with ASD are invited to come in, in person to meet with the Disability Adviser, in advance of enrolment and a learning support plan is drawn up. Applicants can be accompanied by their parents if required. Also try and obtain a copy of the student's statement or ECHP from their school or college, prior to entrance so that support can be planned.

We run a pre-arrival welcome event in September before the start of the academic year to allow new students to visit the campus and meet other students with Asperger Syndrome and key contacts in their academic dept.

For all new disabled students, the disability advisor would meet with the student/their parents too if they wish and explain the process of getting disability support/what support the individual can expect. We follow up all appts with an email confirming the meeting discussion. We would allocate a Learning Mentor/Specialist Tutor to work with the student according to the Study Needs Assessment which is a report based on an interview with an assessor (independent to the University) and sent to the funding body. The mentor would work with the student for the remainder of their studies wherever possible and would fulfil a role to include motivating, time management, managing challenging situations and signposting to other help within the University.

Contact prior to arrival. Housewarming event. Campus assistant. Caseworker.

Early and ongoing pre-arrival contact, peer-mentoring, transition/induction event each July, various outreach events delivered (both on campus and at local schools, colleges etc) by Disability Transition Officer and Disability Champions

The Disability Advice Team are leading a project that will address the needs of students transitioning into and out of University.

Not Relevant. *[name of university removed to ensure its anonymity]* only provides postgraduate programmes

A Learning Support Adviser meets with the applicant / student to develop a Learning Support Plan which is individual to that student.

one to one support study buddies

none

## Appendix 11: What arrangements do you have for non-autistic students to raise their awareness of autism?

Autism awareness training available as requested.

none at present

Disability awareness sessions to student cohorts.

n/a

Our ASC group, 'Spectrum!' has its own social media channels that are promoted via main channels including the Student Union facebook/twitter etc. Awareness events are open to students and advertise through college newsletters and the Student's Union. We also have a presence at Union / Post grad organised events.

We work with the student union welfare officer and college JCR welfare/disability officers to promote understanding of all impairments. We promote AS specific information on our website

*[Name of university removed to ensure its anonymity]* Students Association take part in the Transition Programme and are briefed in advance to raise their awareness of autism. We participate in World Autism Awareness Day by running an information stall on one of the campuses. No other arrangements are yet in place.

We have awareness campaigns throughout the year relating to a variety of disability issues including ASD; we have scheduled meetings with non-autistic students who are in a shared hall with an ASD student to raise their awareness and advise on how they can support and help their autistic peer to integrate

student mentors receive training

Disability quizzes open to all new students that includes autism awareness questions

Annual 'world autism awareness day / week' activities but no specific training programme.

Some training but not enough offered in this area.

None at present.

unaware of anything specific

We are not aware of any although we work very closely with the Students' Union, including making clubs and societies accessible and welcoming.

Awareness training, workshops run by the Equality and Diversity staff

none

Student Autism Society working with the Student Union.

None at present.

None

Awareness raising campaigns are undertaken by the students association on a range of student welfare issues

None.

Bespoke in response to individual need

Nothing standardised.

None

We have had disability awareness events in the past.

Targeted with housemates of students with Autism.

Awareness workshops Autism Awareness Week – Involvement in campaign via stands, talks etc.

Many [*name of university removed to ensure its anonymity*] students act as Support Providers for students with disabilities, which may mean acting as a note taker or campus assistant. Students selected for these roles are provided with disability awareness training, as well as training relating to a range of disabilities, including Asperger's / ASD. The Students' Union has a part-time Vice-President Disability, an elected student representative who convenes a student-led forum to discuss the needs and specific challenges for students with disabilities. This has included a Disability Awareness Week in December 2015.

None

See question 14 re the University accommodation. There is also going to be a University disability awareness month and we are exploring topics of this. [*Question 14 includes the following regarding accommodation: 'There are also Wellbeing practitioners in the University accommodation to help with transition and work with individuals and new flatmates.'*]

Very little is done in this area. Awareness campaigns are generally run through the Students' Association

We currently do not have any specific activities to raise awareness of autism to non-autistic students.

