

# PERSPECTIVES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR AUTISTIC LEARNERS IN GRADE 4 TO 12

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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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### Declaration

1. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the University of Pretoria's policy in regard to plagiarism
2. I declare that this dissertation is my own original work. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, Internet or any other source), this has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements
3. I have not used work previously produced by another student or any other person to hand in as my own
4. I have not allowed and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as their own work.

### SIGNATURE OF STUDENT



**DATE: 2 JULY 2022**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### To Janine and Joshua Thetard, for growing my love of autism

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*“I can do all things through He that strengthens me”*

Philippians 4:13

*“Whatever you do work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not men”*

Colossians 3:23-24

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ADHD	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
APA	American Psychiatric Association
A;SA	Autism South Africa
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
DBE	Department of Basic Education (South Africa)
DoE	Department of Education (South Africa)
IP	Internet Protocol
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Materials
LMIC	Low to Middle Income Countries
OTs	Occupational Therapists
PAAC	Provincial Assessment Accommodations Committee
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SLTs	Speech-Language Therapists
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America
UK	United Kingdom

## **FORMATTING**

The American Psychological Association (7<sup>th</sup> edn.) referencing style was used for the research dissertation.

The research article used the Chicago referencing style. The Chicago Manual of Style, 17<sup>th</sup> edn., 2017). The article formatting therefore differs from the dissertation.

## **ABSTRACT**

### Introduction

Accommodations for assessment are important strategies to enable autistic learners to demonstrate knowledge of content learned. Examination policy guidelines direct educators and allied professionals in the recommendation of and implementation of assessment accommodations. Globally there is a paucity of information on reasonable assessment accommodations for autistic learners. There is also limited information regarding the perspectives of stakeholders for autistic learners in terms of their accommodation needs in assessment. Stakeholders, including autistic persons, can provide insight for the translation of educational policy to practice, as clinical practice and experiences can inform policy. This study described the perspectives of stakeholders in assessment accommodations for autistic learners in Grade 4 to 12 in South African schools.

### Methods

Stakeholder perspectives were gathered using a researcher-designed, self-administered, web-based questionnaire in Qualtrics software. There were 92 participants across five stakeholder groups, being autistic adults, caregivers of autistic persons, educators, psychologists, speech-language therapists (SLTs), and occupational therapists (OTs).

### Results

Results revealed that there was a limited awareness amongst respondents of the South African policy guidelines governing the implementation of assessment accommodations. The need for a wider range of assessment accommodations to provide for individual needs of learners was indicated, with specialised settings, use of noise-buffer/headphones, directions and prompts in simplified language, redundancy and use of a familiar administrator/invigilator being suggested as additional options. A wider range of assessment accommodations underpins the idea that educational programmes and practices must account for diverse learning profiles. Support of diverse learning profiles is the purpose of universal design. Universal design elements identified by respondents included, language supports, format and pre-assessment programmes.

### Conclusion

This study contributes to the body of research on accommodating autistic learners within an inclusive environment. An expanded offering of accommodations is recommended including

universal design options. Training and collaborations to improve awareness of assessment accommodations for autistic learners is recommended. Changes to policy and practice are necessary to support the needs of the growing number of autistic learners in South African schools, and indeed all learners with communication, sensory and executive function needs.

**Keywords: Inclusive education, autistic learners, assessment accommodations, stakeholders, South Africa**

## **ETHICS STATEMENT**

The Author, whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval.

The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of Ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*The purpose of this chapter is to critically review the current literature pertaining to assessment accommodations for autistic learners<sup>1</sup>. The rationale for the study is presented followed by the research question. An outline of the dissertation chapters is included.*

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) in South Africa published the Education White Paper 6 in 2001, providing a framework for the establishment of an inclusive education and training system for all learners (Department of Education [DoE], 2001). A key challenge to supporting individuals with barriers to learning within an inclusive education system remains the use of standardised, valid and fair assessment of progress through different grades or levels, in the form of summative assessment (Keen et al., 2016; Lin & Lin, 2019). This is particularly true for autistic learners due to the broad range of difficulties associated with the condition which pose a barrier to the assessment process (Hodges et al., 2020; Tay et al., 2019).

Changes in the method of teaching and assessment, which provides equitable opportunity for learners with barriers to participate as well as their peers is referred to as accommodations (Brown & Coomes, 2015; Lai & Berkeley, 2012; Larson et al., 2020). Accommodations should therefore be incorporated for the day-to-day teaching and learning as well for summative and formative assessments (Albus et al., 2019; Marshall & Goodall, 2015). With proactive planning, changes can be made to the manner of teaching and assessment to support learners with barriers, without the need for retrospective accommodations or adjustments (Capp, 2020).

