

'Asking us what we want and how best we learn would be appreciated.'
Participant Q

Surviving not Thriving: The lived experiences of neurodiverse learners at the University of Northampton



Aim 1: To understand the preferences, strategies and methods that neurodiverse learners suggest as helpful for their learning journey.

Participants divided their experiences into two distinct categories. We deemed these to be the *Physical environment* (visual and sensory) and the *Emotional environment* (feelings and identity of self). They were asked 'What helps you to learn?' and 'What stops you from learning?'.

Physical things that help me to learn. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual cues and diagrams • Quiet with frequent breaks • Practical activities • Demonstrations and being guided • Face to face interactions 	Physical things that stop me from learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise and loud open spaces • Big groups • Overstimulation (multiple tasks or messy slides) • Fatigue • My phone
Emotional things that help me to learn. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassurance and support (from peers and lecturers) • Being able to ask questions • Interesting content • Staff having time for me 	Emotional things that stop me from learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big groups • None direct instructions with abstract interpretations • Expectations of socialisation • Feeling stressed and anxious.

Research Team

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Sport Dev and PE

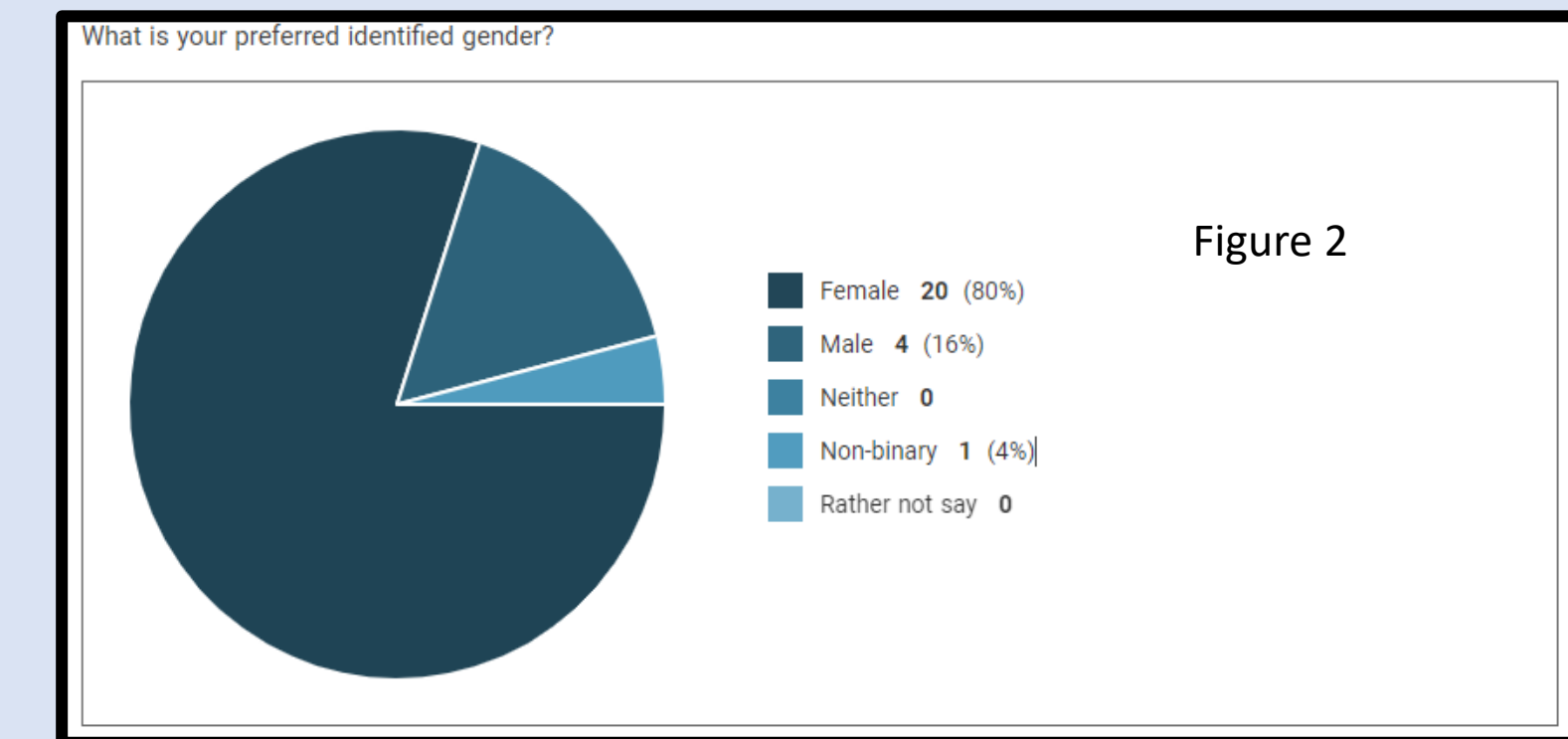


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Aim 2: Explore the experiences of neurodiverse learners during their time of study at the University of Northampton.

We asked our participants about their experiences at UON.

This is what they told us...

