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| Student diversity  Planning adjustments to instruction |

# Adjusting instruction

When planning teaching, learning and assessment, it is important that the functional impact of a student’s disability is considered. Many barriers for accessing age-equivalent curriculum and demonstrating knowledge and understanding can be designed out of learning and assessment tasks using universal approaches. There will however, always be some barriers that cannot be anticipated or require more significant adjustments.

Instructional adjustments enable access to content and can be proactively planned in conjunction with specialist teachers, parents/carers and therapists. This can help:

* reduce anxiety and frustration, e.g. providing a daily visual timetable
* ensure literacy demands are not a barrier to learning, e.g. decreasing the amount of oral/written information presented
* scaffold the learning process, e.g. developing graphic organisers to support memory, sequencing and organisational skills or breaking down skills into steps to sequence learning
* maximise engagement by reducing distractions and potential sensory stimuli, e.g. purposeful choices about visual displays to minimise sensory overload
* increase communication of what a student knows and can do, e.g. using signed, augmentative and alternative systems.

Examples of adjusting instruction

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| Adjustments for learning experiences and assessment may include: | |
| Additional time | * regularly asking the student or support staff whether the student requires additional time to complete a task * ensuring that the tasks developed can be completed in the time provided, based on the student’s learning needs * limiting the amount of text presented to the student to allow them to process it in chunks |
| Learning breaks | * regularly asking whether the student needs a break during the task, ensuring the student’s concentration on the task is not broken * ensuring the student is informed in advance when breaks are coming * ensuring breaks are given with a purpose and meet the student’s needs, e.g. quiet time, reflection, reorganisation, remembering instructions, reconsidering safety protocols, taking medication, personal care requirements * ensuring breaks are given to address sensory needs * sensory seeking, e.g. movement breaks, such as jumping on a trampoline, swinging on a swing, heavy work activities, bouncing on a therapy ball * sensory reduction, e.g. time in a dark, quiet space * using fidget toys, resistance bands, sensory blankets or headphones to cancel noise * allowing the student to request a break as needed, e.g. using a specified number of ‘I need a break’ cards * identifying appropriate behaviours that indicate the need to provide a break * using visuals to assist with focus and predictability, e.g. clocks, timers or a timetable * ensuring student fatigue levels are monitored and breaks provided accordingly |
| Cues and prompts | * listing the types of cues and prompts that are appropriate for each student, e.g. visual, gestural, sign, AUSLAN, auditory * ensuring cues and prompts are consistently used by all support staff * using a prompting hierarchy (least to most) * considering a plan for fading prompting over time |
| Instructions | * documenting the nature, specificity and repetition of instructional language * ensuring clear instructions are consistently used by teachers and support staff * augmenting instructions with keyword signing, gestures and visuals in the student’s augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) system * reducing complexity of verbal and/or written instructions given to students |
| Format of the text | * explaining student access to texts as specified in the units * using different formats to build student engagement, e.g. electronically enlarged braille * ‘chunking’ the text, e.g. releasing text or information gradually, or covering and revealing sections of text |
| Number of sessions | * increasing or decreasing the number of lessons in a unit, including follow-up lessons and one-on-one support * repetition of lessons, including repeating with variety or repeating the same concept in similar lessons with different settings or contexts * incorporating sessions for revision and feedback more or less frequently |
| Order of sessions | * progressing learning from easy to difficult, familiar to unfamiliar, routine to non-routine, concrete materials to abstract concepts * identifying the student’s prior knowledge, understanding and skills and how these will affect the order (and number) of sessions * considering the student’s ability to transfer knowledge and the order of sequential lessons within sessions * scheduling learning experiences and assessment around medication and personal care needs |
| Modes of response | * recording how each student prefers to respond * identifying how to support new and different ways to respond. |

## References

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2021, ‘Meeting the needs of students with a disability’, *Australian Curriculum*, <https://australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/student-diversity/meeting-the-needs-of-students-with-a-disability/>.

Graham, L 2020, *Inclusive Education for the 21st century: Theory, policy and practice*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest.

## More information

If you would like more information, please visit the QCAA website [www.qcaa.qld.edu.au](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/) and search for ‘Student diversity’. Alternatively, phone (07) 3120 6102 or email the K–10 Resources branch at [australiancurriculum@qcaa.qld.edu.au](mailto:australiancurriculum@qcaa.qld.edu.au).

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