Universal design for learning is such a proactive method of curriculum and assessment development, designed to deliver flexible approaches to address the diverse populations found in present day classrooms (Burgstahler & Russo-Gleicher, 2015; Capp, 2020; Ketterlin-Geller, 2007). Globally there is a move to expand accommodations towards universal design for teaching-and-learning and for assessment, to allow for more broad-based inclusive practice (Capp, 2020; Dolan & Hall, 2001). This approach supports the move

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<sup>1</sup>This dissertation makes use of identify-first language as the preferred language of Autism South Africa (A;SA). The informed consent letter, and questionnaire used person-first identity. It had been proposed that person-first language can reduce bias (Dunn & Andrews, 2015). The neurodiversity movement views autism as a difference and not a deficit and is therefore part of a person's identity (Kenny et al., 2016), so this language was favoured in the dissertation.

from deficit-driven accommodations towards social-inclusion and neurodiversity (Happé & Frith, 2020; Sarrett, 2018). Despite advances in some countries, assessment practices around the world seem generally unresponsive to the movement (O'Neill & Padden, 2021).

Consideration of assessment practices for autistic learners is important since the prevalence of autism is increasing, and likewise, the number of autistic learners enrolled in schools is increasing, both in South Africa (Pillay, et al., 2021) and the rest of the world (Anderson et al., 2018; Hodges et al., 2020; Leifer, et al., 2021; McConkey, 2019). Research has shown that educators need guidance, as provided by policy, and specific training, to know when and how to apply for which accommodations, to support a particular learner (Larson et al., 2020; Lin & Lin, 2019; Wilkinson & Twist, 2010; Woods et al., 2018). When considering assessment accommodation policy, there is reason to gain perspectives from stakeholders for autistic learners as they are central to recommending and implementing accommodations (Happé & Frith, 2020; Pellicano et al., 2014; Sagers et al., 2019). Gaining perspectives from different stakeholders leads to participatory research. Such participatory designs are considered best-practice in autism research (Fletcher-Watson et al., 2019), as they lead to person-centered practices.

Accommodations are important strategies in assessment practice for learners with special education needs. There has been global deliberation on special needs education and human rights for decades (Ainscow et al., 2019; Artiles & Larson, 1998; Blatt, 1972; Brown, 1980; Kauffman & Bader, 2014; Miles & Singal, 2010; UNESCO, 1994; Wang, 2019). In June 1994, a meeting of more than 300 participants representing 92 governments, including South Africa convened to promulgate an “Education for all” framework. This meeting gave rise to the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy, and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994), of which South Africa was a signatory. During the late 1990s South Africa went through a process of investigating and making recommendations on all aspects of special needs education, resulting in a published report by the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services (DoE, 1997). This published report gave rise to Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) and the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy (DBE, 2014a). The SIAS policy is used to identify barriers to learning and to highlight the support needs of all learners, including autistic learners. Support includes training of educators, the provision of specialised learning and teaching support

materials (LTSM), specialised services to learners as well as curriculum differentiation, which includes assessment accommodations (DBE, 2014a).

Autistic learners often require assessment accommodations to demonstrate their learned knowledge in formal assessments due to the numerous barriers that they experience. Within an inclusive education system, educators as stakeholders, find barriers to learning related to autism particularly difficult to manage (Erasmus et al., 2019a; McDonald et al., 2019; Waddington & Reed, 2017; Witmer & Ferreri, 2014). Language difficulties and problem-solving make response to assessment tasks difficult (Brown & Coomes, 2016; Leach, 2018; McKeon et al., 2013; Tay et al., 2019). The ability to interpret questions and answer in written form during assessment may further be exacerbated by poor reading skills, reading comprehension difficulties, and writing difficulties such as poor visual-motor integration and written expression (Anderson et al., 2018; El Zein et al., 2014; Leach, 2018; Mayes et al., 2019). Executive functioning encompassing organisational skills, planning difficulties, time management, attention and impulsivity also impede performance during assessment (Anderson et al., 2018; Ashburner et al., 2010; Buncher et al., 2019; Lubin, 2018; Tops et al., 2017). Likewise, self-regulation, sensory processing difficulties and restricted interests can also impact performance (Clarke & Williams, 2020; McKeon et al., 2013, Gunn & Delafield-Butt, 2016; Tay et al., 2019). The DSM-5-TR (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2022) notes that severity of autism may vary by context and fluctuate over time. Autistic learners with low-support-needs frequently have the cognitive ability (as measured by an intelligence quotient [IQ]) to participate academically within mainstream curricula, including academic assessments (Ashburner et al., 2010; McDonald et al., 2019; Tamm et al., 2019).

