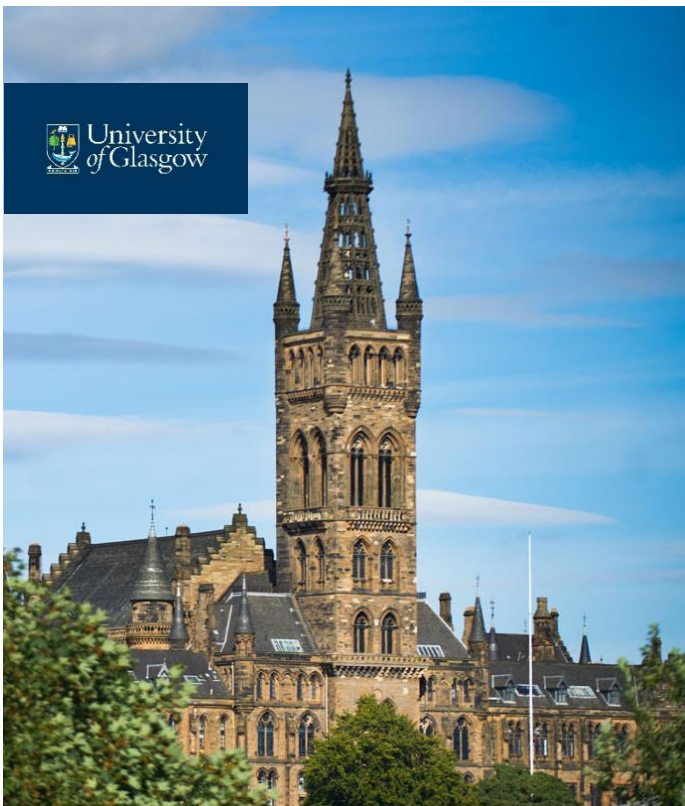




Inclusive working guidelines

The current version of this document has been modified to fit the context of the College of Science and Engineering (CoSE) at UofG, with input and engagement from colleagues with lived experience.

Inclusive working guidelines

This document was originally created by the Academic & Digital Development team.

Nic Kipar, v.1.3, 27.09.24

These guidelines are informed by lived experiences and were developed with input from members of the ADD team. They aim to create an inclusive and welcoming working environment, both within the ADD team and beyond.

v. 1.4, 01.07. 2025

The current version has been modified to fit the context of the College of Science and Engineering (CoSE), with input and engagement from colleagues with lived experience. A special thanks to Dr Daniel Bribiesca Sykes and Dr Lada Murdoch for their efforts to adapt this document.

The College of Science and Engineering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee endorse this document as an opportunity to work towards a more inclusive working environment in CoSE and at UofG.

We encourage neurodivergent colleagues as well as colleagues supporting neurodivergent staff to review and learn from the guidelines. By reviewing this document colleagues can look to increase their knowledge on five main themes:

- 1. Minimise anxiety**
- 2. Improve communication**
- 3. Socialising and behaviour expectations**
- 4. Response time and availability**
- 5. Working environment**

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Inclusive working practices context

The University of Glasgow states on their [Support for Disabled & Neurodivergent Colleagues](#) site that “The University aims to maintain a people-centred and inclusive working environment where colleagues feel valued and supported and can enjoy a fulfilling career.”

The ADD team have practised inclusive working based on their lived experiences. This document captures, and builds upon, these experiences – both positive and challenging – and is intended to support others in fostering inclusivity.

Inclusivity should mean that no one has to request the accommodations they need, as all needs are considered from the outset. This approach aligns with the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) [principles](#) v.3.0 (2024), particularly focusing on the dimensions of Interaction (Guideline 4) and Expression & Communication (Guideline 5).

Furthermore, the guidelines are aligned with the [Code of Professional Conduct](#) of the University and the [Glasgow Professional Behavioural Framework](#). They are also informed by the University of Glasgow’s [Health & Wellbeing portal](#). However, they aim to go a step further by actively enhancing inclusivity, rather than merely adhering to the baseline standards.

A particularly useful source has been the [Neurodiversity Resource Hub](#) that was created as a part of a Wellcome Trust ISSF grant for a project to promote neurodiversity and support neurodivergent staff and PGRs within MVLS; however, it aims to be used throughout the University and is for all staff and Postgraduate Research Students to use.

