

Neurodiversity study circle - full report

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Literature suggests assessment rarely meets the needs of student diversity, particularly disabled students. ^{1,2} Perhaps unsurprisingly, King's students reporting a non-learning-based disability have the lowest rates of satisfaction with their course overall, strikingly low rates of agreement with statements about clear marking criteria and helpful feedback. These students are also the least likely to feel part of a community whilst studying at King's.

The National Student Survey (NSS) categories are based on HESA data collection recommendations. This assigns category 51 to 'learning disability' and categories 53-58 and 96 to 'other disability – not learning', encompassing all other known and declared disabilities. Neurodivergent conditions are therefore considered as part of the 'other disability – not learning' category. However, these statistics are complex, as people may self-report things that HESA treats as learning disabilities under different categories such as mental health conditions.

Defining terms used in this report, *neurodivergent* (abbreviated as ND) describes someone with atypical neurological functioning or processes. *Neurotypical* (abbreviated as NT) is the opposite – someone with typical neurological functioning. ³ *Neurodivergence* is the state of being *neurodivergent*. Neurodivergent and neurotypical are both adjectives; in the same way that an object might be blue or heavy or spiky, a person can be neurodivergent or neurotypical. *Neurodiversity* describes the diversity of human minds – diversity is the property of a group, and an individual on their own cannot be 'diverse'. ⁴

Mental health conditions – examples include depression, anxiety, phobias, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) – are under the neurodivergent umbrella, because experiencing suicidal ideation, the fatigue and appetite changes associated with depression, auditory, visual or sensory hallucinations, are not usually considered within the realm of a typical or 'normal' experience, and people are discriminated against for being neurodivergent. ⁵⁻⁷ Other data sources, like the Office for National Statistics data on disability in education, show that neurodivergent people are disproportionately disadvantaged in education – for example, 18% of people with a mental illness and 20% of autistic people hold a degree as their highest qualification,

compared with an overall average of 25% across all disabled people, and 43% of non-disabled people. ⁸

The motivation here is therefore working to increase inclusive assessment processes to reduce the disadvantages imposed by the current system on these groups in this aspect of pedagogy, within a wider context of oppressive pedagogic design.

Methodology

A unique element of this project was the opportunity for authentic conversations with student participants, as neurodivergent students were involved throughout the project as research partners. ^{9,10} These student partners co-created questions for, and then facilitated, focus groups and interviews.

The intentional selection of neurodivergent students as facilitators meant that they were able to share their own lived experiences and more easily build rapport with participants; this also allowed them to direct the study circle to relevant aspects that should be considered in focus groups and interviews, drawing on their lived experiences to suggest relevant topics in addition to those identified from NSS results, suggest specific questions and sub-topics, and so on. The neurodivergent identities held by the facilitators and the influence of these identities and experiences is not a negative; being neurodivergent arguably brings additional strengths to qualitative research. ⁹ The facilitators' awareness of their position, and how they could be influenced by their lived experience, sets the context for the interpretations and theories presented here. The intentional selection of one undergraduate and one postgraduate research student as interviewers and focus group facilitators supported communication and rapport with students with a broad range of ages and experience.

Neurodivergent student participants were intentionally recruited for the project, and their self-identification was accepted as valid, moving away from the medical model, and acknowledging that diagnosis can be a privilege; some conditions are under-diagnosed in groups who don't fit the stereotype – for example, autism is often underdiagnosed in women and people of colour. ¹¹⁻¹³

The surveys collected a small amount of demographic data alongside faculty and course level; this was done to promote mixed-gender grouping for focus groups and avoid groups with one or two marginalised-gender participants. Data on respondents' gender was collected according to TEMPS (Text boxes; Expansive questions; Multi-select options; Prefer not to say option; Separation of characteristics) design standards. ¹⁴ Survey respondents were also asked for their preference in online participation for cameras on, cameras off, or solo interview; individuals could then be grouped by these preferences, avoiding situations where participants felt obliged to have cameras on despite their discomfort.

Recruitment of focus group and interview participants was also organised to avoid overemphasising one group or one kind of neurodivergence, e.g., avoiding groups that were entirely participants identifying as neurodivergent due to depression, autism, etc. Students were deliberately selected across a range of faculties and departments, which allowed the project to consider both common difficulties and discipline-specific challenges. This also avoided overemphasising one kind of experience.