Disability Awareness provided for hall wardens annually. Awareness raising sessions for students within halls of residence when requested by students.

None as such

We provide autism awareness training for all the students who work as resident Student Advisers in the Halls of residence and to Student Ambassadors. We publicise the autism summer school to raise awareness. Our web pages are currently being revised to provide more information to students about autism.

on request

None.

Nothing specific but we have done group training sessions where requested (for example, students in halls of residence were their friend/flatmate has autism)

Training offered to students and staff from time to time. Autism organisations invited to have a stand at our Disability Awareness week.

The student's union have a Disabled Students' Network and a Disabled Students' Officer who are running awareness raising events this year on all disabilities, including unseen disabilities

Occasional 'awareness' sessions/events as part of annual Diversity Calendar

None

No formal arrangements - liaison with Disabled Students' Committee and Student Union officers.

Information raising sessions available on request and specific disability related events are held throughout the year.

None

Where necessary and with the permission of the student, we meet with other students who are sharing their flat in our halls of residence with a student with ASD to discuss issues around autism.

Through Students' Union

none

Appendix 12: If you offer qualifications in autism, do those teaching these qualifications play any role in raising awareness and understanding of autism across the university?

Yes, training offered to staff.

n/a

n/a

n/a

Not so far but we hope to involve them in WAAD in 2016.

N/A

We do have a taught programme but as far as i know the teaching staff do not have a role in staff development activities.

N/A

n/a

Not at present

No

N/A

N/A

n/a

We do not offer qualifications in autism

n/a

NA

n/a

We do not offer qualifications in autism.

Not applicable

We do not offer a distinct qualification in autism but it is part of modules across a range of disciplines. A number of academics have a research interest and their output will raise awareness and understanding.

Not applicable.

N/A

No

Not currently

The University does offer qualifications in autism. However, this question asks for an opinion and this is not recorded within *[name of university removed to ensure anonymity]*.

We do not provide specific qualifications in autism however we have a number of courses that have modules that cover autism for example. Teacher Training 2nd year covers Special Educational Needs which covers Autism. There is an annual Inclusion Conference again which would cover special educational needs. Psychology courses cover understanding developmental disorders this consists of three two hour lectures on Autism

N/A

MA Advanced Educational Practice- special educational needs- provides modules in autism

Each departments has one member of academic staff who acts in the capacity of a Departmental Disability Co-ordinator, so any specialist knowledge and sharing of information can take place at Faculty and University level meetings. Each Disability Adviser is a link adviser for a Faculty, so there is opportunity for sharing of knowledge.

Not applicable

*[Name of university removed to ensure its anonymity]*. Their mission is to help enhance the lives of autistic people and their families. We conduct groundbreaking scientific research to enhance knowledge about interventions, education and outcomes for autistic children, young people and adults.

N/A

We do not but the School of Health & Related Research runs a series of talks by and about people on the spectrum

unknown

n/a

n/a

## Appendix 13: Is there anything else you would like to add?

no

Disabled students degree classifications show a 4% improved margin across First and 2:1 classifications. We have not been able to answer the statistical questions accurately as many students declaring ASC declare multiple disabilities. The government's proposed policy on DSA support will have a high impact on ASC students.

We also run events and training for autistic students. As well as a general skills and social group called Spectrum! we have specialist employability programmes that are run by our Careers team.

Sorry for the delay in completing the survey. I will be very keen to see the results. Having a dedicated AS specialist post has made significant impact on the development of support structures here. *[Identity of university and staff member removed to ensure anonymity.]*

Students who have support from Number 6 Autism Initiatives generally find this very helpful. Support requirements such as copies of lecture notes in advance, permission to record lectures and exam allowances are communicated to staff via a Learning Profile. We also have School Disability Contacts who can act as a point of contact and an advocate for students with ASCs.

