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Important notice:

- This fact sheet is provided for the exclusive use of all the people involved in teaching at EPFL (hereafter “teaching staff”) and is not meant to be transmitted to students. Any use outside of this context, any distribution or publication, even partial, is prohibited.
- The goal of this fact sheet is to provide information to facilitate the interaction between EPFL teaching staff and EPFL students with disabilities.
- Teaching staff are free to apply this information according to their teaching context and the learning objectives to be achieved and as long as these measures do not create an advantage for students with disabilities.
- This fact sheet does not invalidate the study arrangements which have been granted by the special needs Commission to students with a disability.

Attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder ADHD

1. Description of the disability

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder with genetic, biological and environmental causes. 2 to 5 people in 100 suffer from ADHD. Generally diagnosed during childhood, this disorder often persists into adulthood, even though some patients are only diagnosed as adults (late diagnosis).

ADHD is an attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactive and/or impulsive behaviour. There are different types of ADHD and different degrees of severity in hyperactivity, inattentiveness or impulsiveness. The degree of severity and types affect patients in different ways.

It’s human to have a difficult time concentrating, keeping calm or handling one’s own emotions. People with ADHD, however, face these hindrances on a daily basis. ADHD may also interfere with students’ ability to function in an academic, social or professional environment.

The main perceptible signs of ADHD are:

- *Attention deficit*: difficulty concentrating on tasks or sustaining attention to complete the tasks, losing focus, being forgetful
- *Motor hyperactivity*: moving constantly, having difficulty staying still, restlessness even when appearing calm
- *Impulsivity*: diminished control over own impulses, excessive impulsivity, interrupting frequently

Not all concerned students suffer from all three ADHD types described above. Students may suffer from a single type of ADHD (predominantly inattentive/hyperactive/impulsive) or from a combination of types (combination of concentration problems and excessive impulsivity/activity). People with ADHD often –but not necessarily– have trouble carrying out daily activities and tasks for their studies (for example organizing, planning, dealing with their working memory, cognitive flexibility, fluctuating motivation, time management, etc.)

Treatment includes specific medicine (psychostimulant drugs such as methylphenidate, the active ingredient in Ritalin or non-psychostimulants such as atomoxetine), psychoeducation, learning social skills and individual psychotherapy.

2. Aspects linked to studies

Weak points: inattention, impulsivity, failing to finish and to organize tasks

Strong points: creativity, thinking out of the box thanks to the ability to consider many options at once

Students may, or may not (depending on their specific problems) and regardless of their intellectual capacities, face the issues described below.

Students' issue	Cause/origin of the issue	What is beneficial to students
Trouble concentrating during lectures or during activities (inattention) Trouble concentrating for a long time Easily distracted Daydreamers Easily distracted by task-irrelevant stimuli (noise, light, surroundings) Overlook details	Linked to inattention	Working in a quiet environment Reducing visual and acoustic distractions, taking breaks Receiving precise information concerning priorities
Seem to listen with only half an ear, don't seem to listen when spoken to directly (difficulty listening to instructions) Fail to follow through on instructions, fail to finish academic tasks/ chores/ obligations (not due to oppositional behavior or to an inability to comprehend instructions)	Linked to inattention	Receiving precise information in short sentences Choosing written support to jot down deadlines or expected reports
Trouble organizing/planning tasks, activities, poor time management and failing to meet deadlines (academic reports, difficulty keeping appointments)	Linked to inattention	Receiving precise information in short sentences Providing students with information about deadlines well in advance
Frequently lose objects needed for study or other activities Forgetful in daily activities (forget chores, personal belongings)	Linked to inattention	Using specific methods for filing Developing organizational strategies with the help of Student Affairs (SAE) or an external specialist

<p>Avoid or renounce to commit to doing an activity that requires sustained attention (academic duties)</p> <p>Feel overwhelmed by long-term projects</p>	<p>Linked to inattention</p>	<p>Writing down important tasks</p> <p>Using an agenda</p> <p>Using filing strategies</p>
<p>Answer before a question has been completed</p> <p>Speak without waiting for their turn</p> <p>Speak too often or at an inappropriate moment</p> <p>Change tasks/projects frequently and impulsively</p> <p>Interrupt or intrude on others (rambling on in conversations)</p> <p>Have a difficult time handling emotions: may be impatient, irritable, angry, have emotional flare-ups</p>	<p>Linked to impulsivity</p>	<p>Identifying issues and contacting SAE for coaching (SAE will then contact an expert on ADHD for individual support on the subject)</p>
<p>Switch between different chores without completing any</p>	<p>Linked to hyperactivity</p>	<p>Writing down important tasks</p> <p>Using an agenda</p> <p>Using organizational strategies</p>
<p>Feeling restless</p> <p>Having a hard time keeping calm (fidgeting, stand up frequently, leaving their seat in the classroom or in other situations, move hands and feet, squirming)</p> <p>Appear nervous</p>	<p>Linked to hyperactivity</p>	<p>Identifying issues and contacting SAE for coaching (SAE will then contact an expert on ADHD for individual support on the subject)</p>

For additional information or if one of your students is facing these challenges, please contact sae.amenagements@epfl.ch

For more information:

Conference of prof. Russel Barkley, 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B66nengrhZo>