

Supporting Neurodiversity in Higher Education: Workshop (Part 2)
Applying Your Knowledge of Neurodiversity in Teaching, Learning, and Advising
BCcampus workshop hosted on February 27, 2025
Facilitator: Sarah Silverman
Host: Britt Dzioba
ASL Interpreting team: Debbie Miyashita and Jess Carroll

BRITT DZIOBA:

So, my name is Britt Dzioba. I'm an advisor on the learning and teaching team here at BCcampus, and it's my pleasure to re-welcome Dr. Sarah Silverman here today for Part 2 of this two-part workshop series, Supporting Neurodiversity in Higher Education. If you missed Part 1, we do have a recording available, so we encourage you to watch that whenever you have some time. And we will also be emailing you a survey link, and your responses help us with future programming. I also wanted to sort off in a good way by locating myself. So I live on the traditional and unceded territory of the hə́ŋqəmiḥə́m̓ , and Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh sníchim-speaking peoples which is so-called Burnaby B.C. There are several Indigenous nations who share territory in Burnaby. All speak hə́ŋqəmiḥə́m̓ or Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh sníchim The central Coast Salish nations who share this territory are Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish, Musqueam, Sto:lo, and Qayqayt And I also want to welcome our two ASL interpreters today. We have Debbie Miyashita and Jess Carroll. So thank you both for joining us. And I'm now going to pass it over to Sarah to begin the session.

SARAH SILVERMAN:

Thank you so much, Britt. So first, I just want to thank you all for welcoming me here today. I'm really excited to be back for a second workshop, and I was just going to orient us to the materials that we will be using today. So if we could, I'm going to repost in the chat right now the links. We have both a document, which is called the handout and slides, which are Google slides. So on the top of our handout, we have number one, the ways that you can contact me. I just want to say this up front because sometimes people do like to contact me after the session for various questions or anything like that. So I just want to show you the available options right up front. If you want to find out more about me, my website, you can also message me at LinkedIn or email me. And there's also the link to the session slides right on the handout. If you scroll down this handout, what you will see or find is the four case studies that we are going to be looking at during our workshop today. Most people will only look at one, but this is where you will find them. So that's just something to know there. Now we'll go to our slides.

And I will start sharing those. Okay, so this is our second workshop. It is part of An Introduction to Neurodiversity in Higher Education, but it is Applying Your Knowledge of Neurodiversity in Teaching, Learning, and Advising, Part 2 of 2.

A couple of important notes here. I'm very excited to learn with you today. But this session is only going to be a 1.5 hour discussion, and we may have a lot more that we want to talk about.

So just to keep in mind that this is such a rich topic, and we're able to address a lot of good material in 1.5 hours, but it's part of a journey. We were just talking before everybody came into the room about how there's so many wonderful learning opportunities about neurodiversity around for us, especially through BCcampus. So I just want to highlight some of those. This is going to have a lot of opportunities for you to participate and ask questions. There are going to be two primary ways of participating today, which is going to be either typing in the chat or raising your hand to talk. We can probably not accommodate a huge number of people raising their hand to talk, but it is an option. And so I'll try to monitor the balance between talking and using the chat with 50 people, if all 50 people want to raise their hand to talk, our session might go way over time. So I'm very cognizant of the different ways people may want to contribute and attempt to balance. Please feel free to use your time, space and technology, however you would like. That could mean cameras on or off or moving around your space. You are very much invited to use these slides and handouts, however you would like. You can distribute them. You can share them with other people. You can reuse the content as long as you credit me. And the slides and handout are available at the following tiny URL links for slides, tinyurl.com/BC-ND-Slides2 The handout will be tinyurl.com/BC-ND-Handout2 That's because we're on the second of the two-part workshop.

So my name is Sarah. This is a little bit about me in case you don't know me yet. Many of you I met in some way at the last session. And some of you I have interacted with outside these workshops. But if we don't know each other yet, tell you a little bit about myself. My name is Sarah. I use she/her pronoun. My description is a white woman with short brown hair and metal glasses frames. Today, I'm wearing a blue hoodie that also shows the logo of Goodwin University, where I'm a part-time faculty member. My background also shows my brother's apartment today. I'm visiting. And there's a lamp with wire in the shape of a fish behind me. I teach instructional design and disability studies, and I've also done some amount of faculty development and instructional design support work for about eight years. That's the majority of what I've spent my time doing since I got my PhD. I personally am autistic. So I have a personal connection to neurodiversity, and I share that so that you can know a little bit more about me, know that I'm drawing on personal experience, and a lot of the way I organize my content in teaching. But I don't share that to suggest that only neurodivergent people should teach about and advocate for neurodiversity. I hope that both neurodivergent and neurotypical people will take up this topic as one that's important in higher education. My own research interests include accessible and feminist pedagogy, universal design for learning, UDL, and the history of the neurodiversity movement. If you were here during Part 1, we delved into some of the history of the neurodiversity movement. And just to summarize it began with the formation of a community of autistic adults online in the 1990s, who were searching for an alternative way of discussing autism that did not position autism as purely a deficit or disorder. Wondering whether there was a way to describe the fact that autistic people had strengths as well as challenges or barriers that they encountered. And, out of this came the concept of neurodiversity.