Interviews and focus groups were designed to be as accessible as possible: access breaks were integrated into focus group and interview timings, captions were made available, participants were provided with information sheets in advance of the online event, to adhere to ethical requirements and so they knew what to expect thus reducing anxiety. In addition, participants were also invited to detail any additional access requirements that they had.

Ethics and reflexivity

Ethically, it was important to be clear to participants about what the project was doing and why, and how their data would be used and stored. At the start of the recruitment survey, information and consent statements were provided, where agreement was required to proceed. Interview and focus group participants were given information sheets in advance, so that they knew what would be involved, what topics would be discussed, and information on how to withdraw.

It is also important to note that there was no 'neutral space' in this project. Qualitative research is inherently subjective as people are researching people, and there is no objective place to stand. Both student facilitators were neurodivergent and have their own experiences with trying to access support, so while that brought additional knowledge, it was also necessary to consider what biases this might bring to the research. Facilitators were not necessarily required to be fully neutral or non-judgemental, but acknowledging the influence of their experiences and their biases was key. For example, the postgraduate research student was a white queer man in his mid-20s, so while he was likely to be aware of and sensitive to interactions between queerphobia and ableism, he was likely to be less aware of racialised, gendered or ageist dimensions of ableism.

Findings

Assessment

Participants were overwhelmingly in favour of online assessments. However, some acknowledged that online assessments can be a 'double-edged sword' in the sense that they benefit some and disadvantage others.

Participants also noted that expectations (i.e., the subjective difference between 'good' versus 'excellent' understanding) are not always clear. Some also remarked that the timing of assessments can be improved.

Questions about group work also elicited interesting responses. Some of the participants mentioned that it was a good way to meet people, but unique struggles for neurodivergent students exist in the context of groupwork, in that neurodivergent students often would take on additional stress rather than disclose their neurodivergence or access needs in a group.

Table 1: codes relating to assessment, definitions, and illustrative quote(s)

Code	Definition	Illustrative quote(s)
Assessment relevance	Participants discussing whether assessment methods are relevant	"things would be better if there were more of the same type of coursework, so I could... build on what I've done before" [about open-book online assessments] "it was also nice to.. not have to focus so much on memorizing, and instead just trying to learn how to actually apply all the information"
Timing of assessments	Participants discussing their thoughts on assessment timing	"while you're doing one, they'll give a second one. So you don't have the grades from the first to improve" "I think that time could be a lot less stressful if they'd be more willing to, like, spread out deadlines, especially over the Christmas break"
Assumptions in assessments	Participants discussing the assumptions that assessment methods make	"I've never seen done it before and they were just like, well, you just have to do it. So we were like, that's not helpful" "you still have to kind of fit into a certain category and way of writing"
Challenging authority	Participants discussing challenging lecturers or marks	"Lack of consistency makes people feel like it's not really worth trying if they do want to challenge it" "I don't know how to challenge any marking" "it just feels like contesting feedback is kind of unachievable"
Mix of assessment styles	Participants talking about the variety of assessments in their module	"I have a big mix of different coursework types and alongside exams and I'm really grateful for that" "I'm OK with presentations, but I don't think that's very suitable way to assess neurodivergent people"

Excuses	Participants talking about feeling they were making excuses	<p>“I knew about the assessment X months ago, when the module first started, so what really is your excuse?”</p> <p>“It's just sort of like getting over that initial like, ‘I don't need help’. I was... like, gaslighting myself into thinking, you don't need the support”</p> <p>“I feel like it's just that thought of... asking for something that other people don't have to ask for”</p> <p>“I felt that needing a little bit more time, and struggling with the structure of the course and the submission dates, wasn't a good enough reason to warrant an extension”</p>
Group work	Participants' thoughts on group work	<p>“I wouldn't want [neurodivergence] to be an inconvenience for the other group members”</p> <p>“sometimes we get put into, like, groups, but you don't know that happens until you show up”</p> <p>“the responsibility would fall more on the neurodivergent person to advocate for themselves in their group”</p>
Expectations clarity	Participants talking about clarity around expectations	<p>“I spent like a good hour trying to... demystify what the assignment was actually asking for... that's kind of – it's frustrating for the student and it's frustrating for us [GTAs] as well because we can't help”</p> <p>“if it's a checklist of like, this section must include these topics or something like that, like a kind of actionable checklist, then that's helpful”</p> <p>[about PhD extracurriculars] “they're not marked and don't count at all... there's absolutely no guidance on how to set them up”</p>
Changes due to COVID	Participants discussing changes related to COVID	<p>“they're [office hours] not really accessible, especially since coming out of COVID”</p> <p>“[online teaching]... a double-edged sword in that from my personal like access needs and my mental health, I'm someone who really, really struggled with online university and really struggled to stay motivated last year and found first year incredibly difficult”</p> <p>“If the tutor can use Teams properly, then I prefer online university”</p>

