

The Autistic Experience of Higher Education

“My Autism is a contributing factor in all experiences I have”

Aims

This research project looked to gather data on the experiences of Autistic students in Higher Education in order to provide accurate and relevant recommendations to improve their experiences.

Research Questions:

- Which Facets Of Higher Education Are The Most Difficult For Autistic Students?
- What Support Is Available To Autistic Students In These Areas?
- What Do Autistic Students Feel Is Currently Missing In Terms Of Support?

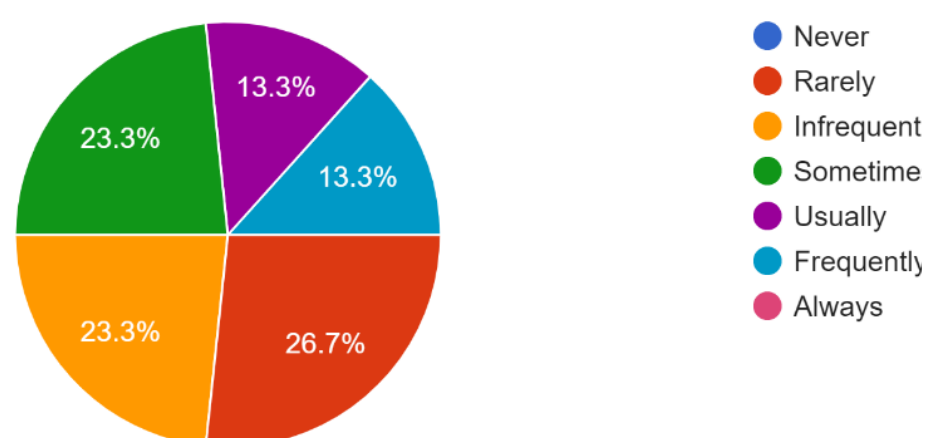
Methods

Anonymised questionnaires distributed online to reduce stress on participants. Multiple question types used to gather quantitative and qualitative data.

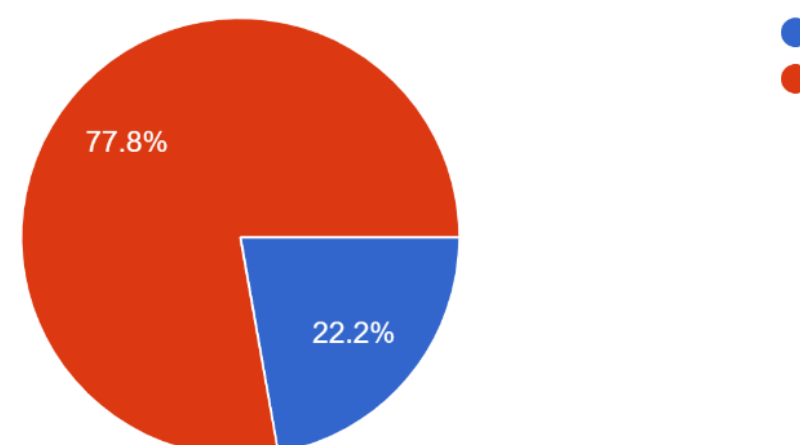
Qualitative data was analysed with the constant comparative method and visualised via a coding frame. Quantitative data has been visualised via descriptive statistics- Tables, pie charts, and bar graphs.