Just to highlight some of the ways that you may engage or participate. Bernadette just put in the chat that they are trying to eat and learn and keep your camera off. That's totally fine. There's a lot of different ways to participate. And I always say, I don't expect that your participation is going to be visible to me or apparent to me necessarily. Everybody does participate in their own way, and I'm super excited for people to join in using the chat or raise their hand to speak. But there are other ways and there's no better or worse ways. You might contribute using the chat. You might write with pen and paper or on an electronic device. You might just think without recording anything. I have a plan for accessibility, but I also recognize that live presentation or live workshopping may not be everyone's favourite format or the way that they learn best. So I invite feedback, the use of these materials after today's session, and I am happy to talk one on one about this content, as well as if that is something you desire. So we have 63 people in the Zoom today. I would love to learn a little bit more about you if you would be willing to use the chat. If you wanted to share your name, institution, role, and what interested you about this session, I would be happy. If you feel like it's repetition from last time, not a problem, you can share anything that you feel like sharing today. And I'll be happy to get to meet some of you this way. Crissa works with neurodiverse students. Karen, an instructor, how to support other students and other faculty. Hi, Janet. Hi, Meghan, who is a librarian and manages student workers. Wonderful. This is an increasing area, by the way, of interest in neurodiversity is in the library space, both in terms of programming, but also the kind of sensory and social needs of students, and whether they may find those to be kind of covered in the way that libraries are set up. Hi, Nancy. Hey, Roberta. It's one. So some of the diversity that we have within this space is people who have various academic staff roles, like advisors, librarians, other kinds of supportive people within the academic environment. But also a lot of instructors, disability and accessibility staff, and a fair number of people who do identify themselves as neurodivergent. So I'm really excited too. I'm really excited to hear all of your perspectives. You can continue sharing, and I'll do my best to also go back and check out a little bit of information about the people here as we go into some of our activities. Thank you. Thank you for being generous and introducing yourself to me. And hi ,Jen, whose response just came in. Oop, sorry.

Okay. I'm going to tell you a little bit about the goals I have for today. We will throughout this session, review some key points about neurodiversity history and theory through our conversation. I'm not going to repeat from workshop 1, but the recording for workshop 1 was distributed in the chat. And I really encourage you to go look at that as well as the slides and documents. So we'll also be considering the interactions of the categories of disability, diagnosis, disclosure, and neurodiversity. So how does neurodiversity overlap with or differ from disability? And how does that affect the way that we approach it in the academic context? We're going to connect the policies for accommodations with the neurodiversity and pathology paradigms. Then we'll also navigate complex case studies related to neurodiversity in the classroom and also collaborative settings. I hope that towards the end, you'll also have some time to reflect on your own relationship to neurodiversity and potentially throughout also brainstorm goals for further neurodiversity-informed practice.

Let's go into an introductory reflection pause. I would be happy if you would use the chat primarily to share. According to your incoming knowledge, how does the category of disability relate to neurodiversity? Please also feel free to raise your hand if that is the best way for you to contribute today as well. Okay. So Janet shares that neurodiverse individuals can experience disability when there are barriers. Andrea said disability comes up when we relate to the law, so in this context, disability can be a tool to get accommodations. Allison says, neurodiversity does not necessarily mean disability. Okay. That's something we're going to explore later on. Diagnosis helps to help someone receive accommodations. Disability is much wider than neurodiversity because it can include physical disabilities. Okay, great. When somebody has a diagnosed and declared neurodivergence, then they can be accommodated, but if it's undiagnosed, it might be hard to provide accommodations. Interesting. Neurodiversity could be identified as a disability, but it might not be. That's from Christina. Erica shares that whether one trait or difference is a disability depends on the environment and context. Wonderful. Thank you so much. Okay, so a lot of what people are sharing is, number one, there are a lot of diagnoses that are associated with neurodivergence. And we can probably name quite a few of these. ADHD, autism, learning disabilities. Increasingly, a lot of people with Tourette's are choosing to identify themselves as neurodivergent, and whether a form of neurodivergence is a disability will depend on the context. Um okay, thank you so much for sharing your incoming ideas. I think one of the kind of major misconceptions that I just wanted to note kind of right up front is that the neurodiversity movement, like we talked about, that began with autistic people searching for a less deficit-based way to think about autism, that the neurodiversity movement, uh, issued or rejected the idea that neurodevelopmental differences are disabilities. I think that's not really true, and I think it's useful to just mention this. There's a difference between saying that something is not by definition, a deficit or a pathology and saying it's a disability. Some traits can be very disabling. In environments that produce barriers to people who have that trait. So there's a way of saying, you know, some neurodivergent people view their traits as fundamentally neutral. However, they do cause disability in some environments. And many of you in the chat have alluded to that.

There are many forms of neurodivergence that are indeed classified as disabilities, especially in a legal context. This image is called the neurodivergent umbrella, and it is attributed to Sonny Jane Wise. And it shows a purple umbrella with a lot of different labels and diagnoses under it. If I'll just read a selection of them, but not all of them. ADHD, DID, and OSDD, that's dissociative identity disorder, and I actually don't know what OSDD is off the top of my head. There's also BPD, bipolar disorder, dyslexia, dyspraxia, sensory processing disorder. Those are all on the left side. On the right side, there's bipolar autism, epilepsy, OCD, tic disorder, schizophrenia. These are all conditions that could be understood as neurodivergent conditions, and they are all under the umbrella of neurodivergence while also potentially being disabilities. In a legal context, there's often a legal definition of disability, and it often requires a diagnosis.

However, not every form of neurodivergence is necessarily a disability. Oh, AC is saying other specified disassociative disorder. Okay, great. Thank you so much. I wasn't familiar with one of those off the top of my head. When we talk about neurodivergence, we say that neurodivergence is not a biomedical term, but a sociological term. It just means that you have a cognition that differs significantly from societal norms. Nick Walker, who is a significant neurodiversity theorist, wrote,

"There are innate forms of neurodivergence that don't involve any sort of disablement. Many forms of synesthesia, for example. So synesthesia is where people have kind of overlapping experiences of the senses. So if you view a word, you may also associate that with a colour. If you hear a sound, you may associate that with a taste. While it's going back to quoting Walker, while it's possible to have levels of synesthesia so intense as to result in atypical access needs, which require accommodation. the majority of people who experience synesthesia aren't impaired by it in any significant way, and thus require no special accommodation for it, and thus aren't disabled by the absence of such accommodation."