1) We run a fortnightly social and support group for ASD students which is well attended. The group aims to support the students in developing their social and communication skills, preparing for work, adjusting to university life and independent living. We invite speakers in who have trained / qualified in this area to run bespoke sessions according to the needs of the students in the group; 2) We ask for written consent to liaise with a person chosen by the student (usually a parent) to enable us to maintain contact with those that can offer support; 3) We have a monitoring system to enable us to keep an eye on the progress and wellbeing of students we have identified as being of concern - this includes many of our ASD students. The system ensures students do not fall through the net as it will be flagged up if they are not attending taught sessions or support sessions so that we can address this proactively. This has helped us to manage the issue of retention as well as student satisfaction.

We are a comparatively small University (12,800 students with approx 25% of students being from Overseas. Please may I have a copy of the final report.

The amount of time you put into autism specific training depends on local resources and most particularly the staff:student ratio in specialist services. Even if i had the knowledge, would i have the time?

This year we are looking to set up a transition out of University scheme for students with aspergers to help them with this transition.

No thanks

*[Words removed to ensure the anonymity of the respondent]* We had links with *[words removed to ensure anonymity]* ASD Development Officer for *[words removed to ensure anonymity]*, but believe this post has come to an end. However, we maintain close links with

a member of the community clinical psychologist and assessment team, who has attended Advisers' team meeting and is also a member of the University's Student Mental Health Strategy Group.

In response to question 6, all of the forms of support required are available if a Needs Assessment requires them to be provided and therefore are applied on a case by case basis.

*[Identity of university removed to ensure anonymity]* had a specialist expert who left last year and hasn't yet been replaced.

The *[Identity of university removed to ensure anonymity]* has seen its population of students with ASC grow year on year. It is committed to offering a specialist service and working collaboratively with other institutions in the country. It has participated in the production of a very successful pre-entry booklet under the Aim Higher scheme which is likely to be republished under the new REACH initiative in *[words removed to ensure anonymity]*. There is also extensive information written for, and approved by, students with ASC on the Accessibility Centre webpages: *[link to website removed to ensure anonymity]* We also produce in house specific information which is distributed pre-entry for students with ASCs

-

NO

The structure of Disability Services around the country varies greatly. We have no specialist roles, all advisers work across all disabled student groups and receive training and CPD opportunities. Unfortunately our current capacity does not allow us to run many training events for staff so we focus on individual briefings and training for disability coordinators within schools. Our responses to questions 6 *[the question asking about the types of support provided]*: not all of these answers relate to all students with AS/autism and are considered on a case by case basis.

We work closely with academic staff to plan Field Trips. Students are supported to attend clubs, societies and sports facilities. We have a disabled student mentor scheme. These mentors provide support to new students at summer school and Get Ahead. Students who have autism have the opportunity (and frequently take the opportunity) to become a mentor or tell their story at Summer school or Get Ahead. We run a Front runner leadership programme for students with disabilities which a number of students with autism are supported to attend.

No

No

No.

No

No

Any figures relating to admissions/retention/progression/attainment, only include those students who have only disclosed ASD. Students with multiple conditions/impairments

including ASD are recorded as 'multiple disabilities' in line with the UCAS/HESA categories, and it is not possible to identify how many of these also have ASD.

I would like to provide some detail to answer submitted in part 6 [*the question asking about the types of support provided*]. Arrangements for continuity of tutors, students will have a personal academic tutor and this will last for the duration of their course unless the student requests a change. With non-medical helper support as far as possible we try to ensure that student and support worker stay for duration of course subject to either party wanting to change. Assistance travelling to and from different locations, we have an intercampus bus to some of our campuses and if students are in receipt of DSA for travel then they will utilise this. Befriending scheme, we operate a befriending scheme open all level 4 students. Support accessing learning centres and IT we recently employed an assistive technologist so we will be improving provision in this area. We are looking at how to improve our approaches with transition and improve the information we provide to students, staff and applicants.

