# Appendix D - Inclusive Approaches for Communicating with Disabled Students

## Introduction

A Social and Communication difference is a condition that affects understanding verbal and non-verbal language for social purposes, sensory and information processing. Students with a Social and Communication difference may have a diagnosis of an Autistic Spectrum Condition, Asperger's Syndrome, Pragmatic Language Disorder, and Sensory Processing Disorder. This document provides best practices for inclusive approaches for students with Social and Communication differences but can be applied to the general student population.

## Communication

- Determine the student's preferred method of communication.
- Provide clear, concise, and unambiguous information.
- Give students enough time to process information before asking questions.
- Avoid using jokes, sarcasm, and metaphors as students may have a literal understanding.
- Allow students to audio record meetings and verbal feedback.
- Provide a short-written summary of the meeting to students.
- Recognise that students may find it difficult to maintain eye contact during a conversation.

## Non – Verbal Communication

- Use verbal communication when communicating with students who have difficulty understanding facial expressions and body language.
- Verbalise social cues to help students who may not always pick up on non-verbal cues.

## Teaching and Learning

- Provide clear boundaries, expectations, and learning outcomes.
- Explain the reasoning behind your requests.
- Ensure unambiguous comments when providing feedback.
- Communicate any changes to students in advance.
- Encourage students to engage in PAT/departmental meetings.

- Check student understanding to ensure they have understood the material.

## Group size and structure

- Try to plan for small groups.

- Have a plan to assign students to a group (a student with a social and communication difference may not know other students within the group or feel comfortable in approaching a group themselves).

- If possible, allow students with a social and communication difference to work with a peer they know/have worked with before.

- Offer to support groups with determining group rules and assigning tasks (a student with a social and communication difference may not feel comfortable contributing to the discussion and may be allocated the last task within the group).

## Clearly defined tasks, deadlines and outcomes

- Provide information about group work in advance of the session so that students have chance to prepare for the session (this may include developing strategies with their Specialist Mentor).

- Provide accessible information regarding the deadlines and learning outcomes online.

- Be mindful that students with a social and communication difference may find it difficult to work in an un-structured environment e.g. if students are expected to communicate and arrange group meetings/tasks outside of lecture times, have a plan on how you may help facilitate this.

## Support contact

- Have a named tutor students can contact if they are having difficulties with the group work.