So what she's saying here is that it is possible to imagine forms of neurodivergence that are not never or very rarely disabling in society. They are maybe just differences. I'm not aware that this is a medical condition, but let's say that your eyes work differently than typical people. And when typical people view something that is blue, you view it as green. That is probably not going to be even though it is a neurodivergence, it's probably not going to be the most disabling condition. Sometimes you can kind of think of ways that this could be disabling. So for example, if you had a form of neurodivergence where you saw the colour red as a different colour, it might be more difficult to look at stop lights and assess what you should do with your car. So some of these kind of edge cases are helpful for thinking through when neurodiversity definitely is a disability and when it might not be. Janet said, it seems synesthesia could be useful for writing poetry. Yeah. I mean, it's, it's not a hugely common condition, but you have likely met somebody throughout your life who experiences synesthesia. And it's also sometimes co-occurring with other forms of neurodivergence as well.

The rights of students with disabilities do depend on the locale. I am personally located in the United States, and so I interact with the rights of students with disabilities in the United States, most commonly. However, in most of North America, the rights typically include protection from discrimination, accommodations that ensure equal access or attempt to ensure equal access, and some type of support services. I wonder if we could just check in for those who are here today. What is your understanding of the rights of students with disabilities in your own context? You can use the chat or raise your hand. Minisha said accommodation. So those are available. British Columbia, colleges and universities have a duty to accommodate. Okay, great. Chris is saying, in fact, students have to meet criteria; they have to jump through hoops to access accommodations. We're going to get into that in a minute. They may have support services like audio textbooks or different formats that are provided through a disability services

office. Yen said, it seems that they need some kind of doctor's note to receive accommodations. This might not be the best model. Accommodations for assessments. And Julia brings up that there is a duty to accommodate, but accommodations don't always support work with others. Christina is also saying that a diagnosis is usually needed. This is hugely flawed, and institutions and individual instructors so do better. Yeah. So this is probably a good time to bring up the neurodiversity paradigm and pathology paradigms. Again, we discussed in part 1. The pathology paradigm that was introduced by Nick Walker is the idea that there is a normal type of mind or cognition, and if you deviate from that then you have some kind of pathology in medical terminology, a diagnosis. The neurodiversity paradigm would say instead, there's no one right type of mind and that people's cognition varies, and that this is potentially a value to society. Um, it's very difficult to imagine how if we fully embrace the neurodiversity paradigm, we could continue with the current model of accommodations that we have. Our entire model in North America of accommodations is that somebody must have a medical diagnosis, and then they have access to the rights and affordances of laws and policies that protect people with disabilities.

So I summarize my own limitations of accommodations, but many of you have already been sharing in the chat some of the limitations that you observe as well. So here's the way that I tend to summarize them. One is first, the requirement of disclosure. This comes even before the documentation or diagnosis, but not all people who are neurodivergent may want to disclose that they are for reasons of their own privacy, or a legitimate fear of how stigma will impact them. Although we have come a very, very long way, it was not that long ago that conditions like a learning disability or autism were something that the average person would say, I would never want to have that. You know, that would be a tragedy if I experienced one of those things. Secondly, we have the requirement of documentation. Many people mentioned this in the chat, which is that under our current system, there's often documentation required. Depending on the health care situation in your country, which I know is different in Canada and the US, but maybe there's some significant similarities here is that there's often a cost associated with documentation. And this also relies on the medical model of disability or the pathology paradigm. The idea that something is wrong with you or abnormal if you are neurodivergent. It requires interaction with the medical system. It requires a kind of submission to the way that the medical field views disability and neurodivergence. Jen is saying there's also an added layer for international students who might fear impacts to their right to stay in Canada and their ability to receive a post-grad work permit and I'm not sure what PR means, but I totally understand what you're saying. Not every. Oh permanent resident. Thank you. Not every immigration system is inclusive of people with disabilities. Nation states reserve the right sometimes to not accept people with disabilities into the country. This also makes me think of a separate situation, which I only very recently learned. Students in the US, who are part of the armed services academies, meaning colleges that specifically work with people who are enlisted. Usually, you are not allowed to serve in the American military if you have most documented disabilities. So it creates a huge problem for the students, which is they're in school. They're pursuing a college degree while enlisted, but they can be removed from their

post, their livelihood, you know, if they do disclose a disability. Okay. Third, limitation of accommodations. You need to have knowledge or awareness of the disability in order to even begin this process. A fair number of people struggle in either educational situations, social situations. Maybe they have challenges with communication, but they may have never personally identified that this is connected with neurodivergence or a disability. Accommodations also views disability mostly as an individual problem. So it relies on the person to disclose their disability, and then there are adjustments made that are responsive to their perceived deficits. But usually, it's not that you declare disability, and then the system changes. It's more that there's a change that has to be made for one person. And lastly, I think one other limitation could be the locating of disability inclusion in the category of compliance rather than relationship. So this is the phenomenon where much discussion of disability is often kind of relegated to the office of accessibility or whatever you have on your campus, rather than kind of permeating the whole educational space in all of the relationships. So I hope that was kind of a useful overview.

So just to review very quickly, the neurodiversity paradigm. This is going to be really helpful for us because we're going to look at two different documents. One is going to be from the US context, and it's going to be an accessibility statement on a syllabus that tells students how to interact with the accommodation system. And the second is going to be a document from the UBC Accessibility Office that's kind of facing students with disabilities to tell them what they need to do to apply for accommodation. My question...

HELENA:

Sorry to interrupt you, Sarah. There's a question in the chat if it's possible, if you can elaborate on relationship vs compliance.

