



AS I Am

Autism Friendly HEI Award

GUIDELINES

Third level institutions which receive the AsIAM Autism Friendly HEI award are understanding of the needs of autistic students, open to making adaptations to being more accessible, have a positive celebratory culture towards autism, and invite a whole campus approach to being autism friendly.

How can your Third Level institution receive an AsIAM Autism Friendly HEI Award?

STAGE 1

The HEI is asked to pay the €5,000 at the start of Stage 1.

The HEI submits the application form to AsIAM.

This stage includes support from AsIAM with the initial application assessment including:

- Remote support and guidance during the strategy development phase
- An on-site sensory audit of the HEI campus (Travel costs are not included). Report will be sent 3-5 weeks after the audit.
- Opportunity to liaise with other HEIs in the network of Autism Friendly HEIs.
- Informal review of the HEI's Application Form and suggested recommendations thereof before official submission to the Accreditation Panel.
- The Autism Friendly HEI Accreditation Panel will formally review the HEI's Application Form, and they will be notified that they are an AsIAM Autism Friendly HEI Candidate and can start Stage 2.

STAGE 2

The HEI is asked to pay €5,000 at the start of Stage 2 and €5,000 at the end of Stage 2.

The HEI then writes the Action Plan for the following three years and submits it to the Accreditation Panel. The action plan will demonstrate how the HEI will implement the 9 Autism Friendly HEI Principles over a 3-year time frame. The action plan should present prioritised actions to address the issues identified in the application.

For each action define an appropriate success/outcome measure and timescale for completion.

Provide evidence that an internal steering group is set up. The internal steering group will provide guidance to inform the application of the principles within your institution. Provide evidence that the HEI has conducted initial research to determine the needs of autistic students and staff. **This research should include:**

- A survey of the whole student and staff population (to reach those who have not disclosed their diagnosis to the HEI)
- A Focus group interview of students and staff across the HEI.
- A Sensory Audit of the HEI environment (conducted by AsIAM and students from the HEI)

The Accreditation Panel meets in September, December, March, and June. We ask that the HEI submit their Action Plan within 6 months of approval of their Application Form. Upon acceptance, the Panel will grant the HEI the AsIAM Autism Friendly HEI Award when it is demonstrated that, at a minimum, 10% of the actions are completed under the 9 Principles of an Autism Friendly HEI.

The HEI and AsIAM will sign an agreement (Service Level Agreement) outlining the terms and conditions of the working relationship for the duration of the Award. **The Autism Friendly Award includes access to:**

- Training and support
- The Autism Friendly HEI Network community and platform with opportunities for collaboration, networking, and research
- Online promotion for the accreditation launch
- Ongoing email/zoom advice and support

The Autism Friendly HEI Accreditation Panel:

In order to transparently maintain a baseline and a standard for the AsIAM Autism Friendly Status, AsIAM has an independent panel of experts to evaluate the project and present its findings to the AsIAM Board of Directors in order to accredit the participating universities.

Dr Magda Mostafa is the chairperson of the Autism Friendly HEI Accreditation Panel, which is made up of 11 national and international members who are all from the field of autism, education and inclusion.

Eligibility for Third Level Institutes to apply for the AsIAM Autism Friendly HEI Award

For a HEI to be eligible to apply for the AsIAM Autism Friendly HEI Award, HEIs must:

1. Return the completed application form to AsIAM.
2. The institution must already have autistic students enrolled.
3. The HEI must offer degree programmes to students.
4. There must be a pre-existing disability support officer in place (or an equivalent staff member who has specific responsibility and training)
5. Demonstrate allocation of resources to the initiative to ensure its success. This includes details if an Autism Friendly HEI coordinator role will be allocated, or how many staff hours will be allocated to the initiative.

Fees to gain an Autism Friendly HEI Award

- HEI will be asked to pay €5,000 at the start of stage 1.
The HEI is then asked to pay €5,000 at the start
- of Stage 2 and €5,000 at the end of Stage 2.



The breakdown of costs are:

Stage 1

€5,000 - Initial application assessment, support and guidance during the application development phase, Campus sensory audit by AsIAM, opportunity to liaise with other universities in the network of Autism Friendly HEI's.

Stage 2

Two payments of €5,000 - This will include on-going support and collaboration for the development and implementation of the Action Plan, access to suite of materials being developed by AsIAM (including sharing platform with other Universities and HEIs for sharing best practices). Online promotion for the accreditation launch, ongoing email / Zoom advice and support, full membership of Autism Friendly HEI Network with opportunities for collaboration, networking and research.

Benefits and Services of being an AsI Am Autism Friendly HEI

There is a growing number of autistic students and others with additional needs participating in mainstream education, who are also eligible for HEI, which means there is a need to ensure your HEI is offering meets the needs of this community.

In order to ensure your institution remains on the cutting edge of research and innovation, the HEI needs to attract different minds to bring unique perspectives to bear.

Neurodiverse people see the world in a unique way and are critical to the success of any HEI.

This initiative will have a wider positive cultural impact on the entire HEI. It will allow students to understand everybody's unique contributions, and to value diverse perspectives.

Employers are increasingly targeting the recruitment of neurodiverse people. In order to compete with this increasing demand, universities must be able to supply these candidates.

Be part of an ongoing design process to shape and define the requirements of an autism friendly HEI through this initiative's associated research programme.

Provide opportunities to share skills and resources within the network of universities.



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