

Constructing the Inclusive Classroom

Exploring Inclusive Spaces

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A research-led pathway for student development

1

Extra-curricular

A structured opportunity beyond the formal curriculum.

2

Interdisciplinary

Students bring different disciplinary lenses to a shared question.



3

Research-led

Learning through designing, visiting, comparing and reflecting.

4

Development & employability

Building confidence, collaboration and research communication.

The programme turns participation into partnership.

WHY THIS PROJECT?

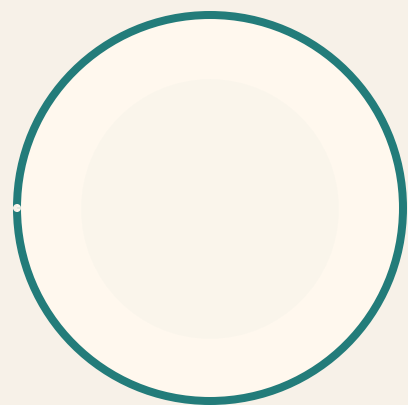
Constructing the Inclusive Classroom **starts with student voice.**

The project foregrounds neurodiversity in higher education and treats student voice as evidence, not illustration.

- 1 Research interest**
Neurodiversity and the everyday conditions that shape learning in higher education.
- 2 Student voice**
Students can identify barriers, workarounds and possibilities that staff may not see.
- 3 Project aim**
Invite students to act as co-researchers and partners in making campus more inclusive.

MEET THE RESEARCHERS

Student co-researchers bring lived experience, curiosity and campus knowledge.



Alicia

Undergraduate Scholar | [English Language and Literature]

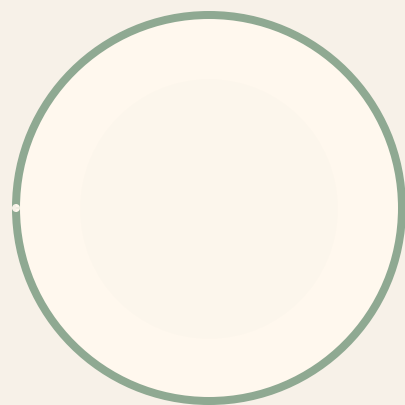
Motivation: interested in how lived experience can shape inclusive teaching spaces.



Esme

Undergraduate Scholar | [Music]

Motivation: curious about practical changes that make campus easier to navigate.



Shan

Undergraduate Scholar | [Linguistics and Sociology]

Motivation: keen to bring student perspectives into research and design decisions.

RESEARCH FOCUS

How can the university improve neurodivergent student connectivity through social and physical experiences on campus?

Why quiet/inclusive spaces?

They can reduce sensory load, support recovery and enable participation for students whose needs are often under-designed.

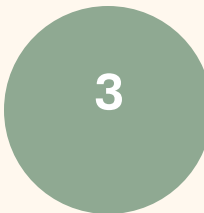
Brief methodology



Campus visits



Comparative analysis



Student-led insights



EXPLORING INCLUSIVE SPACES

**Neurodivergent accessibility to 'quiet/calm'
spaces on University campuses for
dysregulation**

By Alicia, Esme and Shan





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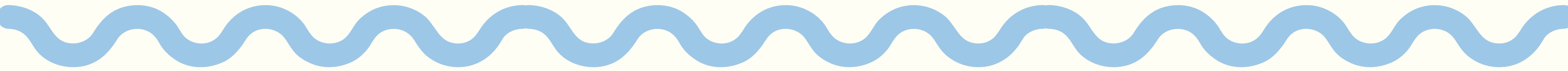
The purpose and
necessity for
neurodivergent friendly
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INTRODUCTION