The aim of assessment accommodations is to remove barriers to understanding and responding to test items (Larson et al., 2020). Research into assessment accommodations frequently focuses more on supporting specific academic difficulties, such as reading and writing, rather than other challenges, such as those experienced by autistic individuals, which may have an impact on how information is processed or expressed during assessment (Tamm et al., 2019; Witmer & Ferreri, 2014). Consideration should also be given to specific training or supports required to prepare for assessment, sometimes referred to as “access facilitation” or “pre-assessment accommodations” (Simpson, et al., 1999; Songlee et al., 2008; Tyrell & Woods, 2018). Such pre-assessment accommodations provide a holistic perspective to assessment, and can be a pro-active measure to support

learners in assessment, congruous to universal design, thereby promoting inclusivity (Tyrell & Woods, 2018)

Universal design for learning and assessment has been promulgated around the world, there appears to be insignificant change in assessment practices (O'Neill & Padden, 2021). It is understood that assessment policies cannot be tailored to specific conditions, particularly autism, as individuals within a specific diagnostic category may vary considerably in terms of their support needs (Witmer & Ferreri, 2014). Policy should, however, be geared towards providing support for individuals with the most complex needs, because assessment can only be as inclusive as the broader education system will allow (Douglas et al., 2016). Indeed, it has been recommended that by focusing on universal design for learning and assessment with autism as the background, learners with communication, sensory, social, academic and executive function needs will be better supported to succeed in education (Sarrett, 2018).

While universal design for assessment is not yet a reality, learners with barriers to assessment are supported through assessment accommodations (Larson et al., 2020; Lazarus et al., 2009). Assessment accommodations can support the principles of universal design, being multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression (Dalton, et al, 2013; Hall et al., 2003), but are generally retrofitted to the original assessment design. Globally, there is a paucity of information on reasonable assessment accommodations specifically for autistic learners (Brown & Coomes, 2016; Jansen et al., 2017; Tay et al., 2019; Witmer & Ferreri, 2014).

Countries around the world have different policies on assessment and assessment accommodations available to learners. In South Africa, amendments to the policy document “National policy pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of examinations and assessment for the National Senior Certificate” (DBE, 2014b) include permissible assessment accommodations for the national senior certificate examinations (on which all other grades are also based, starting at Grade 4). This policy groups behaviour, anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism and psycho-social disorders together. Given the unique and varied difficulties related to autism it is not clear whether such a grouping serves the best interests of learners with autism, ensuring equitable assessment opportunities.

When considering South African policy and practice there is reason to gain perspectives from the stakeholders in education for autistic learners, (Happé & Frith, 2020; Pellicano et al., 2014; Pillay et al., 2022; Wium & Louw, 2013). Collating views from stakeholders can lead to well-informed research that is responsive to the needs of autistic learners and supports better translation of research into policy and practice (Happé & Frith, 2020; Roberts & Simpson, 2016; Saggars et al., 2019).

South Africa has incorporated a social model of disability in education whereby inclusion and participation for learners with disability are emphasized (Nel et al., 2016). This has led to a need for speech-language therapists (SLTs) and other allied health professionals to support educators and learners in schools (Wium & Louw, 2013). Stakeholder partnership, such as the collaboration between educators and allied health professionals, has been recommended by the Department of Education (in Education White Paper 6) for the identification and management of barriers to learning at the level of the learner, educator, curriculum and institutions (DBE, 2014a; DoE, 2001). SLTs and other stakeholders, have a collaborative role to play in strategic planning and policymaking for education at district, provincial and national levels (Wium & Louw, 2013). SLTs and occupational therapists (OTs) are important stakeholders as their fields have been identified as the most frequently used therapies for autistic learners (Ashburner et al., 2014). Psychologists, as stakeholders, are routinely involved in diagnosis of autism as well as management of challenging behaviours, anxiety, and parental stress (Adams et al., 2018; Brunson McClain et al., 2018). Other stakeholders include autistic adults, and caregivers of autistic persons, who provide lived experiences providing a richer understanding of autistic life to scientific, medical and educational communities (Pellicano, 2020). They are considered important stakeholders as they provide guidance in areas of research which have immediate and practical concern for autistic persons and their families (Pellicano et al., 2014; Pellicano, 2020; Happé & Frith, 2020), such participatory research designs are considered best practice in autism research (Fletcher-Watson et al., 2019). Stakeholders provide valuable insight into the way educational policy translates into practice (Roberts & Simpson, 2016) Conversely, clinical practice of such stakeholders and clinical research can inform policy (Lord, 2010).

Policy needs to be responsive to unique challenges of autistic learners (Hodges et al., 2020; Lindsay, et al., 2014), as well as the increase in autistic learners in the education system (Pillay et al., 2021; Hodges et al., 2020). Knowledge of the numerous barriers to learning and assessment experienced by individuals with autism is well-documented (Anderson et

al., 2018; Leach, 2018; McKeon et al., 2013). There is, however, a paucity of information on appropriate assessment accommodations for autistic learners (Brown & Coomes, 2016; Jansen et al., 2017; Leifer, et al., 2021; Tay et al., 2019). Input on educational practices for autistic learners from South African stakeholders could not be found. The research question, “What are the perspectives of stakeholders on different aspects of assessment accommodations as they relate to autistic learners in grades 4 to 12 within South African schools?” was therefore posed.