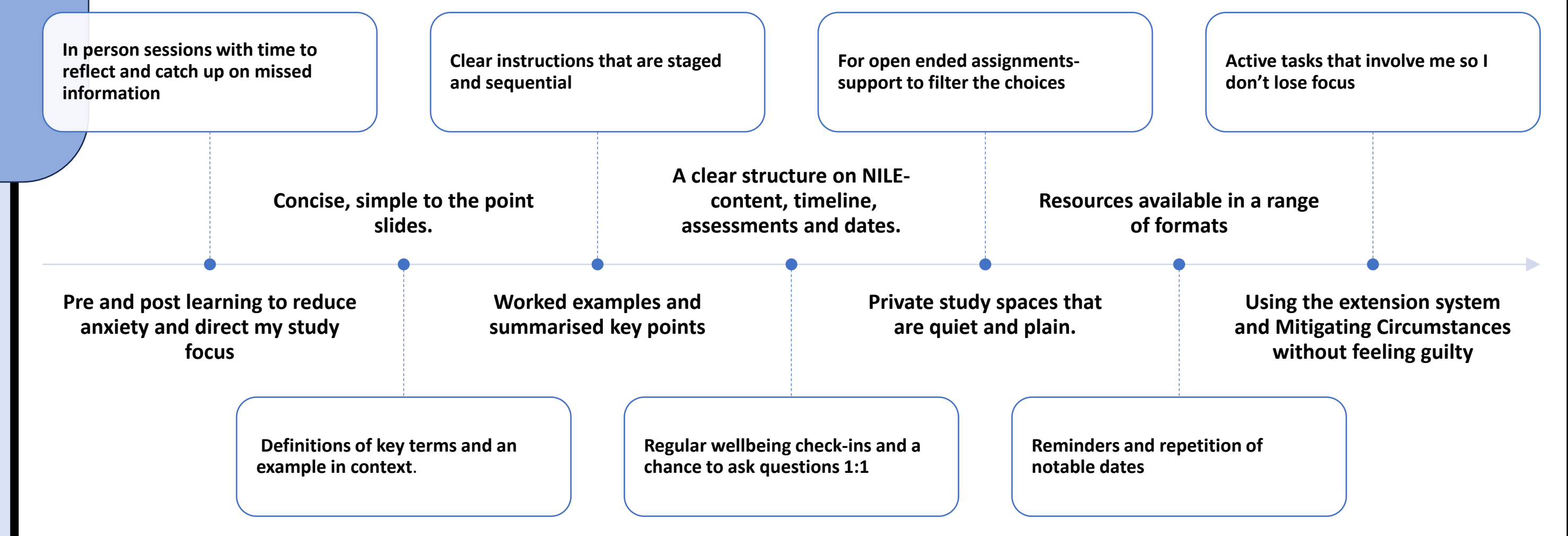
- 'I find breakout groups and discussions with strangers *very difficult*.'
- 'Would be nice to have some *more support* as a level 8 learner.'
- 'Asking us what we want, *how best we learn* would be appreciated.'
- 'There is still *a lot of stigma* about this that we are "*lazy*."'
- '*Not making assumptions* about what I know.'
- 'I think *lecturers are very supportive* and there is support available to help with your work and studies.'
- 'I have no friends. *I find campus a very lonely place*. I find the spaces very overwhelming and loud with nowhere else I know of that I can go and sit.'
- '*Table/chair placements* mean I've either got my back/side to fellow students or the lecturers, although I understand round tables make it easier for group work/collaboration.'

'I don't do well absorbing and understanding teaching where assumptions need to be made, or if the information/fact isn't absolutely clear...it leaves too many possible interpretations.'
Participant W



'Neurodiversity may be different in relation to social preference, ways of learning, ways of communicating and perceiving the environment'
Participant J

Aim 3: To produce a set of recommendations for staff



Selected References

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Introduction

This poster summarises the findings of an URB@N study that explores the learning experiences of neurodiverse learners at the University of Northampton. The notion of neurodiversity is increasingly better understood; however, it is also a term that covers a wide range of experiences. **Neurodiversity is a catch-all term for learning needs, mental health needs, health needs and many more.** The University of Northampton welcomes a wide range of learners who are increasingly exhibiting complex neurodiverse needs. By understanding their experiences, we can hope to use their experiences and suggested strategies to inform our practice.

Aims

- To understand the preferences, strategies and methods that neurodiverse learners suggest as helpful for their learning journey.
- To explore the experiences of neurodiverse learners during their time of study at the University of Northampton.
- To produce a set of recommendations for staff at the University to support neurodiverse learners on their programmes.

Method

Method: Online JISC Survey
Sample: The sample populations used in this study are defined as 'purposeful sampling' as defined in Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), the sample was drawn from the student body at UON- all phases, all subjects.
Inclusion Criteria: Current students studying between Levels 3 and 8 at the University of Northampton that consider themselves to fall into the range of categories for neurodiversity. The final sample included 25 students (Figure 1) from Levels 4-8. 20 identified as female, 4 males and 1 none binary (Figure 2). Their age range was between 19 and 70, with the average age being 31 years old.
 They described their neurodiversity as having a range of conditions including Dyslexia, ADHD, Autism and having a 'super skill' or 'a brain that works differently'.

What year are you currently studying in at University?