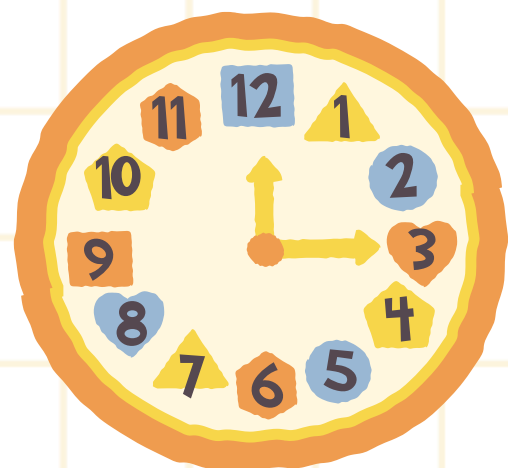
How can the university improve neurodivergent student connectivity through social and physical experiences on campus?



Our project, 'Constructing the Inclusive Classroom', aims to discover ways to further support neurodivergent students at the university.

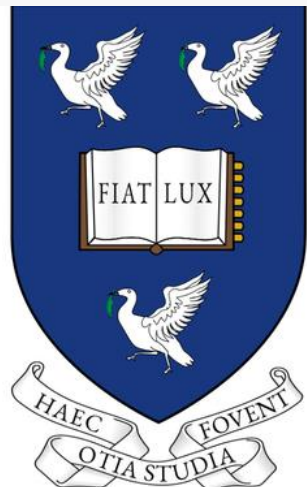
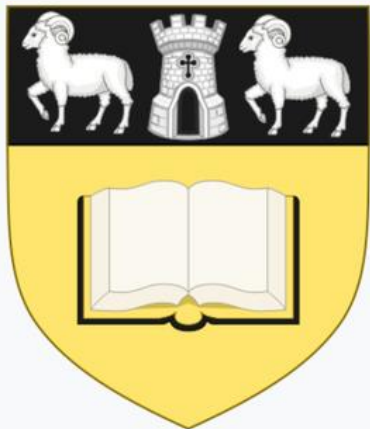
We have investigated 'quiet/calm' spaces on multiple university campus'.

We ask whether these spaces are accessible and inclusive at The University of Manchester and provide suggestions for future changes which can be implemented.



DISCOVERING INCLUSIVE SPACES FOR NEURODIVERGENT STUDENTS ON DIFFERENT UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES



University of Liverpool	University of Huddersfield	University of Leeds	University of Manchester	University of Hull
				
16/4	18/4	18/4	22/4	22/6



REASONS WHY WE DECIDED TO DO THIS

- To explore inclusive spaces

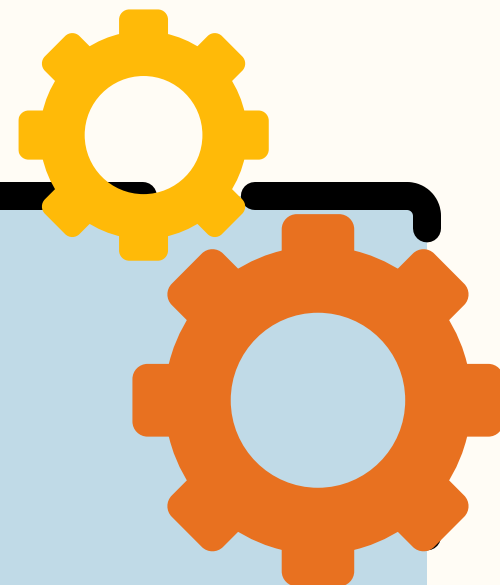
Our group wanted to see if there are enough inclusive spaces around university campus' and whether they are easily accessible.

- Discover the pros and cons

By using this approach, we aim to find the pros and cons of how inclusive spaces for neurodivergent students are organised and considered within different university campus'.

- Make a comparison

By visiting different universities and then our own, we compare facilities and discover useful suggestions to further support neurodivergent students at The University of Manchester.



A QUIET SPACE

What and why?