The Hub provides information on neurodiversity definitions, inclusive practices, support for neurodivergent staff and PGR students, and guidance on navigating workplace relationships. All materials are sourced from experts in neurodiversity or disability equality, as well as the University of Glasgow’s own resources.

The section on [Positive Working Relationships](#) on the Hub offers valuable principles and practices on topics like staff communication and line manager-employee interactions. It is recommended to review the Hub alongside this document on team-specific guidelines.

Finally, the aim of these guidelines is to proactively address the [Equality Act 2010](#) which [requires the University](#), in the exercise of our functions, to give due regard to the need to

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The content that follows provides guidance on some of the common ‘potential challenges’ that may arise in the workplace; these are informed by lived experience.

1. Minimise Anxiety

Teams calls

Inclusive practices:

- Send a quick message checking if someone is available for a call-in advance
- Start Teams calls as audio only and ask if switching to video is ok

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

Unsolicited Teams calls can cause anxiety for many. In the past, phone calls were often uncomfortable for neurodivergent colleagues, even once desk phones displayed the caller’s number. With Teams, the added possibility of video increases the pressure related to eye contact and reading facial expressions. While video may not be required, there is still an implicit expectation. Instead, send a quick message in chat explaining why you'd like to call and ask if the person is free. This simple courtesy makes the process more comfortable for everyone involved.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

- It is perfectly acceptable to decline unsolicited calls (you’re not obliged to answer a call)
- You can always send a message to ask for details ("I saw you called—what was it regarding?") or to arrange a time when you’d be available to call ("I’m unavailable right now; can we talk at <insert time/date> instead?").
- Acknowledge the call, but feel free to set boundaries.

Invitations to meet

Inclusive practices:

- Always give the reason or context for requesting a meeting (in-person, Teams or Zoom).
- When suggesting meeting times, avoid overwhelming invitees with too many options.

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

Not knowing the purpose of a meeting can be incredibly anxiety-inducing for many neurodivergent people because of a tendency to contemplate and fixate on negative scenarios/outcomes.

If the details are too complex to explain in full, at least reassure the person that it is not something negative. For example, you could say, "This is about planning for the next course iteration," or "I'm worried about my assignment" or "I need help choosing a course". Just don't ask for a meeting without giving a reason.

When suggesting meeting times, avoid overwhelming invitees with too many options. Offer either a specific time and date or a limited selection of options to minimise stress and decision fatigue.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

- You can ask for clarification of the purpose of a requested meeting.
 - E.g. "Can you let me know what this is regarding?".
- It is important to remember that this is meant to be an inclusive workplace, aligned with our University Values and it is completely reasonable to ask for the purpose of a meeting.

2. Improve communication

Creating meeting notes and summaries

Inclusive practices:

- Ensure meetings are minuted and the minutes are made available, consider using University approved AI tools (Zoom or Teams) to create meeting summaries.
- Make clear whether meetings can or cannot be recorded at the outset.

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

Automatically generating meeting notes and summaries through recordings and transcriptions can be incredibly useful.

Transcriptions are valuable for creating summaries and maintaining a clear record of discussions. Ideally, recording should be standard practice if all parties agree. While it is understandable that recording may not be suitable for sensitive or confidential topics, such as health-related matters, it is highly beneficial for general work-related conversations.

Recording and sharing transcripts or summaries fosters transparency and inclusivity, and it is good practice to ensure all participants have access to these materials. In terms of workflow, you can quickly create a summary from the transcript after the meeting, including any next steps. This ensures everyone is on the same page and helps prevent confusion. While it may not be necessary for every meeting, it can be invaluable for specific discussions as a reminder or reference. The approach to utilise automatically generating meeting notes benefits everyone on a call, not just neurodiverse individuals.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

- Create and record transcripts using Zoom, Teams or your phone in-person — though, of course, **always get permission first**.
- Use University approved AI tools to summarise meeting transcripts and record ‘actions’ before deleting the recordings, don’t keep more than the summaries.
- It tends to be challenging to take notes while participating in a conversation, and recording allows you to focus without the worry of missing important details.

Ease of reading long text

Inclusive practices:

- Avoid large blocks of text; instead, break them up or provide a summary.

