



TIPS FOR UNIVERSITIES / HOSTS OF EMPLOYER EXPOS

WAYS UNIVERSITIES CAN MAKE EMPLOYER EXPOS MORE INCLUSIVE

Some easy things you should be doing now – and which could be made available on a career or employee expo section of the university website:

1. Provide **lists of employers** ahead of time.
2. Provide a **map / layout** of the event (preferably ahead of time).
3. Ask employers when they register if they are **interested in hiring neurodiverse candidates**. If they are, promote this to students. This could also include companies with explicit hiring initiatives and/or inclusive work environments for neurodiverse employees.
4. Provide employers with **NDH Tips for Exhibitors** guide when they register. This guide aims at raising awareness and supporting more inclusive conversations between employers and students. (Refer separate guide in the Neurodiversity Hub Resources section for [Employers](#).)
5. Provide students with **expectations and ideas of what to wear**, what questions to ask and what to expect (provide them with or refer them to the NDH Expo Survival Kit) in the Neurodiversity Hub Resources section for [Students](#).

ADDITIONAL ACCESSIBILITY IDEAS

1. Have a **chill-out room** or quiet space nearby that students can easily access if they feel anxious, stressed or overwhelmed. This ought to be an enclosed room, not an open space.
 - Additional things to include in the space: sensory toys [textiles, stress balls, fidget spinners, tangles, etc.]
2. Have a **quiet hour** of the expo (ideally the first hour) reserved specifically for students, with sensory issues (so they do not experience sensory overload) and employers that have indicated interest in considering neurodiverse students. This could also include:
 - employers sitting at tables to encourage 1:1 conversation and reduce the pressure students may feel
 - turning the lights down (especially if fluorescent)
 - allow for relaxed apparel as suits/ties can be very uncomfortable for some students and inhibit their willingness to attend.
3. Provide a **picture-by-picture description** of how to find the event expo space, as well as the general scheduled flow of events (if there are planned talks, activities, lunch breaks, etc). Knowing what the space will look like, where to enter and where to check-in can help students feel better prepared. Being specific and providing as much detail as possible can help reduce anxiety.
4. At the end, encourage students that it is **okay to leave**. Some students may feel like they are obligated to stay for a certain amount of time, or until the event officially ends. Remind them that this event is for them, so once they have talked to the employers they are interested in (or more) it is okay to leave.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES (different structures):

The best approach to support ALL students is to broaden the awareness and understanding and increase accessibility. The following structural changes may make neurodiverse students feel more welcome and the overall event more successful.

1. **Separate event.** This could be organised in a number of different ways, but the goal is to make it more inclusive. This would be in addition to other events.

a. One way is for a university to hold an event solely for neurodiverse students and only inviting employers who are keen to hire neurodiverse job-seekers.

Potential areas of concern that need to be considered:

- Some students may feel this is “special treatment” and may not attend
- Insufficient students may attend to make it worthwhile
- There may not be enough employer interest in such an event

b. Another way is for universities to combine with other universities to host a regional event for neurodiverse students. This could be modelled after Carnegie Mellon’s program held in Pittsburgh, PA in 2018. This could increase the number of potential students interested and make it a worthwhile event for employers.

2. **Virtual career fair.** This is a virtual event that allows employers to have a ‘virtual booth’ that students could choose to attend. Rather than participating in an in-person conversation, attendees have the opportunity to chat on-line with employers. This allows individuals more time to think about their response and reduces the social expectations that are relied upon for an in-person interaction.

a. **Example:** Autism@Work virtual career fair held 23 April 2019 in the U.S.

3. **Reverse career fair.** This is where students remain in one spot and employers rotate around the room. This helps reduce student anxiety because they aren’t the ones that approach the employer.