Neuroinclusive Spaces



Educational Connection

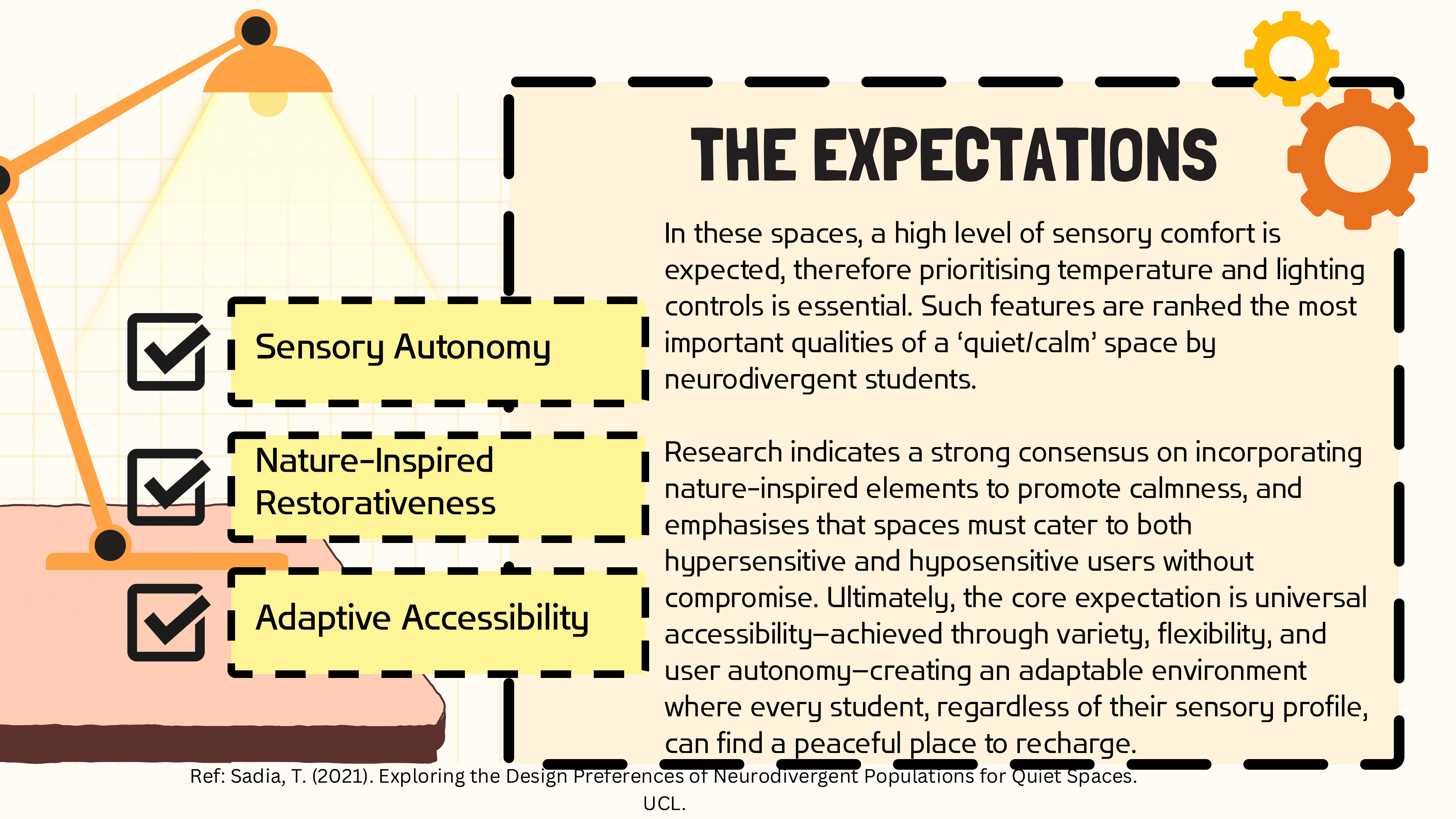


Institutional Inclusivity

The quiet space is a calming, low-stimulus space tailored to the needs of neurodivergent students, essential for fostering campus inclusion. Traditional university environments often lack dedicated spaces, which research suggests can lead to students feeling unsupported and disconnected from university life.