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

Long blocks of text can be overwhelming and difficult to process, especially for individuals with certain neurodiverse conditions. Breaking up text into smaller paragraphs, using bullet points, and including headings makes the information more accessible and easier to understand. Providing summaries or using AI

tools to extract key information can save time and reduce cognitive overload. This approach benefits everyone, not just neurodiverse individuals.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

- When faced with lengthy documents or emails, use AI tools to summarise the content and extract essential details.
- If AI tools are unavailable, employ strategies such as rereading the text in chunks, highlighting key sentences, and creating your own summaries to aid comprehension.

3. Response time and availability

Expected response time

Inclusive practices:

- Aim to respond to emails or requests within two to three working days, unless otherwise indicated. This is a good general practice.
- Be mindful that some colleagues may occasionally forget to respond, particularly if they are unable to address the message immediately. A polite reminder after a week is appropriate. This is important to remember, especially in a team with neurodiverse members who may have working memory challenges.
- Be mindful that not all colleagues have desk-based roles and they may work shift work. Response time expectations should be adjusted to allow for flexibility.
- Include a note in your email signature to manage expectations, such as: 'You may receive emails from me outside your working hours. Please respond/action within your own working hours.' This helps set boundaries for everyone."

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

It is beneficial to remember that forgetting to respond is rarely intentional and is often due to high workloads or memory challenges, rather than a reflection of someone's commitment or regard.

Offering a note to manage expectations from the outset benefits everyone's workflow and understanding that receiving a one week follow up to a previous request is not out of impoliteness but as an opportunity to update.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

- It is helpful to set clear expectations around response times, especially given varying work hours and part-time schedules within a team.
 - "For roles requiring quick responses, agree on specific 'check-in' times rather than constant availability."
 - "Use a traffic light system (e.g., Teams status) to indicate availability levels."
- Keep in mind that some colleagues may occasionally forget to respond if they are unable to address the message immediately. If you have not received a reply within a week, feel free to kindly send a reminder.
- Everyone responds differently, but we all aim to be responsive.

Working offline for focus

Inclusive practices:

- Recognise and respect the need for some individuals to work offline or minimise distractions to enhance focus.

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

Uninterrupted work time is essential for productivity and can be particularly crucial for neurodiverse individuals who may be more sensitive to distractions.

The expectation of constant availability can be detrimental to focus and well-being.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

- Work offline or close communication tools like Teams when focused work is required.
- Communicate availability to colleagues such as setting Teams status updates to indicate availability.
- Work in the way that suits you best, but stay reasonably responsive (e.g. check emails at least twice a day).

If you find it helpful, it is perfectly acceptable to work offline or close Teams for focused work sessions. You are *not* expected to be constantly available on email or on Teams if you need to work without distractions. Feel free to communicate this to the team, or set a status update such as "Focusing – available later."

Maintaining balance between being accessible and having time for uninterrupted work is key to supporting both individual and team productivity and wellbeing.

4. Socialising and behavioural expectations

Socialising is optional

Inclusive practices:

- Make clear that social events are optional and only for those that wish to attend.

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

We want to foster an inclusive environment where socialising is welcome but never forced. Everyone is different in how they engage with social situations, and it is important that no one feels pressured or uncomfortable.

Anyone who wishes to socialise is more than welcome to do so. Building friendships with colleagues can be a wonderful experience. However, we understand that not everyone enjoys socialising, and that is perfectly okay. Whether you enjoy small talk or prefer to opt out of social events, both choices are equally valid.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

- Feel free to opt out of any social event, all are optional.
- If you like to socialise but find it tiring consider setting your own time limit, you can stay as little as you like.
- Some team events may include social components, such as team lunches or casual gatherings. It is important to remember that participation in these is entirely voluntary.
- There is no expectation or obligation to attend social events, and we do not want anyone to feel uncomfortable or forced into situations they do not enjoy.
- Everyone should feel confident in saying, "Thank you, but no thank you," without any judgement.
- Also you can consider attending for a shorter, more manageable period of time, there's no minimum time you need to attend an event, even if it's just for 5 minutes or less.

Organised social events outside of your team

Social events may occasionally be organised for a wider group of colleagues, such as by the wider directorate. Participation in these events is entirely voluntary, and no one should feel pressured to attend. We respect each individual's personal preferences and boundaries. If you encounter any pushback, please direct them to your line manager or team leader for further clarification.

