

Equality Diversity Inclusion Centre and Disability Advisory Service SpLDs and Neuro-terminology.

Imperial College is committed to supporting both students and staff who have been assessed or screened as having an SpLD¹ or ASC².

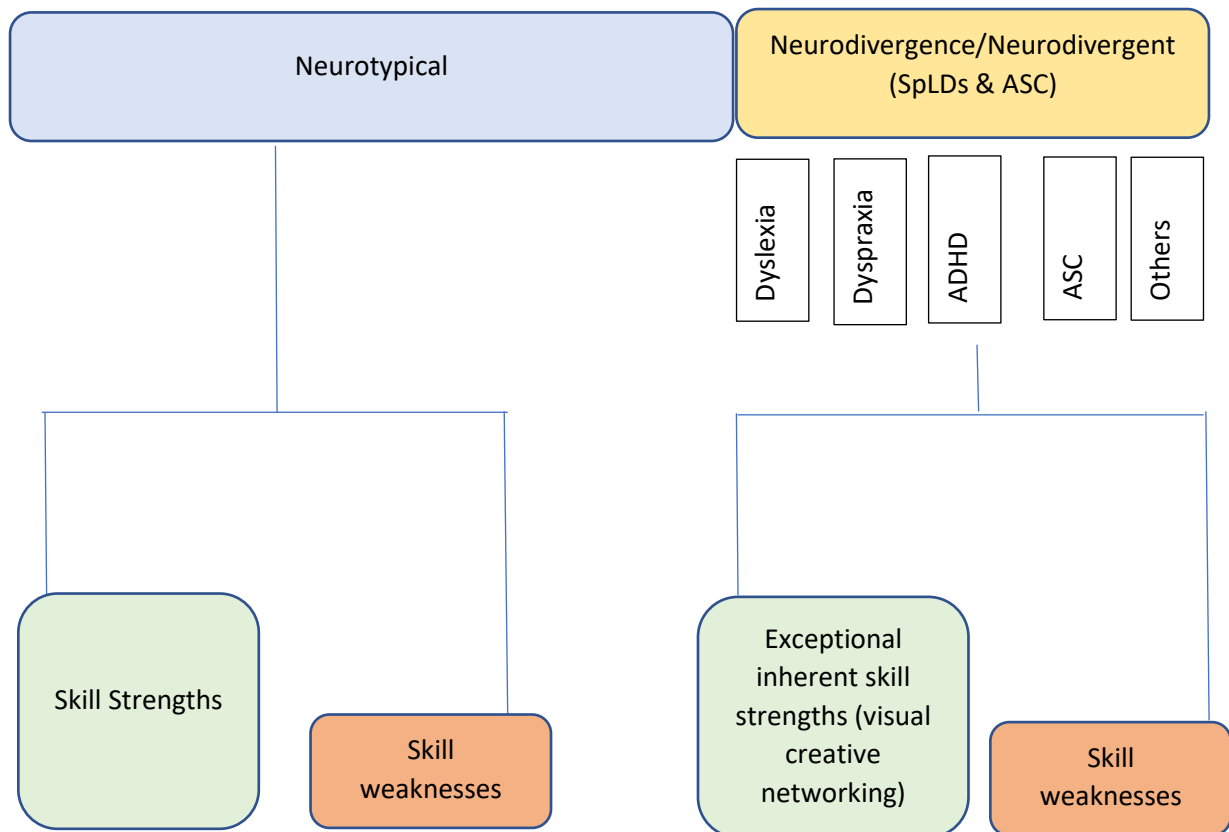
- Some of these students and staff choose to self-identify as being Neurodivergent or Neurodiverse.
 - These terms are often viewed as being positive identities for conditions that can, in an inaccessible environment, be disabling.
 - They also focus on many perceived strengths.
 - The College recognises that many individuals choose to self-identify using these alternative terms. However, it is important to note that they are not diagnostic terms and so are not used in formal assessments.
- These three additional documents summarise the models of neuro terminology in general use. Each is contested for a variety of reasons but an awareness of their meaning will help Imperial College staff maintain a level of clarity around the debate.

Imperial College EDIC and DAS have chosen to adopt the terms ‘neurodivergent and neurodivergence’ for consistency of communications and to align with current methods of assessment and support.

The term Neurodiversity should be used with caution as it refers to the ‘whole’ population but is often mistakenly used to refer to people with SpLDs and ASC. In particular, many people in the autistic community have used this term to refer to themselves for a number of years.

¹ Specific Learning Difficulty or Difference including Dyslexia, Dyspraxia/DCD, ADHD and Dyscalculia.

² Autistic Spectrum Condition



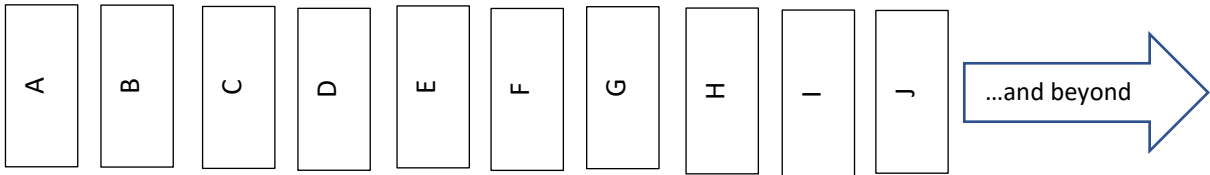
Neurodivergence (neurodivergent) is an alternative (positive) term for SpLDs and other hidden disabling conditions. It is dependent upon the relationship (or counter-position) between the condition and the typical profile. The assumption is that there is a high level of co-occurrence of these conditions. There is also a belief that these conditions bring inherent strengths, along with their impacts and weaknesses.

The words can be seen negatively because some associate them with differing from a typical 'norm'.

Additionally, in this model, neurodivergence is often replaced with neurodiverse, which can cause confusion as neurodiverse refers to everyone.

SpLDs are assessed and all 'neuro' terms are self-identified.

Neurodiverse/Neurodiversity
(Everybody)

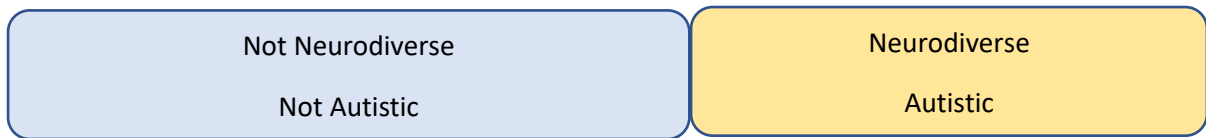


Everyone is neurodiverse or has neurodiversity.

In this model there is no need for functional labels or disabling conditions. People have limitless skill profiles (A-J and beyond). Some people are labelled by others or systems as having an SpLD or ASC. These are merely 'constructs', which are created by a disabling environment.

Some people (A-J and beyond) might have very good literacy but can't draw. This would be disabling in an environment where drawing was a key employment skill.

SpLDs are assessed and all 'neuro' terms are self-identified.



← Spectrum of Severity →

Neurodiverse (neurodiversity) is interchangeable with autism and is underpinned by the idea of a spectrum of skills, abilities and traits. There is an idea that autistic individuals have exceptional strengths in one area, but this might be balanced against broad ranging difficulties or problems in other areas, particularly in relation to interpersonal skills. The idea of high functioning and low functioning is in use, but it is not necessarily helpful.

Autism (ASC) is assessed and all 'neuro' terms are self-identified.