SARAH:

Oh, sure. I'll just go back to that slide for one moment. Thanks for asking. So, disability inclusion can be viewed only through the lens of compliance, potentially. So at the worst of this perspective, you might say, I'm not sure what the value of disability inclusion is. However, I know that law or policy, whether that's law in your jurisdiction or the policy of your institution requires some amount of disability inclusion through accommodations or, you know, whatever it is. One person might say, I don't have much interest in learning about the person, students who have a disability, colleagues who have disabilities. I'll just do what's required of me by law. I kind of liken this to say you're a driver, say you own or drive a car regularly. And you think to yourself, well, safety doesn't seem that important. However, I know that I'll get a ticket if I run a red light or I, you know, drive through a crosswalk while pedestrians are crossing it or something. So I'll learn the rules, I'll follow the rules. On the other hand, one of my friend's fathers made her take what was called a defensive driving class, which is kind of a whole theory of driving that is all about kind of safety, how to prevent accidents, how to pre-kind of anticipate what might be various safety issues that are coming and how to counteract them. And it's kind of a whole perspective on, I want to be safe in a car, I want to keep other people

safe. I want to, like, do my best to contribute to overall safety on the road. That's I think if we think about locating disability more in the context of relationships, it would require talking to students with disabilities, learning more about what their needs are, figuring out what role you can play rather than kind of just locating the interaction in disability services and compliance realm. I hope, does that kind of help, Hasa? Compliance would be, I think compliance would be anytime there is a law or policy that governs and kind of using that as the benchmark and relationships would be more about approaching it in a relational way, attempting to hear what someone's needs are and meet them on a personal level. There's obviously room for both. This is just, you know, one of the potential drawbacks of accommodations. Okay, great. And Kimberly calls that adopting a holistic view of students. Wonderful. That's another great way to say it.

Okay, so as I was saying, we're going to take a look at two documents. One is going to be from the US context, one's going to be from British Columbia. And what I'm hoping to do is look at them and see which elements might be aligned with a neurodiversity paradigm and which elements might be more aligned with the pathology paradigm. To review: neurodiversity paradigm is Nick Walker's way of politicizing neurodiversity. Has three parts. First is neurodiversity, the diversity among minds is natural, healthy, and valuable as a form of human diversity. So neurodiversity exists, and it's good. Second is that there's no normal or right style of human mind any more than there is one normal or right ethnicity, gender, or culture. So this is also a way of saying we try not to identify any particular type of cognition as superior to others. And the third is that, even though there is no type of mind that is superior, there are still the social dynamics involving neurodiversity that we see with other forms of diversity. So there's social inequality, privilege in oppression. But there can also be dynamics by which diversity, when embraced, can act as a source of creative potential within a group. So there's kind of like sets up these two roads you can take. One is where there's dynamics of power and control, and the other is diversity, when embraced acting as a source of creative potential. Pathology paradigm is kind of the opposite of this, where we do say there's one normal type of mind. All others have something wrong with them or have a disorder. I think I want to read out Electra's comment. I see a strong need for awareness around trauma-informed approaches as we encourage instructors to shift from compliance to relationships, which could lead to conversations that could be harmful, if not done well. Yeah. So well, I guess I could say one benefit of the accommodations system is that if somebody is unprepared or unwilling in some way to have a relational attitude towards a disability, there is an office that is kind of a backstop to make sure that some degree of access is provided. If somebody is unprepared or unwilling, if people who do not have a kind of sufficient understanding of disability or neurodivergence attempt to kind of handle inclusion all by themselves without appropriate support and resources. This could also definitely be harmful. So thanks for raising that. So, when we look at the next two artifacts, I'm going to ask from your perspective. Can you identify ways in which they might be aligned with a neurodiversity kind of paradigm and ways they might be aligned with a pathology paradigm? We're going to look at the first one together, and I'm going to read it out loud. And then I'll give you time to read it on your own.

So this is an excerpt from a syllabus. It says:

"Our college strives to provide an inclusive environment across campus that is accessible to all individuals with a diverse range of abilities. As your instructor, it is my objective to facilitate opportunities within all class activities and programs because your success is important to me. If you are encountering difficulties that are interrupting your learning experience, please feel free to make those known to me as soon as possible as early planning is essential. If you feel that you need accommodations in this course, you present a memo to me from the Disability Resource Center, pardon me, indicating the existence of a disability and the approved accommodations. Accommodations are not retroactive. If you have not already done so, please contact the Disability Support Resources Office. Please note that I cannot provide accommodations based on disability until I have received a copy of the DRC issued memo."

So I'm going to give you some time to read this again to yourself, and then I am curious from your perspective, which elements might be aligned more with neurodiversity perspective and more with a pathology perspective. If anybody happens to have come in since we started, we've both been using the chat and if you desire also raising your hand to speak. Yen says it seems internally inconsistent. There are some contradictory aspects. I agree. The first part of it seems to take more of this like neurodiversity or kind of social model perspective. At first, it's very open and accepting. But then goes on to seemingly require some onerous requirements from the students. Lesley, how do you, does it seem to breach privacy?

LESLIE:

Hi. Thank you. I feel I just know, in some ways, in many areas you're supposed to supply the disability diagnosis to the disability centre, not directly to the instructors. So I was quite surprised by that, but that may be a Canadian/American issue, but I know for a fact that instructors at university cannot ask for a doctor's note directly has to go through the disability resources.

SARAH:

That's largely the case in the US, also, yes. Andrea said the first three sentences are more aligned with the neurodiversity paradigm, where the rest is pathology. If I were a student, I would feel very discouraged for requesting assistance. The last half invalidates the first half. Yes. So I think one thing that I see within this statement is kind of the difficulty of adopting the neurodiversity paradigm approach when we have many restrictions and requirements that come from the policy side as well. It very well may be that the person who wrote this statement had something they were required to say and wanted to say something on top of it that made students feel a bit more welcome and included. Heather says, I'm not sure, I'm not sure so many younger students may read as "too long, didn't read." It's not as inviting as it is instructive. It doesn't strike me that the instructor is taking responsibility in the classroom as

much as using the accessibility office to deal with accommodations first. Right? Yeah, so they gave lip service to, Oh, I'm here to help, you know, please please let me know. I want to accommodate people with a diverse range of abilities, but they don't say anything that they will do on that topic. Instead, students should go through the Disability Resource Center. Christina said, the existence part rubs me the wrong way, like, disability is some sort of Easter bunny, right? So it's like he could have said, if you have a disability, or you are disabled. Hasa is raising your hand. Go ahead.

