

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 and 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 the work](#) load made 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.
- 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.
- **Mentoring or buddy programs** (where students are assigned a mentor) can play an effective supporting role.
- A **fixed contact person** in the study program can help monitor the load limit and help look for solutions in case of difficulties.
- Staff members of student facilities provide for **coaching** in case of psycho-social problems.