### **Chapter outline**

**Chapter 1** introduces the research topic, with the rationale and research question.

**Chapter 2** provides a description of the method used in the study

**Chapter 3** presents the full article which was submitted to the International Journal of Inclusive Education, in the formatting required by the Journal

**Chapter 4** presents a discussion on the findings as well as the strengths, limitations and recommendations

## CHAPTER 2: METHOD

*The purpose of this chapter is to provide the research aim and a description of the research design, participants and procedures employed to describe the perspectives of stakeholders in assessment accommodations for autistic learners in grades 4 to 12, within South African Schools. A description of ethical considerations and steps taken to ensure the validity of the questionnaire and reliability of the research is provided.*

### 2.1. Research Aim

The aim of the study was to describe the perspectives of stakeholders, specifically autistic adults, caregivers of autistic persons, educators, psychologists, SLTs, OTs, in assessment accommodations for autistic learners in Grades 4 to 12, within South African schools.

### 2.2 Research Design

The primary design was a quantitative survey, used to explore the perspectives of stakeholders concerning assessment accommodations for autistic learners in Grade 4 to 12 within South African schools (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). A few open-ended questions were also used to support the quantitative data captured, and to give opportunities for participants to expand on their responses to the close ended questions. Data were collected by means of a researcher designed, self-administered, web-based questionnaire. A questionnaire can describe attitudes or opinions of a population, by sampling results and inferencing to the larger population (Cresswell, 2014)

### 2.3 Ethical Considerations

Research must ascribe to a code of ethics (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015; Check & Schutt, 2012). Permission from organisations to post to their Facebook™ pages to access potential participants was obtained. Institutional ethics clearance was also obtained before the study could commence. Other ethical aspects considered included voluntary participation and informed consent, professional code of ethics and experience of the researcher, participants' right to privacy, protection from harm and beneficence.

#### 2.3.1 Ethical Clearance

Ethical clearance was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria, HUM022/0720 (Appendix B).

### 2.3.2 *Permission*

Permission to recruit research participants was requested from the targeted Facebook™ page administrators and organisations (Appendix C). Permission was obtained from the Facebook pages as shown in Appendix D. Permission to recruit research participants using the database from targeted organisations not having a Facebook™ presence was also obtained (Appendix E.1 to E.2).

### 2.3.3 *Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent*

Each of the respondents needed to give informed consent to participate in the study. An invitation to participate in the study was posted on the Facebook™ pages of targeted special interest groups and professional groups that had granted permission to do so (Appendix D). The same invitation was sent to organizations who had granted permission to disseminate to their database (Appendix E). Respondents needed to click on or scan a link to a Qualtrics questionnaire. An information letter formed the first page of the web-based questionnaire. Only where respondents consented to participate in the research, were they be able to access the rest of the questionnaire. Respondent consent was obtained through a checkbox at the end of the information letter.

The manner of informed consent for the vulnerable group of autistic adults was considered through consultations with A;SA. Autistic individuals were treated with the same autonomy as other adults in the study.

Any participant had the right to discontinue the questionnaire at any time before the questionnaire was submitted. Once submitted, participants were not able to withdraw as the questionnaires were completed anonymously.

### 2.3.4 *Right to Privacy*

Respondent's data was collected anonymously. Their responses were collected through a URL link on a Facebook™ page or shared with participants through an organisation of which they are members (Appendix C).

The only identifying data collected were Internet Protocol (IP) addresses, as the questionnaire was web-based. The statistician analysing the data, as well as the primary

researcher had access to the IP addresses. The statistician signed a non-disclosure statement. No identifying information was released.

Upon completion of the study, data were digitally stored on a password-protected computer, in Room 3-4 in the Communication Pathology Building, Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, at the University of Pretoria, where it will remain for a period of 15 years. The data were also stored on the University of Pretoria Research Data Repository, according to the rules of the University of Pretoria.

### *2.3.5 Protection from Harm*

There was generally deemed to be minimal risk to participants as they were required to provide their perspectives on assessment accommodations for autistic learners in Grade 4 to 12, within South African schools via a web-based questionnaire.

A slightly elevated risk for the population of autistic adults was identified, as recalling their own experiences at school could increase anxiety experienced while completing the questionnaire.

Permission was obtained from the South African Depression and Anxiety Group to cite their hotline number at the end of the questionnaire, so that respondents could contact them should they feel the need to discuss their anxiety (Appendix G).

## **2.4 Respondents**

### *2.4.1 Sampling and Selection*

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants. This sampling method allowed the researcher to hand-pick a sample that was satisfactory to their needs (Cohen et al., 2007). Purposive sampling was necessary in this study to ensure that specific stakeholders were included, meeting the selection criteria and giving a holistic view to perspectives and lived experiences (Pellicano, 2020). Stakeholders included members of different professional groups with experience in the field of autism, caregivers of autistic persons and autistic adults.

The target populations were recruited through professional bodies and autism-specific organisations as well as social-networking interest- and professional-groups, using

Facebook™ (Appendix C). Targeted snowball sampling was used to encourage psychologists to respond, by contacting known psychologists and asking them to share the information, as the number of psychologists who initially responded after 6 weeks was found to be too low to conduct the two-proportions z-test.

