

Definition of neurodiversity

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity refers to the differences in cognition and neural processing that gives individual learners a particular profile of strengths and weaknesses in relation to education and training. Neurodiversity acknowledges that some learners have different ways of processing and responding to information than the majority, the neuro typical. These differences manifest or cluster in different ways and impact differently in relation to the experience of education and training. The term neurodiversity seeks to place specific learning differences within human variation. Whilst it is difficult to provide an exact figure, a best guestimate is around 20% of learners are likely to be neurodiverse. This is a significant population by any benchmark or standards.

In approaching learning differences in this way, diversity of cognitive processing becomes acknowledged as a part of human variation and consequently, education and training is required to change and remove the barriers to learning experienced by neurodiverse learners in the social construction of education and training. As such, the term is congruent with the social model of disability.

Alternatively, the specific learning differences that Neurodiversity encompasses are often only responded to in education and training once there has been a specialist diagnosis. As such, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia (Developmental Coordination Disorder), Autistic Spectrum disorder (ASD) including Asperger's Syndrome, AD(H)D and Tourette's Syndrome tend towards a more medical model approach.

Neurodiversity aims to reconceptualise the idea of disorders like autism by supporting equal opportunity, changing associated language, dismissing the need for a cure, and encouraging acceptance for unconventional types of autonomy

In defining neurodiversity and learners who may be in this category, the starting point is the social model of disability and not a medical model approach.

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For more information on neurodiversity see:

Neurodiversity in Higher Education: Positive Responses to Specific Learning Differences

David Pollak (Editor)

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Jaarsma, P., & Welin, S. (2012). Autism as a natural human variation: Reflections on the claims of the neurodiversity movement. *Health Care Analysis*, 20(1), 20-30.

Jurecic, A. (2007). Neurodiversity. *College English*, 69(5), 421-442.