Respecting different comfort levels

Some people enjoy networking or small talk, while others may find these activities challenging or uncomfortable. It is essential that we respect these differences and do not make assumptions about what others enjoy. Our goal is to ensure everyone feels comfortable and included, without being pushed into situations that might cause discomfort.

In summary, social activities are open to all, but there is never any expectation or pressure to participate. Inclusivity means respecting everyone's individual preferences and ensuring a supportive and welcoming environment for all, regardless of their comfort level with socialising.

Understanding focus and behaviour

Inclusive practices:

- If you see someone in a meeting engaging in a separate, non-disruptive activity, understand that this behaviour may be their way of maintaining focus. Forcing individuals to stop these activities will reduce their ability to concentrate.
- Do not assume that eye contact signifies engagement, forcing eye contact is in fact distracting for many neurodiverse people.

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

In meetings, presentations, or talks, it is important to recognise that people may demonstrate focus and concentration in different ways. Some individuals may appear distracted—doodling, looking at their phone or tablet, or even knitting—while they are actually deeply engaged in what is being said. This behaviour helps them to concentrate by managing external stimuli and keeping their minds focused on the speaker.

For some, focusing their eyes on something closer, like doodling on paper, or keeping their hands busy helps them concentrate better. This is not a sign of disrespect or lack of attention; in fact, it allows them to process information more effectively.

The traditional expectation that one should always make eye contact with the speaker is not universally beneficial. For many, it can actually hinder their ability to focus. Recognising and accepting different ways of listening promotes inclusivity and ensures that all individuals can participate fully. In summary, respect the different ways people engage during meetings. These behaviours are often a strategy for improving focus, not a sign of disinterest, and accepting this fosters a more inclusive and supportive environment for all.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

- There is no expectation on you to explain/justify your focus strategies

While some people may choose to inform others about their focus strategies, there is no expectation that they must disclose or explain their behaviour. It is important to create an environment where these behaviours are understood and accepted without judgement.

5. Working environment

Sensory stimulation

Inclusive practices:

- Be mindful of the sensory environment, including lighting, noise levels, and smells.
- Offer options for reducing sensory input, such as providing quiet spaces or allowing the use of noise-cancelling headphones.
- When planning events, consider the sensory impact on attendees.

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

Many neurodiverse individuals have heightened sensory sensitivities, which can make certain work environments overwhelming or uncomfortable.

This can be a specific challenge in technical spaces and environment. Where noise from equipment, strong lighting and possible smells can be encountered.

Sensory overload can lead to stress, anxiety, decreased productivity, and even physical pain.

Creating a sensory-friendly workplace demonstrates respect for individual differences and promotes well-being.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

- Utilise noise-cancelling headphones or earplugs to minimise auditory distractions.
- Modify your workspace to reduce sensory stimulation (e.g., using lamps instead of overhead lighting).
- Take breaks in quiet areas to regulate sensory input.
- Communicate your sensory needs to colleagues or supervisors.

Identify your specific sensory triggers and communicate them to your manager or colleagues.

Explore different strategies for managing sensory input, such as using noise-cancelling headphones, adjusting lighting, or using fidget tools.

Remember that it's okay to prioritise your sensory needs, even if they differ from those of your colleagues.

Disclosure and reasonable adjustments

Inclusive practices:

- Create a culture where individuals feel safe disclosing their neurodiversity.
- Provide clear information about how to request reasonable adjustments.
- Be flexible and responsive to requests for reasonable adjustments.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the University's policy on reasonable adjustments and how to implement them.

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

Disclosure is a personal decision, and individuals should feel safe and supported regardless of whether they choose to disclose.

Reasonable adjustments can help neurodiverse individuals to thrive in the workplace by removing barriers and providing necessary support.

The Equality Act 2010 requires employers to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees, including those with neurodiverse conditions.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

- Disclose your neurodiversity to your manager or on your CoreXD profile if you feel comfortable doing so.
- Request a reasonable adjustment passport to accommodate your specific needs.
 - o Flexible working hours
 - o Assistive technology
 - o Quiet workspaces
 - o Modified communication methods
 - o Support for attending meetings and conferences

Familiarise yourself with the University's policy on reasonable adjustments and your rights under the Equality Act 2010.

If you choose to disclose your neurodiversity, clearly communicate your needs and the types of adjustments that would be helpful. Attempt to work collaboratively with your manager to identify and implement reasonable adjustments.