Providing restorative spaces away from busy campus life can enhance student focus and well-being, and demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity which is also often warmly welcomed by the student bodies.

Ref: Bruce, T. A., et al. (2025). The WISE Room. British Journal of Special Education.



THE EXPECTATIONS

In these spaces, a high level of sensory comfort is expected, therefore prioritising temperature and lighting controls is essential. Such features are ranked the most important qualities of a 'quiet/calm' space by neurodivergent students.

Research indicates a strong consensus on incorporating nature-inspired elements to promote calmness, and emphasises that spaces must cater to both hypersensitive and hyposensitive users without compromise. Ultimately, the core expectation is universal accessibility—achieved through variety, flexibility, and user autonomy—creating an adaptable environment where every student, regardless of their sensory profile, can find a peaceful place to recharge.



Sensory Autonomy

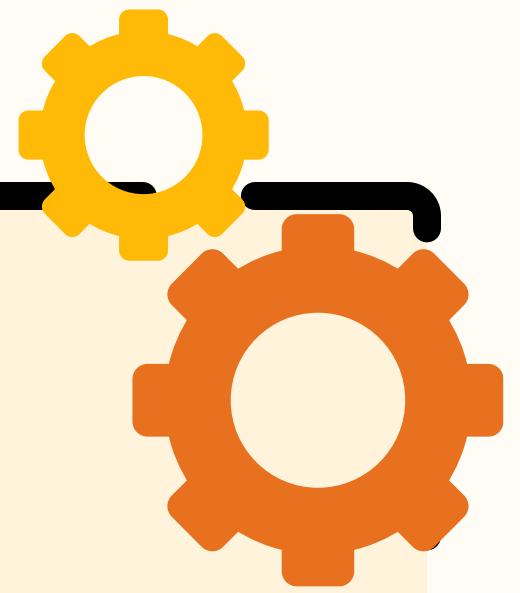


Nature-Inspired Restorativeness



Adaptive Accessibility

THE EXPECTATIONS



Dignified Privacy



Autonomous Regulation



Intentional Sanctuary



Neurodiversity
Celebration
Week

March 17 - 23, 2025



They don't want to start to self-regulate in a kind of goldfish bowl in the corner of the library. They need to be able to take themselves away where they are properly able to meet whatever sensory needs and whatever dysregulation they may be experiencing at that particular time.



LIVERPOOL

OUR FINDINGS

- Knowledgeable disability team on where the spaces are located.
- Multiple spaces across campus.
- Some rooms had lighting and temperature controls.
- One space available in the main library, which is accessed by DASS card and therefore is reserved for registered disabled students.
- Spaces located in quiet areas of campus.
- Poor signage.
- Lack of awareness of the existence of these spaces from students.
- Varied quality of rooms – no consistent provisions.
- No document with information on these spaces at the disability service.
- Some rooms were joint with prayer rooms.
- Some spaces needed to be booked before hand.





HULL



OUR FINDINGS

- Located in the 'hubble' (wellbeing centre) in the student union.
- No need to book these spaces.
- Information is available on the hubble student services website and spaces are shown to registering disabled students in welcome week.
- Knowledgeable disability team on these spaces.
- Soundproof pods open from 5pm and quiet floors available in the main library. Current investigation into providing a neurodiversity friendly space.
- Only one area on campus with a designated 'private room' and quiet space for disabled students.
- No temperature and lighting adjustment controls in the private room.
- No physical document with information on these spaces.
- No designated space in the main library



HUDDERSFIELD



- Students we interviewed were unaware of the campus' inclusive spaces.
- We're unable to access a lot of facilities during our visit.
- However, the university provides clear guidance for disability services and inclusive spaces.

