Resources and Advice to Support Neurodiverse Writers

For teachers

- Here's a great summary of international literature on how neurodiverse students experience higher education and the ways in which higher education institutions respond:
Clouder, L., Karakus, M., Cinotti, A. et al. "Neurodiversity in higher education: a narrative synthesis." *High Educ* 80, (2020): 757–778. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00513-6

- With an emphasis on Autism Spectrum Disorder, this article suggests a pedagogy better attuned to neurodiversity can support the alternative social literacies of neurodiverse students:
Walters, S. "Toward a Critical ASD Pedagogy of Insight: Teaching, Researching, and Valuing the Social Literacies of Neurodiverse Students." *Research in the Teaching of English*, 49(4), (2015): 340–360. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24398710

- For a short blog post with clear and helpful strategies, see: Steven Florens (2019). "Four Strategies for Helping Neurodiverse Writers." Galin Education: https://galined.com/blog/four-strategies-for-helping-neurodiverse-writers/

- Howard Gardner writes about the theory of Multiple Intelligences, which can be a helpful concept for students. See Gardner, H. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books, 1983, and *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century*. New York: Basic Books, 1999. Alternatively, a simple explanation can be found here: https://www.explorepsychology.com/multiple-intelligences

- For an alternative method to student assessments – a.k.a. the 'unessay' approach – read:
Lucinda Matthews-Jones (2019). "Assessing Creatively, or why I've embraced the #unessay": https://lucindamatthewsjones.com/2019/09/11/assessing-creatively-or-why-ive-embraced-the-unessay/

- Try to make different forms of the same resource for your students. Some educators make games to help their students develop research questions, perhaps with cards and a game board. Ideally, the game would also be available as a text version that could be used with a screen reader and does not depend on visual clues.

- Some students will better understand concrete examples for theories or concepts, and others will prefer abstraction. It's always helpful to provide both forms of analysis so all students can grasp the concept well. It's also important to be very clear when you give feedback to students—Comments like 'Not clear' or 'Develop this further' are usually not transparent enough.

For students

- For understanding the writing process as a neurodiverse writer, see:
Leah Pope (2016). "How We [Actually] Write: Neurodiversity, Writing Process and Writing Instruction." Another Word: from the writing center at the university of Wisconsin-Madison: https://dept.writing.wisc.edu/blog/how-we-actually-write-neurodiversity-writing-process-and-writing-instruction/#:~:text=I%20would%20suggest%20that%20writing,than%20another%20%E2%80%9Cnormal%E2%80%9D%20writer.

- For some great general advice on writing strategies and accessing tools while at university, check out this blog: Academic Coach (2020), 'Writing Academically When You are Neurodiverse': https://academiccoach.info/blog/writing-academically-when-you-are-neurodiverse

- For style and productivity advice, see the 'Adventures in Academic Development' website:
  Adventures in Academic Development (2014), 'On Writing Paragraphs', https://acdevadventures.blog/2014/04/03/on-writing-paragraphs/ ;
  Adventures in Academic Development (2019), 'How to get back into Academic Writing', https://acdevadventures.blog/2019/08/19/how-to-get-back-into-academic-writing/

- To help you to understand your writing process through metaphor, consider this great article:
  Flowers, Betty S. "Madman, Architect, Carpenter, Judge: Roles and the Writing Process." *Language Arts* 58 (7), (1981): 834–36. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41962375
  For a PDF summary, see Nottingham University's resource about the article: https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/library/documents/academicskillstoolkit/artist-architect-carpenter-judge.pdf

- Try bullet journaling to resolve problems and roadblocks in your writing. Read about the bullet journalling method from The Thesis Whisperer (2023): 'New Year, New Bullet Journal' : https://thesiswhisperer.com/2023/01/05/new-year-new-bullet-journal-spreads/

- You may wish to try audio transcription apps, which can take away the pain of typing up your ideas. Otter is a good free option.

- Visualisation tools can create an intellectual map to connect ideas and identify key elements. Try a whiteboard or pen and paper for an old-school method. Alternatively, there are many digital mind-mapping tools to try (Canva has a free mind-mapping tool and Adobe Fresco is great for drawing with a stylus).

- Many neurodiverse writers struggle with structure, especially those with ADHD. The following strategy is great for scientific writing contexts, but may be helpful for other disciplines too:

  - Consider sentences as step-by-step progression within each paragraph.
  - Each paragraph begins with a sentence summarising the ultimate conclusion of the paragraph.
  - Then write each sentence with a logical progression, from broad to fine discussion points.
  - The last sentence of the paragraph serves as a hand-off to the following paragraph (e.g. A counter discussion, alternative view, or simply a change of topic).
  - You can use this structure for all kinds of sections, including intro, method and discussion.

- Download 'Starting on the Right Foot', a strategy developed by Eirini Tzouma, Academic Development Advisor in the Durham Centre for Academic Development.