HASA:

The recommendations or, like, what they need to fulfill the requirement is also really able because it's labour intensive.

SARAH:

Right. Okay, so there's an additional time and logistical burden placed on the student. And a lot of what we call in universal design, there's not much tolerance for error here. You know, it's not like, Okay, well, find a way to get in touch with disability services, and they can help you contact me. It's like, no, you must do it at this time. It can't be retroactive. It can only be through this channel, that sort of thing. And Carmen.

CARMEN:

Thank you, Sarah. I'm wondering if you feel that there might be a risk. The more that we naturalize inclusion and inclusive opportunities like the first part of this course outlines it, says, Is there a risk that by naturalizing and making it inclusive, we do not provide the proper supports for students.

SARAH:

Yes, there is a risk. Okay, so I didn't plan to go on this tangent, but I will for a moment. In Jay Dolmage's book "Academic Ableism," he goes through one example. I just wrote about this in my own book the following anecdote. Let's say a student has a disability. And then they receive a syllabus from an instructor that uses the principles of universal design and is inviting and says similarly to this first part of this statement, we want to provide an inclusive environment, cater to a diverse range of abilities, and, you know, we want to provide you the opportunity, equal access opportunity. And good news, also, the class is designed. So there are multiple options for how to submit assignments. There's flexibility with the schedule. The due dates are not too hard. There's no time-dependent exam, so people don't need to request extra time, if that's something they need. Jay Dolmage says one of the drawbacks of this situation could be a student might feel compelled under the circumstances to inform their instructor that, no, they don't need accommodations and kind of turn away from that process of sharing or stating their needs and receiving accommodations. We want to make sure that the idea of universal or inclusive design does not shut down discussion of disability rather that it encourages further discussion of disability. We don't want to be in a situation where a syllabus that doesn't seem to require a lot of accommodations kind of acts as what he calls a defeat device against the

conversation. We're not hoping to end the conversation. We're hoping to open it. So I think that is a kind of a useful example where we always want to make sure we're not kind of asking students to accept that they don't need accommodations and end the conversation. Does that kind of make sense? Yes. Thank you very much. Wonderful. Thank you. Okay, thank you all for your feedback on this document. The next one I picked out to take a look at is one from UBC.

This is the documentation requirements for accommodations. I'm not super familiar with UBC, but I decided that I would look into some of the requirements there since I'm presenting at BCcampus. So this came from the link that is present on the slide. "Medical documentation must meet all of the following requirements. It should be up to date and recent, preferably created within the last three years. It is legible and preferably typed and submitted on letterhead. Includes a practitioner's name, license number, title, phone or fax, mail and email address and signature. It indicates the length of time you've been under the care of that practitioner, describes a medical condition or disability and a detailed explanation of the impact. A diagnosis alone is not sufficient. It provides sufficient detail so the centre can determine appropriate accommodations, describes the symptoms, includes relevant test results, and supporting documentation, describes the timeline for rehabilitation and recovery if it's a temporary disability, and identifies side effects of medications that may adversely affect academics.

So I want to go to Erin because they're raising their hand, but we'll go to the chat in a minute as well. Erin, what were you going to say?

ERIN:

Hi. I'm going to turn my camera on, too. Hi. So as someone who was diagnosed with ADHD in later life, I last year. Okay. And my sister, who was a year older than me, also went after me. We had a really interesting conversation about the amount of documentation that is required by a psychiatrist to be able to determine ADHD. I was asked to provide every report card that I had from kindergarten up until grade 12. And I also was required to have a parent to be able to speak to the psychiatrist. My sister and I were talking about the disparities of different realities in that. Yeah, I am lucky enough that my mom got both me and my sister this little book where you can put every year, all of these little artifacts and write things your day and your things. And I still have all of those. So I was able to pull every report card. What about a child who has gone through care? What about a child who, you know, has had you know, major upheavals and don't have access to those things? How then are they going to be able to provide the documentation to the practitioner to be able to access these types of diagnoses? Also, before you, just before that, what the hell is timelines for rehabilitation and recovery?

SARAH:

Well, I mean, that's if it is a temporary diagnosis. So, this may be I don't know. Maybe you had a concussion or something.

ERIN: That is better context for me.

SARAH:

Okay. Yeah, no problem. So, a couple of interesting things have emerged in the chat. One, many people have noted, Okay, this seems expensive. This seems like a lot of detail. Correct. I agree with that. Other people are saying, I didn't actually have to submit all of these details for my diagnosis and to get accommodations. This is a good point. This is, in fact, kind of a hidden curriculum, so to speak, or hidden facts about the way that many people access disability services, which is some of the publicly published requirements are not always required. And if you don't know that, you may find this to be such a barrier that you don't even try. A couple of people are just kind of expressing shock at the list of examples. Hasa said it made disability homogeneous. So the three-year timeline appears to both short-term and permanent disability. Right? So of what relevance is three years? Many people don't have a family doctor, so, you know, this is a huge barrier to these things. Yeah, so here's what I would say, to connect to the neurodiversity and pathology paradigm. What we see here is a lot of very onerous requirements that I think are based on the idea that if somebody does not really quote have their disability, we want to make sure that they don't get accommodations, and we're going to rely on the medical system and a lot of detail from medical providers to verify this person's disability. Sorry, AC is saying, quick note. This is for registration with the Centre for Accessibility, and instructors and other staff don't have access to this information. It's kept confidential. Okay. Of course. Typically, when you provide this information, it's not going to, it's more to qualify for accommodations. That's great. Thank you. So back to neurodiversity and pathology paradigms. If we were working under a neurodiversity paradigm, it would be, I think, less likely is that the need for accommodations would be so clearly defined by not just diagnosis, but specific symptoms of recovery timeline. And all of this additional detail such that it would, you know, that would be necessary to support a request like this. Someone has their hand raised. Oh, Hasa. Yes. Go ahead.