All participants needed to be over 18 years of age and have sufficient English language literacy to read and answer the questionnaire. Criteria for selection of professional groups (educators, psychologists, SLTs and OTs) included experience with autistic learners in grades 4 to 12, within South African schools, or experience in adjudication of assessment accommodations at a District or Provincial Education Office. Criteria for selection to the caregiver group required that participants were caregivers of autistic persons having completed at least Grade 4 of a mainstream curriculum.

#### *2.4.2 Respondent Description*

One hundred and eighteen (118) individuals consented to participate. Thirteen respondents spent less than one minute completing the questionnaire; their submissions were thus disregarded. A further three respondents were removed as they completed only the first few biographical questions, providing no further responses.

Respondents had to self-identify their stakeholder groups. Ten individuals identified with two stakeholder groups and were removed from the final sample. The exclusion of these ten participants was necessitated as an objective of the study was to compare different stakeholder groups using the two proportions z-test for independent groups. Including these respondents in both stakeholder groups they identified would result in a small percentage of the sample being dependent observations, invalidating the independent groups. In addition, it would over-represent the voice of these ten participants as their responses would be included in multiple groups.

Additional descriptions qualified the involvement of respondents with autism (e.g., remedial teacher; advocate for autistic persons). Where respondents did not identify with one of the stakeholder groups they were included in the stakeholder nearest to their state involvement/profession. “Child psychiatrist” was grouped with psychologists, “social worker” was grouped with psychologists and “sibling with autism” was grouped with caregivers.

The final sample included 92 participants, comprising four autistic adults, 14 caregivers, 15

educators, 10 psychologists, 18 SLTs and 27 OTs, three 'others' and one respondent who did not select a group (Table 2-1).

**Table 2-1**  
**Characteristics of stakeholder respondent groups**

Stakeholder groups	n=92 (%)	Primary Language		Province in South Africa		Years' Experience with Autism		Work Setting	
<b>Autistic Adults</b>	4 (4.3)	English	3	Eastern Cape	0	Not applicable		Not applicable	
		Afrikaans	1	Free State	0				
		isiXhosa	0	Gauteng	2				
		isiZulu	0	KwaZulu-Natal	0				
		Sepedi	0	Limpopo	0				
		Sesotho	0	Mpumalanga	0				
		Setswana	0	North West	0				
		Other	1	Northern Cape	0				
No response	0	Western Cape	5						
<b>Caregivers (incl. person with autistic sibling)</b>	14 (15.2)	English	10	Eastern Cape	2	Not applicable		Not applicable	
		Afrikaans	4	Free State	0				
		isiXhosa	2	Gauteng	7				
		isiZulu	1	KwaZulu-Natal	0				
		Sepedi	1	Limpopo	0				
		Sesotho	0	Mpumalanga	0				
		Setswana	1	North West	0				
		Other	0	Northern Cape	0				
No response	0	Western Cape	10						
			No response	1					
<b>Educators</b>	15 (16.3)	English	9	Eastern Cape	2	<3 years	1	Not currently employed	0
		Afrikaans	7	Free State	0	3-5 years	2	Private Centre / school	8
		isiXhosa	0	Gauteng	11	6-9 years	3	Private Practice	0
		isiZulu	0	KwaZulu-Natal	2	>10 years	5	State special school	1
		Sepedi	0	Limpopo	0	No response	4	State mainstream school	1
		Sesotho	1	Mpumalanga	0			State inclusive school	0
		Setswana	0	North West	0			Other	0
		Other	0	Northern Cape	0			No Response	5
		No response	0	Western Cape	6				
			No response	1					
<b>Occupational Therapists</b>	27 (29.3)	English	19	Eastern Cape	6	<3 years	6	Not currently employed	1
		Afrikaans	8	Free State	0	3-5 years	9	Private Centre / school	9
		isiXhosa	1	Gauteng	12	6-9 years	5	Private Practice	12
		isiZulu	1	KwaZulu-Natal	4	>10 years	7	State special school	5
		Sepedi	0	Limpopo	0			State mainstream school	2
		Sesotho	0	Mpumalanga	1			State inclusive school	0
		Setswana	0	North West	1			Other	3
		Other	0	Northern Cape	0			No Response	1
No response	0	Western Cape	4						
<b>Psychologists (incl. a child-psychiatrist &amp; a social worker)</b>	10 (10.9)	English	5	Eastern Cape	5	<3 years	2	Not currently employed	0
		Afrikaans	4	Free State	0	3-5 years	3	Private Centre / school	0
		isiXhosa	0	Gauteng	4	6-9 years	4	Private Practice	6
		isiZulu	0	KwaZulu-Natal	0	>10 years	2	State special school	3
		Sepedi	0	Limpopo	0			State mainstream school	1
		Sesotho	0	Mpumalanga	0			State inclusive school	1
		Setswana	0	North West	0			Other	2
		Other	1	Northern Cape	0				
No response	0	Western Cape	2						
<b>Speech-Language Therapists</b>	18 (19.6)	English	11	Eastern Cape	5	<3 years	7	Not currently employed	0
		Afrikaans	8	Free State	0	3-5 years	2	Private Centre / school	6
		isiXhosa	0	Gauteng	9	6-9 years	4	Private Practice	7
		isiZulu	0	KwaZulu-Natal	0	>10 years	5	State special school	6
		Sepedi	1	Limpopo	0			State mainstream school	0
		Sesotho	0	Mpumalanga	0			State inclusive school	2
		Setswana	0	North West	0			Other	2
		Other	1	Northern Cape	0				
		NR	0	Western Cape	6				
<b>Other</b>	3 (3.3)	English	2	Eastern Cape	0	<3 years	1	Not currently employed	0
		Afrikaans	1	Free State	0	3-5 years	1	Private Centre / school	2
		isiXhosa	0	Gauteng	1	6-9 years	0	Private Practice	1
		isiZulu	0	KwaZulu-Natal	0	>10 years	1	State special school	0
		Sepedi	0	Limpopo	0			State mainstream school	0