Emotions

In the analysis, we noted instances of neutral (i.e., nuanced or mixed), negative and positive emotions mentioned by participants.

Table 2: codes relating to emotions, definitions, and illustrative quote(s)

Code	Definition	Illustrative quote(s)
Mixed emotions	References to mixed emotions	"I think it's important to manage expectations with supervisors as well and some will give great feedback and others will not give enough" "It's just mixed feelings all around, it seems, regarding this new approach [online teaching]"
Negative emotions	References to negative emotions	"I never felt as under pressure as I did at King's this year" "Well, it's the lab. The lab is scary... it's [a] really hectic environment to work in" "Just feeling so disempowered by the fact that I'd never gotten that much help"
Positive emotions	References to positive emotions	"I feel quite lucky now because I couldn't imagine trying to do the degree without example essays" "undergrad, which I really, really loved and felt kind of worked quite well for me... has obviously allowed me to get into this postgrad course"

Discrimination and bad behaviour

In the analysis, instances that transcended bad practice was recorded separately under this section. This included discrimination and other forms of poor practice. Participants' descriptions of incidents paints a bleak picture, and should be used as a call to arms for progress across different strands of liberation – it is clear that more work needs to be done on anti-racism, and wider anti-discrimination for many marginalised groups.

Table 3: codes relating to discrimination/bad behaviour, definitions, and illustrative quote(s)

Code	Definition	Illustrative quote(s)
Discrimination and bad behaviour	Participants making references to poor practice from lecturers or GTAs	“She basically was... yelling at me”
		“We did it [group presentation] based on like BAME communities for our project. And she went, yeah, but what about the white kids?”
		“His response was ‘well, I don't actually look at the coversheet cause I don't think they're fair... it's just a reminder that for some students that I need to take extra care with marking it that way’, and that's not what a coversheet is”
		“I had another one... the feedback was just like, stop being autistic, or stop being dyslexic”
		[Participants' department after hearing their autism diagnosis] “saying that they were ‘sorry to hear that’ and that ‘they hope I get better soon’, ‘at least it's high functioning’”
		“I've never said this all out loud at once before it once I've just said it in like segments to different people, but now I'm realizing how ableist King's actually is”

Feedback

Participants, expectantly, reported instances of both unhelpful and useful feedback. Feedback was generally identified as unhelpful if it was perceived as minimal, vague or non-specific. The common thread under useful feedback was perceived care; participants appreciated when staff were thorough with their feedback or even did something as simple as acknowledge their coversheet.

Table 4: codes relating to feedback, definitions, and illustrative quote(s)

Code	Definition	Illustrative quote(s)
Bad, unhelpful or absent feedback	Participants describing poor feedback and why it wasn't good	<p>“For the coursework they give you the grade and they give you, you know, minimal description on what you could do to improve. But it's quite general, not specific”</p> <p>“I never got feedback unless I ask for it”</p>
Difficulties with feedback	Participants discussing things they struggle with around feedback	<p>“I understand I get what you're saying a bit, but I don't really know how to apply it. Whereas if they had pointed out exactly where they're talking about, what they're referring to, then it would be easier to, I guess, make the connection”</p>
Useful feedback	Participants describing helpful or useful feedback and why they found it relevant	<p>“My supervisor's feedback is so applicable to real life publishing... I've never received feedback that's been so applicable to the career and the course”</p> <p>“of course some of it is ambiguous but that's down I think to the nature of essays as opposed to, like, exams and stuff, but... pretty much is as clear as you can get, like it's pretty good”</p> <p>“Some even write down that they've acknowledged the coversheet in that in the feedback and it's great”</p>

Specific challenges for neurodivergent students

This is not something the facilitators expressly set out to explore in focus groups or interviews, but it came up organically in conversations. Participants generally displayed unfavourable sentiments toward memory-based assessments (i.e., closed-book examinations). Another major theme that emerged was anxiety – for example, participants shared anxiety around being perceived as an ‘inconvenience’ and changes to routine. Participants also spoke about the lack of disability understanding, and acknowledged that being able to talk to others about their disability and neurodivergence required a certain amount of privilege.