HASA:

Um. I have a question. So I'm looking at this from a political economy perspective because not only is it pathologization, it's an inaccessible one because it costs money to get that model. So that economic context, I think, is really important because it purposely excludes those who can't afford the pathologization of their disability. And my other question is, there's a lot of theories around why it has to be so much. It's so, like, monitored by experts is because the system will be abused. And I don't know if you have any research or you could speak into if that's valid or even like....

SARAH:

It appears to be much less valid. I'll put in the chat when I get a chance an article by a US legal scholar Doron Dorfman, who referred to this phenomenon as the fear of the disability con. It's present throughout legal discourse, at least in the US, which is basically the anxiety that people will abuse the system. Many people believe that while there are documented examples of it, it's

really quite rare. And I will post that article. It's a great read. He's an excellent scholar of disability in law. So I'll grab that. Um Okay.

Thank you to everybody for your participation in this first part. We're going to move on to our second part, which is a couple of scenarios that involve neurodiversity in different higher ed contexts. And the purpose of the scenarios is to look at a few situations where neurodiversity is definitely present, but there's a variety of relationships to diagnosis and disclosure. What I hope we can kind of take from the first part of this workshop is when somebody has an undisclosed or undiagnosed form of disability or a form of neurodivergence, I think it's easy to say, Okay, well, maybe that's just their opinion, or I'm not sure how that really maps on to any kind of legally protected medical condition. The other side of that coin is that the burden of the documentation really is so high. And I think we could at least all agree that this may be a process that a lot of students would not even attempt in many situations because of the cost burden and the logistical burden. And just digging into some of the requirements can kind of help us see the limitations of that system. Christina says, I certainly wouldn't. Yeah, I can see that. Alright, so we're going to get ready for a couple of scenario activities.

The first thing that I want to say about these scenarios is that I call them scenarios that we have to explore rather than a list of strategies. That's why I kind of always have this discussion in the context of our real scenario. A lot of times you'll find clear advice that's like: Here's a neurodiversity-affirming teaching practice. It's often a checklist or a strategy list of, you know, things you can do. Some of that advice is going to be very useful. Sometimes it's also a bit general. For example, things like provide flexibility in assignments and assessments, including due dates. Present the same information in multiple ways. Clarify expectations. Acknowledge and embrace different forms of participation, like either text or verbal forms of participation during class after class. And then, you know, provide structure, supportive environment, and options for participation if you have highly social or collaborative activities. So, these are all useful to a certain extent. The problem is, I think we run into trouble when we say there's any strategies that definitely support all neurodivergent students because neurodiversity is not one condition, identity, or set of needs, it's a collection of these, which can be different, and they can also create friction with each other. If people do classroom teaching or advising or any kind of work in higher ed, you've probably encountered some kind of situation where there are access needs that don't work that well together. We can recall that the neurodiversity paradigm says that there is not necessarily any normal or right style of human mind. But in that case, there is likely to be a lot of different, there could still be conflict, even though there is no one right or correct style of human mind.

That's why I want to introduce the concept of access friction. Some of you may know of this concept. And I say it's something we've all probably experienced, but maybe not had a word for. It's a phenomenon in which people have different and potentially conflicting access needs. More generally, we could say it's an acknowledgment that working towards access often involves at least some friction. And I just wanted to note a nice connection to British Columbia

and the BCcampus community that I originally learned the term "access friction" from Arley McNeney, who was an instructor at KPU and died about a year-and-a-half ago, sadly. And she was an instructor in higher ed, but she was also a former paralympian wheelchair basketball player. And I learned a ton from her while she was alive. So, access friction is a really useful concept, in my opinion. I have a link to a whole essay that I wrote about how we can kind of think through access friction in the classroom, and that's on the handout. But I think that this is a particularly relevant concept for neurodiversity, because different needs of neurodivergent people do sometimes come into conflict. Here's one that I experienced within a classroom when I was the instructor. And I have a few other kind of funny or interesting examples. But, I'll go with the funny interesting ones first, and then I'll tell you the classroom one. Okay. So one, this doesn't have to do with neurodiversity, but here's access friction. Somebody is blind and has a service dog that travels around with them. Another person has a severe allergy to dogs. This is access friction. They both have legitimate needs. One person has a need to have their service animal assist them with navigation. And another person has a significant need to not be in the presence of a dog because it can cause them medical problems. Here's another example of access friction. So a lot of autistic people have differences in the volume of the way that they use their voice. Some autistic people speak much louder than non-autistic people, so speak very, very quietly. I'm one of the people. I have a very, very difficult time raising my voice, and it's a huge strain for me. You can see that I'm already coughing after talking for an hour here. Most people think I speak way too quietly. A form of access friction is that my mom is deaf in one ear. And hard of hearing in the other. She had a surgery. She had a brain surgery in which they had to deliberately cut the auditory nerve on one side in order to remove a tumour and she doesn't have any hearing and is hard of hearing in the other year. It's really difficult for us to be in spoken communication because my voice is naturally very quiet, and she can't hear very well. Those are some examples that don't have to do with neurodiversity. Here's one that does. And so I once had a class that contained a couple students with ADHD and at least one autistic student. The students with ADHD had asked, would it be possible when we were doing an individual or group activity where people are working on their own or in small groups to have a timer go off when they needed to switch activities or bring their activity to a close? Can there be a timer on my phone or something? Um, I raised this possibility, and the autistic student said that they were very disturbed by loud and sudden noises, and that it could trigger a kind of meltdown or distress for them. So, please, could I not do that? This would be a great example of access friction. Some of the students with ADHD were finding that they needed kind of an external stimulus to help them keep on track or remind them of what they were supposed to be doing. Another person found that to be distressing. That's a little bit of access fiction. I'm just going to check the chat. Fran said, Wait, that's a thing. Some of us are louder than others. It's part of my... There is a lot of documented differences in the volume of variation in volume of different neurodivergent peoples.

PARTICIPANT:

I feel very seen right now for that. Thank you.