Data

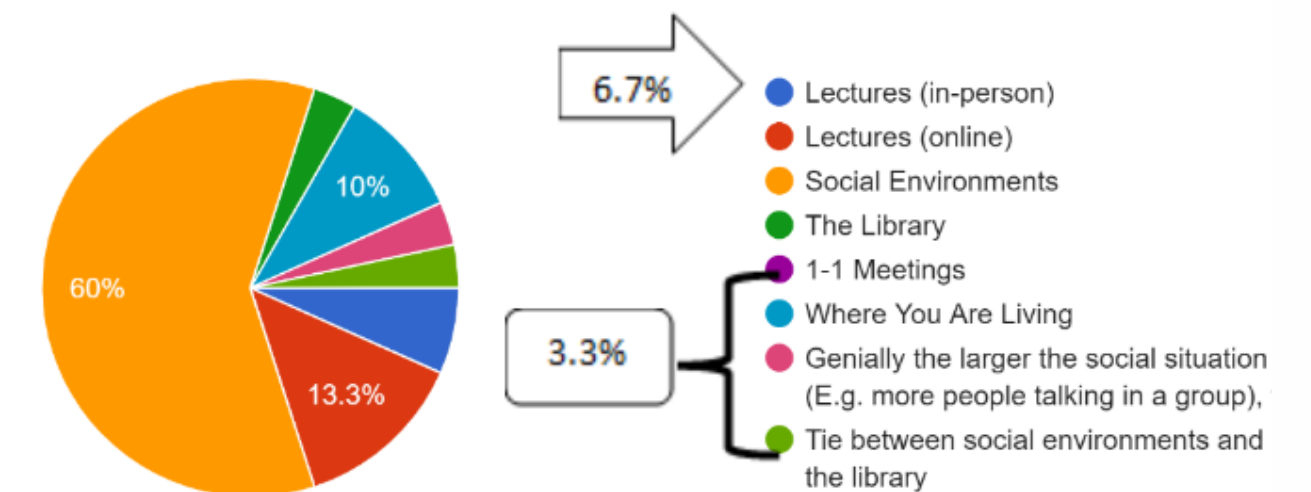
How often have you chosen to socially disclose your ASC?
 30 responses



Is there any support you requested but did not receive?
 27 responses



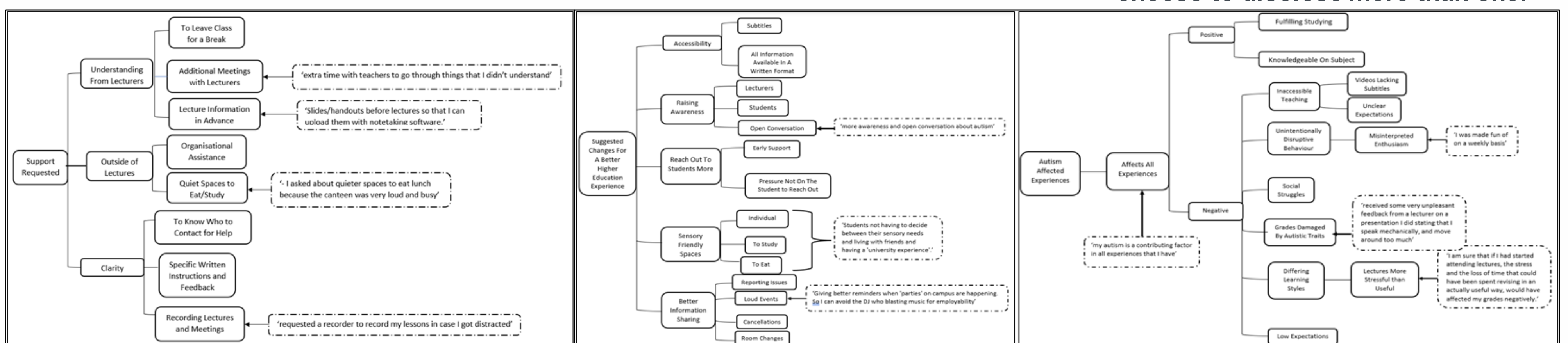
Which environment do you find most difficult, in terms of sensory management?
 30 responses



‘Please specify the support you asked for’

‘Are there any changes you could suggest, that would be beneficial to your Higher Education experience?’

‘Have you had any experience(s) during your time in Higher Education, where you felt your ASC was a contributing factor? You can choose to disclose more than one.’



Importance

Research considering Autism is primarily conducted by, male, white, neurotypical researchers with young white male participants. This does not reflect the variety within the Autistic community or highlight Autistic voices. This research looks to combat this. The methodology of a questionnaire allows for the amplification of Autistic voices. This research has been conducted by an Autistic woman.

Researcher

This poster represents my dissertation research into The Autistic Experience of Higher Education. I am an Autistic student and teacher who has both witnessed and experienced insufficient support in Educational settings.

Recommendations

This research suggests that HE lecturers are still impacted by stigma surrounding Autism. This issue has also been noted in the student population. A program of targeted education about Autism could combat this. This is likely to address the issue of grades being affected by Autistic behaviour. It also removes the potential for those acting on prejudice to claim they were ignorant of the issue. Spaces designed to support students who need to retreat from a high level of sensory input or that can be occupied by a single student would greatly benefit Autistic students. The addition of a ‘support menu’ would be invaluable to all students, as it offers a clear list of what support they can access.