There are quite a number of inclusive spaces for neurodivergent students:

- Calm Zone (5th floor in the library and PCs are removed)
- Silent Study Area (Individual area on 2nd and 5th floor)
- Group study areas (does not require booking)
- Floor plans for disability services and accessible routes are easily found on their website.
- Video tours are provided for neurodivergent students to navigate inclusive spaces.
- However, there does not seem to be a quiet and adjustable room specifically for neurodivergent students at the moment and students from the university have been advocating for it.



LEEDS



- Signage on campus was poor.
- It was very difficult to navigate the inclusive spaces and quiet rooms on campus.
- The lack of awareness of disability services from staff on campus.
- Although places are not easy to find through the on-site map, the university has provided a video on how to access disability services.

There are accessible student study rooms for neurodivergent students:

- Laidlaw Library Rooms 1 and 2
- Edward Boyle Library Rooms 1-3 (9th and 10th floor)
- Brotherton Library Room B16
- Only Laidlaw and Edward Boyle Library include adjustable lighting and comfortable seating like beanbags and floor mats and they require prior booking.
- We have attempted to explore inclusive spaces in the Student Union, but we were unaware of any.
- An ADHD support group room has been replaced and no longer takes place on campus.
- There does not seem to be any quiet rooms according to the university website.

MANCHESTER

OUR FINDINGS

- Multiple spaces across campus.
- Adjustable lighting and temperature in the 'wellbeing pod' (University Place).
- Spaces located in quiet areas on campus.
- No designated space in the main library.
- Outdated document with information on inclusive spaces, which was provided when asked.
- When contacted about quiet study spaces, the same document was provided by DASS.
- Some spaces were locked and could not be accessed (Simon Building).
- Some spaces are joint prayer rooms (Simon Building).
- Different names to define these spaces ie. Safe Space (Student Union), Wellbeing Pod (University Place), Quiet Room (Simon Building).
- Confusing signage and directions (Simon Building).
- Lack of consistency in room provisions.

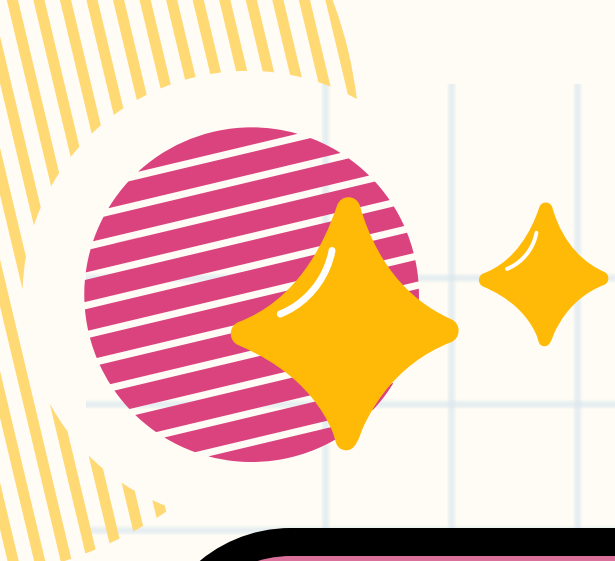


WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?



- Inconsistent naming creates confusion about purpose.
 - Limited staff awareness and unclear information reduce accessibility.
 - Lack of centralised information prevents effective use.
 - Booking systems can both support and restrict access.
 - Neurodivergent students may face barriers to seeking out spaces.
 - Shared use (eg. prayer + other needs) limits suitability for all users.
 - Lack of available inclusive spaces promotes inaccessibility.
-
- There is need for improvement at all the campus' visited.

*All of these points relate to the current provisions at The University of Manchester whilst some of these points relate to the other Universities visited.