SARAH:

Great. Leslie said structural examples. Students who experience less access barriers in face-to-face courses, and those that experience less in online courses and decisions are made institutionally to only offer one of these options. Correct. Okay. Great. Um So, that's access friction. When we are about to get into our scenario exercise, I want to also keep this in mind that when we are trying to navigate with neurodiversity and a range of disclosures and non-disclosures or diagnoses and non-diagnoses, we have to definitely recognize that this friction is potentially going to be present. Really quickly, Olivia, I want to just give us time with the scenarios, but I'll tell you how I moved through. I'll tell you how I moved through interacting with my mom and how I dealt with the situation in my own class. So with my mom, I have to stand on her good ear. She has to lip read as well, and I project my voice as much as I totally can. So it's kind of three pronged. One is, like, change my orientation. Second is she makes it sure to be looking at me while I'm speaking, and I attempt to raise my voice. So, bye, Kim, Kimberly, sorry. Within my classroom. I basically decided that I would try to go with some sort of timer that does not make a loud noise that instead is shown on a screen and flashes when it's done. And I suggested to the autistic student to turn their back to that, and that I would, like, come over and notify them in their group when the time was running out in a kind of less sudden way. That seemed to work for everybody. I'm not sure it would have worked for every group, but that was one thing that we did.

Okay, so we're going to get into a couple of scenarios here. And there is a way that we are going to try to use breakout rooms to provide people with smaller groups to look into this. So there's four case studies. I'll just quickly summarize them. One is a group project in a mid-sized economics class where students are working together. Second is student instructor conflicts over universal design elements in a small seminar. Third is team members negotiating needs to review materials in advance of a meeting. And four is a scenario that addresses the question, are stim or fidget toys unprofessional? And stim and fidget toys might be something that you use to occupy your hands while you're working on something to kind of help regulate yourself. The cases and instructions are going to be on the handout in pages 2 to 5. We're going to open up some breakout rooms. And what's going to happen is, I'm going to encourage you to choose case study 1 through 4. You'll I believe see, let me just start opening the breakout rooms. When I open them, you'll see that you can choose which case study you want to address. And additionally, there are three rooms per case study. I'm going to ask if you could observe a maximum of six people per room, and I can always help move people around if we get over a certain number of them. So I'll open them up in a second. You will also see on page 1 of your handout that there's a suggested discussion protocol. It's something that you can use, but don't need to use, but it is a way that you could structure the discussion to make sure everyone has needed time to read the case study and then an opportunity to participate. So I just wanted to suggest that to you as well. My hope is that we'll stay in the breakout rooms for about 15 minutes. You'll have time to read and discuss the case study. And then we'll have hopefully an opportunity to hear from at least one person or group that worked on each case study towards the end. So I'm opening the breakout rooms. What you will see is that you have options of

which room to join. You can select which case study you want to do and hopefully also observe a maximum of six people per room. Oh, yes, sorry. Thank you for reminding me. Nobody is obligated to join in a breakout room if that's not something you would like to do. If you don't want to join, you can stay in the main room, and you can look through one or more case studies on your own and decide if there's something about your own reactions to them that you want to share when we come back. So staying in the main room is absolutely an option.

Okay, so my hope was, I do not believe we have time to debrief all of the scenarios individually, but I hope to solicit a couple of reactions from people of some takeaways they had from their group conversation about how neurodiversity is present with and without diagnosis, with and without disclosure, and any examples of access friction that you noted. You can also, you can feel free to raise your hand if you'd like. And, of course, typing in the chat would be great as well. Just give everyone a moment. Oh, Erin, Yes, go ahead.

ERIN:

Most of what we talked about was access to information and the setup of our specific case study. Like, it was about group work and putting people into group work. And the prime that has to happen in that learning environment to be able to support students through that is fundamental. You can't just throw kids. Can't say kids. You can't throw students into group activities and group assignments without, you know, giving them opportunities beforehand to do that and telling them what the boundaries are of that work and all of those things. And there was something else that we talked about, but I can't remember.

SARAH:

It's almost as if we skip, often skip the element of developing what a disability advocate named Ruti Regan calls real social skills, meaning not social skills of kind of, like, how to, you know, how to chat with people. But in fact, how do you establish communication and collaboration? How do you learn about someone else's working style or their communication style and get ready to complete a task together with them? And I rarely make firm concrete recommendations for teaching, but this is one I will make. I always suggest to people, if you're doing teamwork or group work, do not make, do not organize a, like, high-stakes deliverable before the group has had time to establish. So, for example, if you have a kind of phased project, and there's a part of it that's worth 20% of the grade, even though it's only worth 20%, don't make that due the first week. Give students time to get to know each other because I think that this pressure of time and high stakes really increases the likelihood that students will treat the group as just a kind of instrument for getting a grade rather than an opportunity to establish collaboration.

ERIN: I remember what it is now, and that reminded me when you said that. Can I say it?

SARAH: Sure. Go ahead.

ERIN:

Linking the purpose of group work back to the learning outcomes. The students really like that transparency. I forgot who said that in our group, but it was brilliant.

SARAH:

And someone just messaged me to say, they joined late, and will this be distributed? Yes, the recording will be distributed. Wonderful. Okay. And I think another aspect of knowing the purpose of teamwork is, like I said, I've been working on a book about neurodiversity and education. I just wrote a little section about this. Sometimes it could be helpful to clarify. Yes, in fact, the teamwork is more important than the deliverable or, like, the success. I've structured it this way because there's. Here's what I think are the benefits as the instructor. And I would much prefer that you come to me for help if your group is having difficulty than just dropping somebody from the group or dissolving the group. Any other takeaways people had from their scenario? Nancy, go ahead. NANCY: Just one thing that came to mind from some of my own experience is providing a structured space for the students to do their group meeting so that it's not just happening in some environment where students may not have access to the social media platform that they're using or things like that.