You would not normally be required to provide evidence of your diagnosis, but being prepared to do so, may aid discussions.

If you encounter difficulties in obtaining reasonable adjustments, seek support from P&OD (People & Organisational Development) or your trade union. Remember that you have the right to a workplace that is inclusive and supportive of your needs.

Burnout* and meltdowns**

Inclusive practices:

- Promote a culture of self-care and encourage employees to take breaks when needed.
- Be proactive in identifying and addressing potential sources of stress in the workplace.
- Have open conversations regarding early interventions to minimise the likelihood of burnout.
- Have an open discussion with your line manager about changes required to support your successful return to work.

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

Neurodiverse individuals may be more susceptible to burnout and meltdowns due to the challenges of navigating a world that is not always designed to accommodate their needs.

Burnout and meltdowns can have significant negative impacts on mental and physical health, as well as job performance. By creating a supportive and understanding work environment we can help to prevent burnout and meltdowns for neurodiverse colleagues and neurotypical colleagues alike.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

- Take regular breaks to avoid burnout.
- Communicate your needs and limits to your manager and colleagues.
- Develop strategies for managing stress and early interventions to meltdowns.

Learn to recognise your early warning signs of burnout and take steps to address them proactively. This might include increased anxiety, fatigue, irritability, or difficulty concentrating.

Prioritise self-care activities that help you to manage stress and regulate your emotions, such as exercise, mindfulness, or spending time in nature.

Communicate your needs and limits to your manager and colleagues. It's okay to say no to additional tasks or to request adjustments to your workload or schedule.

Develop a plan for how to manage a potential meltdown in the workplace. This might include having a designated quiet space to go to, using calming techniques, or having a trusted colleague who can provide support.

Utilise available support resources, such as occupational health or the employee assistance programme.

Remember that seeking help is a sign of strength, and taking care of your mental health is essential for your well-being and long-term success.

* The term burnout refers to “a state of physical and emotional exhaustion”.
(matters, n.d.)

**The term meltdown refers to “your brain’s reaction to extreme stress as a result of being overcome by frustration, upset, burnout, anxiety or depression.”.
(Wellbeing, 2025)

Handling a negative work environment

Inclusive practices:

- Try to provide a respectful and inclusive workplace for all staff and encourage colleagues to do the same, in line with the [Code of Professional Conduct](#).
- Take complaints of negative behaviour seriously and address them promptly and effectively.
- Follow clear procedures for addressing bullying, harassment, and discrimination in line with University policy.
- Offer support and resources to individuals who have experienced negative treatment.

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

Neurodiverse individuals may be more vulnerable to experiencing negative treatment in the workplace due to misunderstandings or lack of awareness.

A negative work environment can have a significant impact on mental health, job satisfaction, and productivity. By each colleague addressing unwanted behaviours, we will all work in a more inclusive and positive environment.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

- Document instances of negative behaviour.
- Report the behaviour through the University's [Reporting Tool](#), to your manager, your P&OD Business Partner, or another trusted colleague.
- Seek support from the [Respect Adviser Network](#) or trade union representative or through the independent [employee assistance programme](#).

Familiarise yourself with the University's policies and procedures for addressing and reporting bullying, harassment, and discrimination. If you experience negative behaviour, document the incidents as thoroughly as possible, including dates, times, and any witnesses.

Seek support from your manager, a trusted colleague, trade union representative, or the employee assistance programme. You have the right to a safe and respectful workplace.

Adjustments for staff who are carers for neurodivergent family members

Inclusive practices:

- Scheduling important meetings with consideration for staff members' caring obligations.
- Organising hybrid meetings rather than purely in-person meetings should be the default approach, so that staff members with caring responsibilities can attend the meetings remotely if needed.

Why this matters and how it benefits us all:

It is stressful for staff members with complex caring obligations to be told that an in-person meeting is scheduled for an unsuitable time. By organising hybrid meetings, it allows all colleagues flexibility and ensures a meeting goes ahead without the need for last minute adjustments. This is more productive for all team members and ensures colleagues feel the work environment is inclusive.

Guidance for neurodivergent staff:

Communicate your needs and limits to your manager and colleagues.

- Be proactive in identifying and addressing potential time or location conflicts with meeting scheduling.

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