Stakeholder groups	n=92 (%)	Primary Language	Province in South Africa	Years' Experience with Autism	Work Setting				
		Sesotho	0	Mpumalanga	0	State inclusive school	0		
		Setswana	0	North West	0	Other			
		Other	0	Northern Cape	0				
		NR	0	Western Cape	1				
				No Response	1				
No Selected options	1 (1.1)	English	0	Eastern Cape	1	<3 years	0	Not currently employed	1
		Afrikaans	0	Free State	0	3-5 years	0	Private Centre / school	0
		isiXhosa	0	Gauteng	0	6-9 years	0	Private Practice	0
		isiZulu	0	KwaZulu-Natal	0	>10 years	0	State special school	0
		Sepedi	0	Limpopo	0			State mainstream school	0
		Sesotho	0	Mpumalanga	0			State inclusive school	0
		Setswana	0	North West	0			Other	0
		Other	0	Northern Cape	0				
		NR	1	Western Cape	0				
		No Response	0						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92</b>								

\*NOTE: Not all respondents answered all questions regarding biographical information. Respondents listed more than one primary language when their main work language and home language were not the same.

The main trends in respondent characteristics in Table 2-1 showed that the majority were English speaking (59/92 responses; 64.1%) from Gauteng (34/92 responses; 37.0%) and the Western Cape provinces (24/92 responses; 28.3%). These are two of the three most densely populated provinces within the country (Stats SA, 2011). The largest stakeholder group represented in the sample is OTs, followed by educators, caregivers and SLTs. English is the most common language across the groups, but participants' diversity of language reflects multilingualism in South Africa. The allied health professionals mostly worked in private practice, or at least spend some of their time working in private practice (26/55; 47.2%). Almost a third of the respondents in the professional groups, i.e., educators, psychologists, SLTs and OTs (19/70; 27.1%) had more than 10 years' experience with autistic learners, 22.9% (16/70) had six to nine years' experience, 22.9% (16/70) had three to five years' experience and 21.4% (15/70) had less than three years' experience, while 5.7% (4/70) did not indicate the number of years' experience that they had.

## 2.5 Material

A researcher-designed, self-administered, web-based questionnaire presented by Qualtrics Software, was used to collect data (Appendix F).

The questions in the questionnaire were compiled by the researcher after reviewing the status of assessment accommodations available to autistic learners within South Africa. Consideration was given to the numerous facets of the condition that could have an impact on assessment performance at school-level (Ashburner et al., 2010; den Houting et al., 2019; Tamm et al., 2019). Questions were based on, and cited Annexure C1 of the "National policy pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the national senior

certificate examination” (DBE, 2014b). The table of accommodations from this document was included for participants’ perusal (Appendix A). Background for the setting of questions in the questionnaire was obtained from literature referring to accommodations for various barriers to learning and assessment (Elliot et al., 1999; Larson et al., 2020; Lin & Lin, 2019; Sagers et al., 2016; Sarrett, 2018; Songlee et al., 2008; Witmer & Ferreri, 2014).

The questionnaire was designed to be completed within 15 to 20 minutes and consisted of:

- Two dichotomous questions to establish consent
- Eight quantitative questions to establish fair distribution across the stakeholder groups and biographical description
- Six dichotomous questions to gauge personal perspectives on a nominal level
- Five Likert-scale questions gauge perspectives on an ordinal level, also allowing for reliability checks within the questionnaire.
- Four multiple-choice questions to allow for probing of perspectives of differing assessment accommodations
- Five open-ended questions add depth to the quantitative information by allowing for more qualitative interpretation.