SUGGESTIONS

● Raise awareness

We found that both students and disability services staff had limited awareness of inclusive spaces on campus. Thus, we suggest that the university raise awareness towards these spaces by promoting them through a staff training course and information delivered through student email.

● Signposting and Specificity

There should be clearer directions to these spaces to promote accessibility. Room naming should be concise and specific so that students know their function and can easily find them across campus. Room function should solely be for dysregulation. An updated document must be available with accurate information on these spaces.

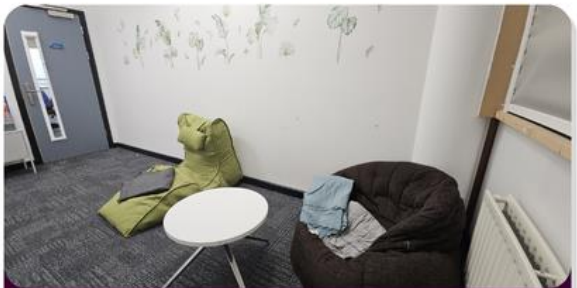
● Location and Comfortability

Providing inclusive spaces in areas where neurodivergent students may become overstimulated, such as the library or the Alan Gilbert Learning Commons is essential. All spaces should have adjustable temperature and lighting implemented. If rooms are bookable, this must be advertised effectively and non-bookable spaces must also be available to accommodate all.

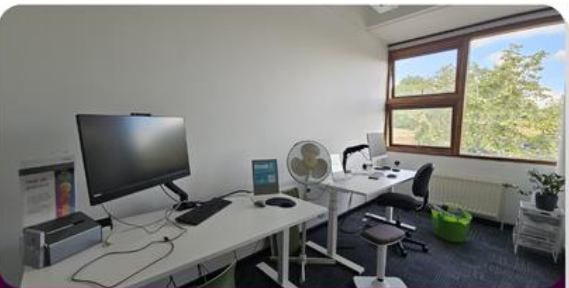
EXAMPLE: UNIVERSITY OF YORK

What are quiet spaces and who are they for?

Quiet spaces on campus are designed for students and staff who need a safe, controlled environment for self-regulation, especially for those with sensory processing or neurodivergence. The purpose of these rooms is to help people manage their sensory input.



Sensory retreat rooms



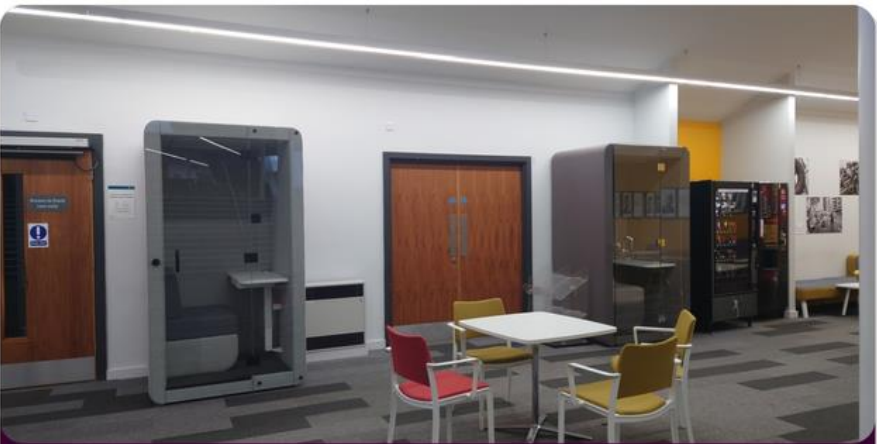
Sensory study spaces



Quiet study spaces



Wellbeing rooms



Zoom pods



SENSORY RETREAT ROOMS

Sensory Retreat Rooms are comfortable, quiet spaces designed for respite and relaxation, especially for those feeling anxious or experiencing sensory overload. They allow for some control over the sensory environment with features like dimmable lamps and blackout blinds. The rooms also offer amenities to help you relax, such as weighted blankets and fidget toys.

