

1. Facts & figures

- A psychiatric disability is a condition where the **psychological functioning** (behavior, emotion, cognition) **deviates** from the normal pattern of functioning, leading to participation problems.
- **Common psychiatric conditions** that have an impact on higher education are for example mood disorders, gender identity disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders, personality disorders and addictions.
- Depending on the **nature and severity** of the condition, the **impact is different** and **other symptoms** are present. Besides the condition specific symptoms, the following problems are common:
 - **fatigue, anxiety, stress, gloominess and overload.**
 - difficulties **attending classes** and internships at a regular base due to paramedical care, stress and anxiety.
 - problems taking readable and complete **notes** due to fatigue, concentration difficulties or absence from classes.
 - difficulties making **deadlines** due to periods of inactivity or reduced activity, anxiety or avoidance behavior.
 - **lower study rate** due to fatigue, problems with concentration and medication.
 - problems with **time management and planning** due to inactivity, medical care, fatigue and concentration problems
 - problems with **self-reliance.**
 - reduced **social contact** due to frequent absences.
- According to a study by the WHO (World Health Organization) including 21 countries, **20,3% of all students** in higher education meet **at least one criteria** of the DSM-5 criteria for psychiatric disabilities over a period of 12 months.

2. Focus points, tips & tricks

Attending classes

Focus points

- Taking readable, complete and well-structured notes is challenging.
- Due to **absence** not all classes can be followed, leading to a delay in the processing of course material.
- **Medical procedures** are sometimes required during classes.

Tips and tricks

- **PowerPoint presentations** with adequate structure, delivered before class, enhance the process of taking structured and complete notes.
- **Copies of notes of fellow students** can have substantial added value in addition to one's own notes.
- **Lecture recordings** that are made available online after class, offer the opportunity to review difficult passages and complete the notes.
- The possibility to ask lecturers **additional questions**, can help eliminate confusion or ambiguities due to absence of classes.
- It is advisable to put a space or **room** at the disposal of the student where medical procedures can be performed and where it is possible to rest. Leaving class early should be allowed.
- During classes the **follow-up of medical prescriptions** should be allowed e.g. drinking, taking medication, standing up,

Planning and organizing study-related activities

Focus points

- Due to **absences**, specific information is missed, leading to a lack of overview on all study activities.

- Due to unforeseen inactivity, exhaustion, and concentration difficulties **deviations from the study plan** are necessary, leading to problems with time management.

Tips and tricks

- Providing an **overview** of all assignments and tasks helps create an overview and make up an efficient study plan.
- **Study coaching** can be useful to help make up a realistic plan and help determine which tasks are proprietary, how much time can be spent on specific tasks, when rest can be incorporated,
- Assignments can be broken up in **partial assignments** with separate deadlines.

Processing and rehearsing study materials

Focus points

- The **pace** at which study material is processed is slow.

Tips and tricks

- Support in the draft of a **realistic study plan** enhances the processing of study materials. The deadline calendar can be of great use here.
- **Postponed deadlines** can be considered.
- An **individual trajectory** with a reduced study load is sometimes appropriate.

Assignments

Focus points

- Frequent absences, exhaustion, frequent medical follow-up can hinder the termination of **assignments within the provided time**.

- Active participation in group assignments can be difficult due to frequent absences.

Tips and tricks

- Changing **deadlines** can be advisable in specific situations.
- Large assignments such as bachelor- or master theses can be split up in partial assignments and progress can be monitored.
- For **group assignments** additional agreements on the division of work load by the lecturer are necessary.

Exams

Focus points

- **Fatigue and concentration difficulties** can hamper the successful termination of an exam.
- During exams the **follow-up of medical prescriptions** is sometimes necessary e.g. drinking, taking medication, standing up, ...
- Due to **absence**, exams cannot be taken at the provided time.

Tips and tricks

- Taking exams in a **separate room** where medical prescription can be followed is recommended. A more quiet room is also advisable in case of concentration difficulties.
- **Extra time** for the preparation of an oral exam or for a written exam can help compensate for the concentration difficulties.
- An exam that is divided in **two parts**, makes it possible to rest in between.
- An **optimal spread of exams** within an exam period can compensate for the overload and slower processing speed.

Internships

Focus points

- Due to medical follow-ups, exhaustion, or illness, frequent **absences** can hinder the internship.
- During the internship **medical procedures** are sometimes necessary e.g. drinking or eating, taking medication, standing up or moving, ...

Tips and tricks

- Providing an **adjusted internship location** is sometimes required.
- **Spreading** an internship over a longer period of time can be useful.
- An internship location that is **accessible** can remedy mobility issues and reduce exhaustion.
- Providing a **quiet room** at the facility where the student can retreat and perform the necessary medical procedures, is recommended.

Student life

Focus points

- Living **independently** and being sufficiently **self-reliant** can be challenging. Finding a new balance between attending classes, medical procedures, living in dorms (grocery shopping, cooking, studying, ...) and creating a new network can take time.
- Participation in student activities and the associated **social contacts** with peers can be challenging. These challenges can have an impact on the general well-being. Stress, anxiety and loneliness can occur.

Tips and tricks

- Support in finding a **new balance** between attending classes, medical procedures, living in dorms (grocery shopping, cooking, studying, ...)

and creating a new network can make a great difference. Taking up a **leisure activity** can be encouraged.

- o Support can be provided in **ADL-activities** through projects such as **framed living**. Additionally, support in the development of a structure, new routines and the organization of the paramedical support system (physiotherapy, nursing, ...) is important.
- o **Mentoring or buddy programs** (where students are assigned a mentor) can play an effective supporting role.
- o A **fixed contact person** in the study program can help monitor the load limit and help look for solutions in case of difficulties.
- o Staff members of student facilities provide for **coaching** in case of psycho-social problems.