Question 6 [*types of support provided*]: some of the items listed may be arranged, subject to need and certain restrictions. Question 17 [*university disability policy*]: there is a general policy but this is currently under review. Questions 18, 19 and 20 [*graduation rates, retention rates, and students going on to employment or further study*]: The number of students with ASD is very low, therefore the figures ... should be treated with caution and should not be used to infer general trends. If you are surveying all universities we strongly advise you to go to HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) for this information to ensure consistency across the sector.

Support for students is assessed on an individual basis. Not all students will require same types of support. Items ticked in section 6 [*types of support provided*] is a range of support available to students. Not a package taken up by all ASD students. Style of questionnaire does not allow for respondent to indicate when something is not applicable or state an alternative for how things are done. For example Question 4 [*is in-house specialist support full-time or part-time?*], we actually have a full time Disability Specialist, a half time Mental health specialist and a part time ASD specialist. All of whom work with our ASD students as required. For section 16 [*university autism policy*] we don't have a specific policy for ASD students but we do supply information specifically for ASD students via our web pages as well as more general information which applies to all disabled students. Your questionnaire did not allow for an alternative to yes or no.

No

Our Tutors and Disability Advisors work closely with academic staff to advise appropriately on learning conditions for all disabled students. We annually review the attainment gap between students without a declared disability/students with a declared disability. In 2013/14 the attainment gap was a positive one with 10% more disabled students obtaining a first/2.1 degree compared with students without a declared disability.

We run a successful social group for autistic students.

We also run a successful weekly social group - facilitated by Spectrum First, a local charity - for our students

no



with only an occasional student it would be impossible to make the sort of provision expected of a larger university. we have only 1000 students in total; 20-25% are dyslexic

## Appendix 14: Brief biographies of the authors

Nicholas (Nick) Chown is an independent autism advocate, mentor, researcher, and trainer. He has researched barriers to learning for students with autism in further education, autism awareness in the UK police service, viva protocols for doctoral students with autism, and diagnostic pathways for autistic adults. His doctoral thesis focused on language methods and the applicability of Wittgenstein's language game concept in autism. He is a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, and a reviewer for various journals. In addition to leading the Higher Achievers project, Nick is engaged with a university project mentoring autistic adults. He is also writing a book on autism theory. He had previous careers in corporate risk management and insurance loss adjusting.

Joanna Baker-Rogers is an independent autism researcher who also teaches in higher education. Joanna's interest in the world of autism stems from the diagnosis of her son with Asperger syndrome. In 2006 she graduated from Sheffield Hallam University with an MA in the Education of Children and Young People with Autism. She is currently writing her Thesis for her doctorate on the meaning of sociality and friendship for persons with autism. Her interests in the field of autism include: social barriers, special educational needs, the lived experience of persons with autism, and the phenomenon of friendship and autistic sociality. Joanna is a founder-member of the 'High Achievers' research team.

Elizabeth (Liz) Hughes is a former civil servant and IT systems designer/analyst who has a child with Asperger syndrome. She has an academic background in economics at degree and post graduate levels but more recently has studied autism, various qualifications including a Post Graduate Certificate in Asperger Syndrome. She is a school governor with particular interests in special educational needs and autism. Liz advocates for and supports individuals with autism, and runs an online support group for people who live with autism and hypermobility. She is a founder member of the High Achievers autism research group.

Kleio Nicola Cossburn is a former police officer and parent of two children with autism. She has a Bachelor of Science degree, and a Post Graduate Certificate in Autism and Asperger Syndrome. Kleio is currently developing her research skills prior to undertaking doctoral studies. Her particular interests in the field of autism concern operational policing, and autistic service user involvement in professional training. Kleio is a founder member of the 'High Achievers' research team.

Pamela (Pam) Byrne advocates for, and supports students with autism within a college of Further Education in England. With a background in Fine Art at degree level, a Post Graduate Certificate in Autism and Asperger Syndrome, and a particular interest in special educational needs, Pam is committed to enabling students to reach their full potential. Pam has experience of supporting students within Further and Higher education settings and is also a work supporter at a community interest company in Warwickshire, which supports adults with autism and learning differences in work based activities, and provides opportunities to develop work, life and social skills.