The questionnaire was web-based allowing for dissemination to a wide number of participants across all nine provinces of South Africa. Questionnaires allow researchers to capture biographic details, probe perspectives, and compare information from different stakeholder groups (Simmons, 2008). Web-based questionnaires are a preferred means of questionnaire design as an internet link directs a respondent to the site where the questionnaire is hosted, thereby reducing the need for lengthy email attachments (Cohen et al., 2007). It also allows for anonymity, improving validity of answers (Cohen et al., 2007). Data are automatically digitally stored (McPeake et al., 2014; Ruel et al., 2015). Web-based questionnaires allow anonymous, non-traceable responses (Cohen, et al. 2007). Qualtrics Software allows embedding of images for review by participants, permitting the attachment of the accommodations table as it appears in Annexure C1 of “National policy pertaining to the conduct, administration, and management of the national senior certificate examination” (DBE, 2014b) [Appendix A]

## 2.6 Research procedures

### 2.6.1 Pilot

The pilot study enlisted four persons (two SLTs, an OT and a lay-person) to answer the questionnaire and to supply feedback on clarity of questions, the duration of completion of the questionnaire, as well as any potential difficulties in answering the questionnaire. A lay person was included to ensure that academic jargon was clarified.

There was positive feedback from the participants. The questionnaire proved to be within the estimated 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Minor changes were suggested to improve the formulation of questions [Table 2-2].

**Table 2-2**  
**Suggested Changes by Pilot Group**

Question / Section referenced	Comment by Pilot Group	Adjustment made
Biographical section	As the lay-person in the group I felt like there were lots of questions that I could not relate to – but I'm sure the rest did okay	Branching of the questionnaire so that parents and autistic adults did not need to sift through the biographical details on work related environments
Are you aware of restriction on the granting of assessment accommodations regarding cognitive functioning?	Should read restrictions  I felt the restrictions should be explained	Are you aware of restrictions on the granting of assessment accommodations regarding cognitive functioning (candidates should have IQ scores within the average range)?
Do you believe that learners with ASD should be subjected to IQ restrictions on granting of accommodations?	Explain the restriction cut-offs	Do you believe IQ should be a consideration when granting assessment accommodations for autistic learners?
Do you know the difference between assessment accommodations and concessions?	This question can be confusing as many people refer to concessions when they mean accommodations.  As a lay person this is difficult to answer	Question was removed as it was later deemed to be irrelevant to the context of the study
Section on assessment accommodations.  Do you think learners with ASD could benefit from having a reader?  Do you think learners with ASD could benefit from having a scribe?  Do you think learners with ASD will benefit from specialised settings?  Do you think learners with ASD will benefit from a personal assistant?  Do you think learners with ASD could benefit from rephrasing of questions?	It was tedious to answer each question, do you believe that learners with ASD will benefit from _____ during examinations and why or why not?  I was not always sure what was meant by the question as we don't use these accommodations	Different options were grouped together, this also allowed for more options.  Do you believe that any of the following assessment accommodations should be added to the available list of accommodations for learners with ASD. <i>Check all applicable boxes</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral delivery: recorded</li> <li>• Oral delivery: reading pen or text-to-voice technology</li> <li>• Oral delivery: in-person (reader)</li> <li>• Specialised setting (e.g., low arousal; special lighting/acoustics)</li> <li>• Specialised setting (playing of calming music to minimise distractions)</li> <li>• Familiar administrator</li> <li>• Key words highlighted</li> <li>• Simplified language (restate question with more appropriate</li> </ul>

		vocabulary or define unknown vocabulary) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual supports for language</li> <li>• Colour coding instructions to emphasize steps</li> <li>• Use of stimulation toys</li> <li>• Use of noise buffers/headphones</li> <li>• Use of headphones with music</li> <li>• Time-tabling of examinations (no two exams on one day)</li> <li>• Encourager/motivator (may provide verbal encouragement of student's efforts and encouraging words to sustain effort longer)</li> <li>• Individual assistance with directions of test (including interpretation)</li> <li>• Allowing learner to voice ideas while engaging with the question paper</li> <li>• None</li> <li>• Other:</li> </ul>
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### 2.6.2 Data Collection

Links to the web-based questionnaire were posted on the Facebook™ pages of professional organisations; Facebook™ pages of South African therapist groups, South African teachers' groups and South African autism interest groups, that had granted permission to have the link shared on their pages (Appendix D). Organisations (South-African Speech-Language-Hearing Association; Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa; South African Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions; and A;SA) were also approached to distribute the link to their member database (Appendix E). Upon clicking the link, the informed consent letter was presented, requiring consent before entering the questionnaire. The questionnaire remained active for a period of two months. Each Facebook™ page posted the invitation to participate twice. The organisations that sent invitations to participants to their member database sent out the invitation to participate one. The questionnaire remained active for a period of eight weeks.