Table 5: codes relating to specific challenges, definitions, and illustrative quote(s)

Code	Definition	Illustrative quote(s)
Memory	Participants making memory-related references	<p>“there's no need for us to be able to know these things from memory. And I think it just creates a barrier for neurodivergent students, especially who may have, like, difficulties being able to commit such a massive amount of information to knowledge”</p> <p>“With in person exams, it acts as a memory test as well, and it doesn't matter how much extra time that I have. The fact of the matter is I've still got 3 disabilities that affect my memory and put me in a very much of a disadvantaged position”</p>
Bureaucracy	Participants talking about the bureaucratic nature of the university system	[participant talking about being in a small cohort] “My essays are never anonymous, people know that it's me and people have told me, like they can spotlight essays from a mile away and he knew it was me”
Accessibility	Participants discussing issues around accessibility	“If something's... affecting neurodivergent people, but it's probably gonna be affecting the neurotypical people in some way as well. So it benefits us all if, you know, people accommodate to neurodivergent people, it's not that hard”
Expectations clarity	Participants discussing lack of expectations clarity	<p>“They're being a bit wishy washy with how they word things”</p> <p>“It's just like the lack of available information. And it's like if a neurotypical person has a hard time finding it, then I'm assuming, you know, then obviously, if you, it just makes it even harder [for a ND person to find it]”</p> <p>“My main issue is timelines and expectations aren't really conveyed properly”</p>
Changes to routine	Participants talking about difficulties adjusting to routine changes	<p>“[some students have] neurodivergences that make them, like, make it difficult for them to necessarily commit to being up at that time on a Monday morning”</p> <p>“[attendance marks] just inherently makes the module inaccessible for somebody who has a disability that might mean they can't necessarily rely on their health being able to let them attend that class on person, in person or online”</p>

Anxiety	Participants discussing the anxiety and emotional stress that comes with being neurodivergent	<p>“neurodivergence and the typical anxiety that comes along with being neurodivergent just makes it ten times worse for people to try and challenge tutors... whether that be over grades or even just in lessons”</p> <p>“to add more stress onto the students who would find it stressful... when it's completely avoidable”</p> <p>“I'm scared of being stupid”</p>
Bad experiences in academia	Participants discussing that being a ND student or academic can be traumatic	<p>“So many good academics and like future researchers are just lost because of how traumatizing the whole experience is”</p> <p>“I mean, I do, but that's because of the trauma I faced throughout my whole academic career where I've been told that I'm not good enough and that my work's not good enough”</p> <p>“[about experiencing discrimination from a tutor] I don't care if the grade goes up at this point. I just want him to be trained properly so he doesn't do it to someone else”</p>
Lack of disability understanding	Participants identifying the lack of neurodivergence and disability awareness	<p>“I shouldn't have to explain how my disability works.”</p> <p>“Most of them don't know what dyspraxia is when I tell them about it and the accommodations I need for it”</p> <p>“All members of staff, they just don't understand what it is like. It's so ridiculous that we are in 2022 and I'm still explaining to some people what autism is. Like, how do you not know what autism is?”</p>
Self-advocacy privileges	Participants identifying the fact that being able to openly talk about neurodivergence is a privilege	<p>“I'm also aware that obviously a certain amount of that probably is due to my privilege in being able to advocate for myself and having known about, kind of, like, my conditions for a long time.”</p> <p>“Being able to have the language to, to tell people what I need is a massive privilege”</p> <p>“But then it's a privilege to be able to go and speak to your professor quite comfortably and get them to go through the feedback with you. Not everyone has access to do that, especially neurodivergent people”</p>

Structure

In terms of consistency, participants mentioned that across departments, teaching and feedback can be inconsistent. One participant also mentioned that online assessments ensure that the assessment expectations are the same for those studying on campus and abroad. Participants also mentioned organizational problems across departments and modules – including the lack of communication between module leads and students and the varying accessibility of content on the virtual learning environment pages (King’s E-learning And Teaching Service, or ‘KEATS’ for short).