SARAH:

Right. This also is great for dealing with various sensory needs. You know, I think a lot about neurodivergent students who have difficulty with either background noise or loud noises. There's also a lot of other disabilities, like related to hearing or like any kind of hearing impairments or deaf students. A lot of times we have groups working, and there's just this din in one big classroom. This could present a huge barrier, and I've thought a lot about, like, is there a way? Even if they're not within my view, students, like, being able to go in the hallway, go to the library for a 20-minute work session, anything like that, I always try to build in. Janet, go ahead.

JANET:

I had to chuckle to myself on this one. I was looking at the case study, small seminar where one student said are there. Some students wanted to communicate to the chat to someone in a more typical discussion. I noticed myself today with the chat. And I totally get it's legitimate to allow people to communicate in the chat, but I find it's really hard to multitask. I want to read everything in the chat, and I want to listen to all the conversations, and I kind of feel like I'm chasing my tail. That's probably just personal preference, and there's nothing to change it, but just kind of funny that that should come up for me.

SARAH:

Great. It's also that's an example of access friction, I would say. Multiple channels of communication can produce a certain amount of overwhelm or increased cognitive load for some people. Some people really rely on one of the modes in order to express themselves in some way. So that's a great point. Okay. Let's take maybe one more takeaway from the scenarios,

and then we'll take a second to wrap up our whole session. And I really enjoyed. I appreciate what Bernadette shared in the chat. That access friction is potentially an opening just for compassion. And when we talk about neurodiversity and disability, we often are talking about access needs and the right to have one's access needs met. And then there is, I think, also a great opportunity for students to develop a sense of collective access. What does it mean for my needs to be met, but also someone else's needs to be met and to kind of invest in that negotiation together.

Okay, I'm going to wrap up our session because I know that most of you probably have to go to other things, and I want to make sure that we have a second to wrap up and respect your time. So here's what I like to say to wrap up case study exercises like these.

Neurodiversity is probably going to be a part of every classroom, even if you don't have someone who has disclosed an identity or a diagnosis. And this is kind of true across the board, even if there isn't a student who is neurodivergent, possibly the instructor is neurodivergent. It's possible that there's somebody who does not yet know they're neurodivergent. So when we try to teach with the neurodiversity paradigm, we're going to balance a whole variety of student needs and preferences. And also, we can make sure to keep in mind that teaching that's inclusive of neurodivergent students doesn't necessarily need to compel neurotypical students to use methods that don't work for them. It might just require a kind of acceptance that people are going to do different things in different ways. That kind of brings us back to the small seminar scenario for those of you that looked at it. You know, maybe there are ways that we can explain to students that just because I'm making an option available, that doesn't mean it's the best option for you, and that there may be some utility in reflecting on which options work best for you, trying out different options and determining that for yourself. Ultimately, an inclusive classroom community will need to acknowledge difference, facilitate interpersonal understanding, and embrace options, even if one individual is not always using all of the options.

Okay, so I will open up for any questions and the time we have remaining. I also just want to make sure you know that I really invite you to contact me and keep in touch. The QR code goes to my newsletter if you would like to sign up for that. And then you also have my email, my LinkedIn profile, and my website. I thank you all so much for hosting me for this part 2. You are one of the most engaged and generous audiences that I've talked with recently. I mean that very seriously. So I'm very appreciative of you and your engagement. I'll stop sharing, and if you would like to make any other further comments or questions, I'm open to that. CARMEN: Thank you so much, Sarah. This is Carmen Rodrigues. Thank you for all your insight and contributions and all your work. I posted a question in the chat, excuse me, to ask if it was respectful to say "neurodiverse students" as opposed to "neurodivergent." Because in my mind, the first "neurodiverse" focuses on diversity. Whereas, to me, maybe as a speaker of English as a second language, "divergence" means away from normalcy or from the standard. And I don't know.

Maybe it's no different, but yeah, which would be more respectful "neurodivergent," if that's the language, or "neurodiverse students"?

SARAH:

Okay. So you have hit upon a slightly contested area. So I'll provide my own perspective, and then I will also try to call up an article that explains this a little bit more. You will hear both of them. I prefer the term "neurodivergent" because it is rooted in the language of the neurodiversity movement. "Divergence" is not meant as a kind of othering. It is meant as a commentary on what society's norms are and the way that neurodivergent people experience a difference from those norms. One of the critiques available of "neurodiverse" to refer to individuals is that there's some similarity to, you'll sometimes when people refer to students of colour, other minoritized students as a "diverse student," which it seems to kind of be implying that the diversity comes from the others. So, I see what you're saying, and that a lot of people in the neurodiversity conversation name the same issues, but somehow reverse them in the preference for terms. And so I guess I will say, I'm never going to correct someone, especially a neurodivergent person who uses the term "neurodiverse" refer to themselves. I use "neurodiversity." I also use "neurodiverse" to refer to a group of people that contains neurodivergent and neurotypical people. So, I use "neurodiverse" as an adjective for a whole group of people rather than individuals.

CARMEN: Thank you so much.

SARAH: No problem.

BRITT:

Thank you so much, Sarah, for this amazing two-part workshop. It's been such a pleasure to have you. I've been a follower of your work for a long time. So having you here with us at BCcampus is just such a pleasure. And I know a lot of the discussion today in the breakout rooms was very fulfilling. So thank you so much. And we will be sharing out the slides and the recording, so please keep an eye out for that. I also really want to thank Debbie and Jess, our interpreters as well. Thank you so much. And yeah, have a great day, everyone. Oh, sorry, one more thing. I just wanted to do a little quick promotion. If you are up in the interior of B.C., we do have our second annual BCcampus Regional Roadshow. So we are coming to your campuses. We are going to be in Prince George, Dawson's Creek, and Fort St. John, this late spring, early kind of getting into the summer. And this is a great opportunity to do a lot of hands-on learning and teaching work. Collaborate with others, network, and yeah, really dive deep into your teaching and facilitation practice. So thank you so much. And thank you, Sarah, so much for being here.

SARAH: Thank you. Thank you, everyone.