

## What Does it Mean to Have Asperger's Syndrome (AS)?

AS is viewed as a disability in the area of social skills. Many famous people such as Dan Ackroyd and Bill Gates are thought to have Aspergers. What individuals with AS do have in common is a set of characteristics that may make social interaction difficult. Many individuals with AS have been bullied or teased as children. They may have a hard time maneuvering complex social cues at school or work.

### Individuals with AS may say:

- *I find social situations confusing.*
- *I find it hard to make small talk.*
- *I did not enjoy imaginative story-writing at school.*
- *I am good at picking up details and facts.*
- *I find it hard to work out what other people are thinking and feeling.*
- *I can focus on certain things for very long periods.*
- *People often say I was rude even when this was not intended.*
- *I have unusually strong, narrow interests.*
- *I do certain things in an inflexible, and repetitive way.*
- *I have always had difficulty making and keeping friends.*

Centre for Students with Disabilities

## Asperger's Syndrome

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# Asperger's Syndrome

## Do I Have Asperger's Syndrome?

I have heard that the Centre for Students with Disabilities arranges accommodations for students with Asperger's Syndrome. How do I determine if I am eligible for accommodations or other services through the CSD.

## What is Asperger's Syndrome?

Asperger's Syndrome (AS) is a developmental disorder that falls under the Autism Spectrum and is sometimes referred to as High Functioning Autism. People with AS are of normal intelligence and typically have difficulties with social interaction. People with AS have difficulty with changes or major transitions, such as coming to college.

Most individuals with AS have incredible rote memories and may have obsessive interests or tremendous creativity that may lead to great achievement if encouraged and given the opportunity to flourish. Albert Einstein, Glenn Gould, and philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein are believed to have had AS.

## How is AS Diagnosed?

AS is diagnosed by a qualified health care professional such as a psychologist, physicians, or psychiatrists. It is important

to work with someone who specializes in AS, particularly if this is the first time AS is being diagnosed. Learning disabilities (LD) and AS often co-exist, and in the past AS has often been misdiagnosed as ADHD or a Non-verbal Learning Disability. A complete assessment is recommended if a LD is also suspected.

## What Supports/Services are

### Available?

Once you are diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, you may want to consider social skills training, education about the syndrome, and/or coaching for daily activities in a post-secondary setting. People with AS frequently experience low moods and anxiety as a result, and personal counselling support is often recommended. Talk with your CSD counsellor about your options. Referral to a medical specialist is possible along with coaching from your counsellor and Learning Strategist.

### I was diagnosed with AS when I was a child. Does that qualify me for academic accommodations?

Asperger's Syndrome does not disappear as you get older, but individuals with AS are often able to develop the necessary coping strategies to do well in college without special assistance. However, if AS was diagnosed as a child, and if the symptoms of AS are significantly interfering with your educational goals, you may be eligible for accommodations at Algonquin. You will need documentation from a

physician, psychologist or psychiatrist who specializes in diagnosing adult AS and who can monitor your situation while you are at college.

## Possible Accommodations

Accommodations are based on documentation and individual needs, not on the diagnosis itself. Some possible accommodations include:

- Extended time for tests and exams
- Quiet location during examinations
- Meeting with the Learning Strategist
- Social Skills Support
- Assistance with note taking
- A reduced course load

## Interaction of AS and Academics

AS symptoms can often interfere with learning. The first step to academic success is to identify and develop strategies, such as social skills awareness and study skills in order to cope with the effects of AS. The Learning Strategist or your CSD Counsellor can help you with this.