Table 6: codes relating to structure, definitions, and illustrative quote(s)

Code	Definition	Illustrative quote(s)
Consistency	References with regards to consistency	“Different lecturers in my department I've found like quite different styles of writing”
		“[feedback] it's been so consistently inconsistent that I just don't even want to open my brain to the idea... because what we receive initially is just so disappointing”
		“I was told to do this. Why am I now being told not to do this?”
		“it's like a hit and miss with kind of Wellbeing as well in terms of disability”
Organisation problems	Difficulties arising from poor organisation (e.g., within a module or department)	“I was basically kind of promised that I wouldn't be marked down [for attendance marks]. And then when I got my grades back at the end of the semester, I actually was marked down”
		“We didn't hear anything for seven months. And then we heard oh, he's left the uni, here's your grades, don't question it. So that was all of it”
		“Compared like my flatmates, all of our different KEATS pages. Ours was nicely laid out. Theirs was all just like, lines, and I was like, what is that?”
		“I suppose Disability is to blame as well, kind of, because they always forget to send out KIP plans at the start of the year”

Support

Participants generally said that having personalised assessment arrangements (PAA) or King’s Inclusion Plan (KIP) from Disability Services made accessing support easier, and that the Mitigating Circumstances Form (MCF) process was ‘easy’. However, some participants described how the Disability Team would forget to send documentation to relevant staff, that lecturers did not always check these documents, or would sometimes not provide their accommodations. Some participants described feeling incredibly frustrated at a perceived lack of support, and going so far as to say that the Disability Services team was “not suitable to be speaking to people with disabilities”.

We noted that participants spoke favourably about recording lectures, exemplar essays (and explanations for why they were exemplar), good KEATS layouts, formative essays and the Widening Participation team. Participants also acknowledged that support is often dependent on the relationships students have with staff and even the kindness of individuals. While it is encouraging to hear that there are individuals committed to providing support, students should not have to rely on the good will of staff – good practice should be embedded and consistent across the college.

Table 7: codes relating to support, definitions, and illustrative quote(s)

Code	Definition	Illustrative quote(s)
Accessing support	Participants talking about accessing support	<p>“Every time I called up or tried to send an e-mail, I'd be sent in circles around this student services, self-service pages”</p> <p>“[I seek assessment guidance] right at the end when I have exhausted all of my own chances to try figure it out alone, this often makes it too last minute”</p> <p>“Because I was diagnosed and I got set up with the KIP. That made it pretty easy to access accommodations”</p> <p>“[MCF] was quite an easy process”</p> <p>“Disability is not suitable to be speaking to people with disabilities”</p>
Bad or unhelpful support	Participants discussing support that hasn't been useful	<p>“There's not a lot you can do, to kind of think that things can improve because they're so adamant on keeping things really bad for us all”</p> <p>“they're supposed to send any document that they're going to have out in the classes like an exercise 48 hours in advance to me. I'm lucky if I got 2 hours in advance”</p> <p>“I changed my module to artificial intelligence and then they got rid of all the support but they didn't tell me so before the exams”</p>
Lack of support	Participants describing difficulties or not being supported	<p>“[when asked if they felt supported] no, like big fat no”</p> <p>“passed from pillar to post”</p> <p>“This year we had two neurodivergent students... it was just quite demoralizing seeing how unsupported they were”</p>

Useful support	Participants discussing instances of helpful support	<p>“I've literally never been refused an extension”</p> <p>“personalized assessment arrangements are really helpful”</p> <p>“Our assessment criteria for different pieces of work has always been quite well signposted to us”</p> <p>“You can request for your transcript back. And I did do that once... And then that's when someone sat through with me and explained where I could have done better”</p> <p>“For my course, the way they have laid out KEATS makes it a lot easier to find things”</p> <p>“if you've got a history of mental health issues, you are given a senior tutor”</p> <p>“The Widening Participation department, in terms of like disability as well, they're really good and supportive”</p> <p>“Some even write down that they've acknowledged the coversheet in that in the feedback and it's great”</p> <p>“They had like an empty course for you to practice going through all the steps and submitting something.. that was very helpful because you knew beforehand how everything would be going and how and where to click”</p>
'Kindness of individuals'	Participants discussing how support is often reliant on the 'kindness of individuals'	<p>“I've just been lucky with having receptive – receptive staff members and teaching staff”</p> <p>[in reference to a named academic] “He'll go out his way to try and help if he can”</p> <p>[when asked about assessment criteria] “as far as I'm aware, [course] has none and sometimes the teachers make their own, but it depends on the course and even it depends on the teacher, whether it's useful or not”</p>
Relationships with staff	Participants discussing how support is sometimes reliant on relationships with individuals	<p>“I feel quite comfortable challenging feedback from my lab my supervisor, but we've got quite a good relationship so I know that's definitely not gonna be the case for everyone”</p> <p>“If I like the tutor, I'll go to them and show them my essay plan and my research and that and if I don't, I'll just wing it and hope for the best”</p>

