



# Student Spotlight: Celebrating Students with Reasonable Adjustments

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## About my disability:

I have Autism which makes me under the 'Neurodivergent' umbrella. Essentially my brain has way too many connections, so I am receiving an inundation of information all over my brain. This means that normally mild sensations (background noise, certain clothing materials etc.) are amplified often making me feel agitated and uncomfortable. Like an itch in my brain that I can't scratch.

A way I cope with this is through maintaining stability in as many aspects of my life as possible, so when these controls fail, I am hit with all the sensations I try to avoid as well as frustration and often exhaustion from maintaining my daily routine. So, if I appear as if I am overreacting there is most likely layers of confounding variables all hitting me at once so please be patient.

## What my disability makes me appreciate:

With the way my brain works I have an enthusiasm for things I love which most people lose in adulthood. While I could list the skills my autism assists me with such as pattern recognition it also has many difficulties that accompany it. My enjoyment of activities, events and even my friends and family has consistently motivated me to where I am. It carries me through the challenges of my Autism, my Endometriosis and all the other ups and downs in my life.

I do everything out of love and passion and as I am growing as both a student and as a person, I treasure that more and more.

## The challenges I face in the Lab environment:

My main issues are noise sensitivity and slow processing speeds.

As mentioned prior, my brain is always inundated so lab noises can make it additionally hard to focus, especially when I am already trying to comprehend things in a lab manual, and the more exhausted and busy I am the more likely I am to have 'sensory meltdown'. This is where I lose all capabilities of masking, focusing or speech and become a kind of cry-y blob (first ever lab in first year this happened and I fear I traumatised the GTA). This is, as you can imagine, is exhausting, embarrassing and has led me several times into something 'Autistic Burnout' which like normal Burnout leads to feelings of depression, emotional withdrawal and exhaustion but is often accompanied by skill regression and personality changes.

## Accommodations I need to do my science:

I'm permitted to use earplugs and have a fixed seat in my main lab, which makes those sessions accessible and enjoyable. However, these adjustments aren't applied in 'dry' computer labs or other modules, which has caused significant distress—especially as I wasn't told they wouldn't transfer across, so I didn't know to contact module leads in advance.

I appreciate the challenges involved, but being allowed to enter large labs ten minutes early to choose a suitable seat and familiarise myself with the room would make a substantial difference, without requiring strict seating plans.

Consistent lecture capture in Life Sciences is also invaluable. On days when sensory issues or Endometriosis keep me in bed, I can still engage with my studies and avoid falling behind. That sense of normality is a real support when I'm struggling.

Ultimately, meaningful reasonable adjustments come from listening to the individual and recognising that while we can't transform the entire environment at once, even small actions can greatly improve someone's experience.