Sensory retreat rooms on campus

Room Number/Location	Campus	Bookable	Capacity	Wheelchair Accessible	Amenities	Opening Times	Contact
LFA/213 - Located on the second floor of JB Morrell Library	West	No	3 people	Yes (via lift)	- Fan - Colouring book - Noise cancelling headphones - Fidget toys - Blanket	08:00-22:00 Mon-Sun	The Library lib-enquiry@york.ac.uk https://www.york.ac.uk/library/visit/sensoryroom/

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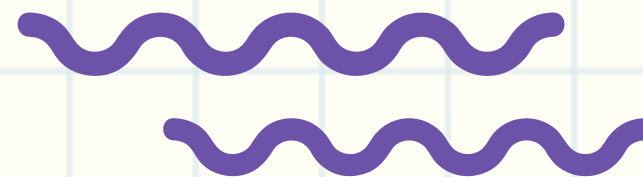
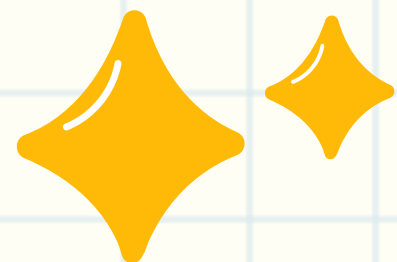
Morgado Camacho, B., R. Lopez-Gavira, and A. Moriña Díez (2017), 'The ideal university classroom: Stories by students with disabilities', International Journal of Educational Research, 85, 148–56, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2017.07.013>

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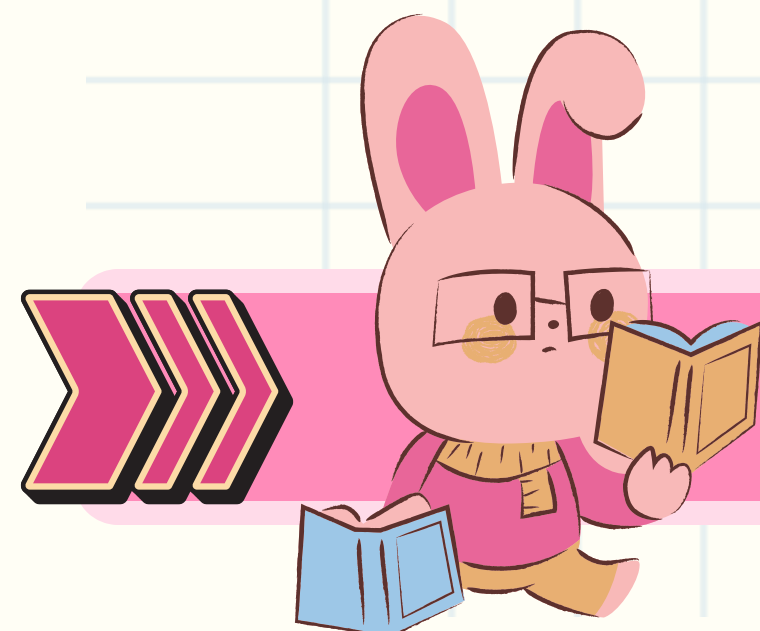
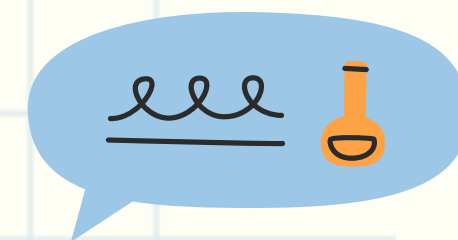
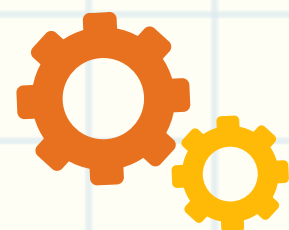
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THANK YOU!



By Alicia, Esme and Shan.