Students as customers

Some participants brought up student fees and, by extension, what they are entitled to from the university. While the marketisation of education is an ongoing issue, it is interesting that students themselves have begun – as shown here – to weaponise this discourse, turning it against the system charging them extortionate fees and using it as a way to argue that they are entitled to accommodations, support, and ultimately respect as disabled students.

Table 8: codes relating to students as customers, definitions, and illustrative quote(s)

Code	Definition	Illustrative quote(s)
Students as customers	Reference to tuition fees, how much students are paying, and what they're entitled to from the university	“I’m paying something likes 40s and 50s, so they can at least give me my own invigilator so I can sit an exam fairly” “Despite the fact that we're paying the same, they probably get extra funding for us [neurodivergent/disabled students] anyway from the government because we're disabled” “Again, we’re paying 27 K for this, so...”

Staff pressure

Some of our participants expressly noted that staff currently face unprecedented pressures in university. Despite their frustrations in other areas, such as assessment, feedback and marking, participants were typically sympathetic to staff difficulties, noting that lecturers and GTAs were not being treated fairly by the university and were often dealing with the same struggles as their students (e.g., the increased cost of living).

Table 9: codes relating to staff pressures, definitions, and illustrative quote(s)

Code	Definition	Illustrative quote(s)
Understanding staff pressure	Participants mentioning the pressure and stress faced by staff	“I know that lectures probably already feel like they’re overworked right now, especially, and underpaid” “I’m fully aware that a lot of module leaders on classics are on not amazing contracts” “I understand at the same time that they're obviously – lecturers are dealing with a lot of the same things that we are, and there may be reasons why they need extra time” “Lecturers are under far too much pressure”

Conclusions and recommendations

Recommendations

Some of the suggestions posed were course or department specific changes – fewer questions per exam, named academic contacts for disability and neurodivergence support, and so on. However, these could be applicable in many departments, and would potentially benefit all students while specifically supporting those who are neurodivergent.

Some participants identified the need to improve the minimum standards – as one participant said, “we’re not even ready to ask for the ideal, let’s start with the bare minimum”.

The key issue participants identified was information signposting; participants described situations where often, it was not the lack of information, but the difficulty of trying to find it. This is challenging for neurotypical students and a step harder again for neurodivergent students, who may experience executive dysfunction (making searching far more challenging and frustrating), or think about information organisation very differently. It would be of benefit to all students if information was laid out clearly and consistently across the college, but this would specifically support neurodivergent students who may struggle to navigate a complex and bureaucratic system.

However, some suggestions should be considered more critically. Staff being penalised for late feedback might *feel* useful for students frustrated with long turnaround times, but this approach supports a culture of punishing rather than accommodating, impacting neurodivergent, disabled and marginalised staff particularly (compared to their non-marginalised counterparts). In addition, staff and GTA workloads are already out of step with pay and workload models, and placing more stress on these individuals is likely to be counterproductive at best.

Table 10: codes relating to participant suggestions, definitions, and illustrative quote(s)

Code	Definition	Illustrative quote(s)
Signposting	References to signposting	“An introduction at the beginning of the year... about where to find [information about mitigating circumstances]”
		“Online signposting and making information actually locatable”
		“Posters around the campuses being like ‘if you need support, it's OK. Here's where you can get it’”
		“Being more proactive with offering support”

<p>Clarity</p>	<p>References to clarity</p>	<p>“What I want to know is, what makes it a good piece of work? Because I don't know anyone that's ever scoring 100 out of 100”</p> <p>“Communication and openness about process, less unnecessary, unnecessary barriers that prevent people from accessing support, both academic and pastoral”</p>
<p>New ideas to explore</p>	<p>References to ideas that have not been explored before to the best of our knowledge</p>	<p>“One dedicated academic member of staff that I could go to, before and or after assessments to speak through feedback, like actually go through work with”</p> <p>“[group assignments chat] equivalent that's managed by the university and it lays out, or it can lay out, from the start what each person has to do”</p> <p>“Seating plans... I think it's better to, just kind of – cause what I usually do is I get into the class and I sit in the same place every single time”</p> <p>“I do think [department] could really benefit from a neurodivergent advisor”</p>
<p>Suggested improvements with regards to disability support</p>	<p>Suggestions for disability-related accommodations at King's</p>	<p>“Putting that [specific symptoms] inside the KIP in itself like explaining that that is the nature of, the nature of what this person experiences”</p> <p>“It would be useful for them to have like a more cohesive [cover sheet], cause, tutors aren't gonna look at any updates if they have to look at it every year, even though they should”</p> <p>“Emailing system like in regards to important deadlines, especially within the mitigating circumstances, you know the disability team or mitigating circumstances team like the deadline for applying for essays or exam things”</p> <p>“More clearly signposting that free 7 days [with PAA] that you're entitled to”</p>
<p>Focus groups</p>	<p>References to focus groups</p>	<p>“Focus groups, where different ideas are bounced around and things that there were particular problems with, might be helpful”</p> <p>“It might be helpful to do something like this [focus group] within a course”</p>
<p>Suggested improvements for assessment</p>	<p>Suggestions for those marking the work and for exam structures</p>	<p>“A very explicit explanation of what the grade means, rather than like ‘excellent’ and ‘good’ and ‘satisfactory’”</p> <p>“People to look and respect my coversheet”</p> <p>“[in timed exams] move the timer somewhere, as like ‘see time’ is an option so we can just check it”</p> <p>“For the quizzes... explanation box on why one's correct”</p> <p>“Less questions per exam”</p> <p>“Ideally, again, [exams] will be online”</p>

Suggested improvements for course structure	Suggestions for planning the academic year	“No attendance grades”
		“Centralized assessment timetable laid out in one page, easy to comprehend”
		“Staggered deadlines”
		“More of the same type of coursework, so I could actually prove to myself and gain more skills and build on what I've done before”
		“Essay workshop at the beginning of the year”
Training	References to training, improving understanding around disability and accommodation	“Exemplars, please”
		“Sensitivity training for neurodivergence”
		“Being able to like adapt to people’s need to for routine and the sameness”
		“It's not even an ideal world that we're asking for at the moment. Just give us the basic needs that we need to succeed”
		“More understanding about personal assessment arrangements”

Conclusions and next steps

The facilitators noted that participants felt comfortable asking them questions and commented positively on their approach, which suggests that the intentional methodology in this work was successful. Both facilitators were also involved in data analysis and coding, so their in-depth knowledge of the data and wider context was instrumental in aiding qualitative analysis.

An intersectional approach could be highly relevant going forward. As this project was primarily interested in neurodivergence, the recruitment survey, focus groups and interviews did not specifically ask about intersections with other marginalised identities like gender or ethnicity.

Similarly, groups were intentionally organised as mixed-gender and mixed-neurodivergence to avoid all-male or all-autistic groups, as noted in the methodology; however, this could have influenced what participants felt comfortable discussing. Being in a gender minority might mean participants did not feel comfortable describing gendered aspects of the discrimination they had experienced, for example. This could be ameliorated by adding a question into the recruitment survey regarding group diversity preferences, e.g., preference for mixed gender groups, or groups with only participants of marginalised genders.

Some faculties were underrepresented in this project, such as medicine, business, and law – this could be due to the high workload associated with these programmes, or

the stigma associated with being 'out' as neurodivergent or disabled. Some levels of study were also underrepresented, notably foundation-year students; this was due to the timing of the project, as recruitment, focus groups and interviews were scheduled close to exam dates for this group of students. Multiple rounds of recruitment across the academic year could mitigate this, although would potentially make coordinating mixed-course groups more complex.

This project has received further funding to create an asynchronous, open-source modular training course for staff and students in UK HE. The aim of this project is to improve empathy towards neurodivergent people, signposting to legal requirements for reasonable adjustments and access to support with a particular focus on assessment and feedback needs of neurodivergent students.

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