### 2.6.3 Data analysis

Quantitative descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data, whilst inductive thematic analysis was used for open-ended questions (Cohen et al., 2007; Swart, 2019). Thematic analysis enables the researcher to organise and analyse responses to determine common perspectives amongst participants (Swart, 2019). Recent literature has highlighted the use of thematic analysis to analyse open-ended survey questions (Corr et al., 2015; Palmer et al., 2019). It should be noted, however, that there are cautions that open-ended survey questions do not provide rigorous qualitative insights (LaDonna et al., 2018). The researcher

therefore acknowledges the limitation of thematic analysis in open-ended questions. Main themes were identified within the qualitative data and either contrasted or complimented the findings from the quantitative data.

Qualtrics software, Version June 2020 tracked the number of respondents from each group. Manual data cleaning was performed before data was sent to SPSS software (Version 27). The two-proportions z-test was used to make pairwise comparisons between stakeholder groups. A  $p$ -value of less than 0.05 indicated that the responses differed considerably. For ease of comparison, as the response numbers were too small without doing so, the 5-point Likert scales were collapsed into three categories, namely disagreement, neutrality and agreement.

## **2.7 Reliability and validity**

Research should be valid so that the results can be seen as meaningful (Cohen et al., 2007). Findings need to be accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, participants and readers of the research (Creswell, 2014).

### *2.7.1 Face Validity of the Questionnaire*

The supervisors in this study, who are experienced in the field of speech-language pathology and research, contributed to the face validity by making suggestions to help guide the creation of the questionnaire. Questionnaire construction is an important research activity (Peterson, 2013). Useful, valid and reliable information is gathered when a researcher asks the right questions in the correct manner (Peterson, 2013).

### *2.7.2 Content Validity of the Questionnaire*

To demonstrate content validity, the questionnaire must show that it covers the aspects that it purports to cover (Cohen et al., 2007).

The table of accommodations Annexure C1 of the “National policy pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the national senior certificate examination” (DBE, 2014b) included for participants’ perusal (Appendix A). Background was obtained from global literature referring to accommodations for barriers to learning and assessment (Elliot et al., 1999; Larson et al., 2020; Lin & Lin, 2019; Saggars et al., 2016; Sarrett, 2018; Songlee et al., 2008; Witmer & Ferreri, 2014). Consideration was given to facets of autism impacting on

assessment performance at school-level (Ashburner et al., 2010; den Houting et al., 2019; Tamm et al., 2019). Following the scrutiny of available research and information, research gaps were identified. No published questionnaires suitable for this study could be found.

The questionnaire was scrutinised through pilot testing, to ensure clarity of the questions and to control for researcher bias. The pilot contributed to the content validity of the questionnaire. The questionnaire also underwent scrutiny by the supervisors to ensure that the questionnaire included all aspects relating to assessment accommodations.

### *2.7.3 Construct Validity of the Questionnaire*

To demonstrate construct validity, the researcher needed to show that her understanding of the construct of assessment accommodations for autistic learners was shared by other professionals (Cohen et al., 2007). Piloting was used to ensure construct validity, thereby ascertaining that the questions were clear, concise, easily understood and was focused on the research question.

### *2.7.4 Reliability*

Several measures were taken to increase the reliability of the study. A substantial number of 92 participants could be recruited, thereby increasing the reliability of the results. Similarly, the Cronbach alpha coefficients were computed to ensure that the questionnaire used was reliable.

Selection bias was limited as most participants were not recruited directly, but through invitation on their Facebook™ interest groups. There was minimum pressure to participate in the study.

The completed questionnaires were anonymous, lending to a greater amount of honesty in responses from participants (Cohen et al., 2007).

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH ARTICLE

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### **Perspectives of stakeholders in assessment accommodations for autistic learners in Grades 4 to 12 within South African schools**

Assessment accommodations are an important strategy to enable autistic learners to demonstrate academic knowledge. Examination policy guidelines in South Africa direct educators in the implementation of such accommodations. Knowledge of stakeholder perspectives on assessment accommodations for autistic learners is, however, limited. Stakeholders provide insight for the translation of educational policy to practice, while clinical practice can inform policy. The aim of this study was to describe stakeholder perspectives on assessment accommodations for autistic learners in Grades 4 to 12 within South African schools. A web-based questionnaire was used. Respondents (n=92) were distributed across five stakeholder groups, including autistic adults, caregivers, educators, psychologists, speech-language therapists, and occupational therapists. Results indicated limited awareness of South African policy guidelines for assessment accommodations. Most respondents found it inappropriate to group autism with other conditions identified in the policy document. A wider range of assessment accommodations was suggested by respondents, including specialised settings, use of noise-buffers/headphones, directions and prompts in simplified language, redundancy and familiar administrator/investigatior. Changes to policy and practice are necessary to support the needs of growing numbers of autistic learners in South African schools, and for all learners with communication, sensory and executive function needs.

*Keywords: Inclusive education, autistic learners, assessment accommodations, stakeholders, South Africa*

## Introduction

A challenge to supporting individuals with barriers to learning within the inclusive education system remains the use of standardised, valid, and fair assessment of progress (Keen, Webster and Digby 2016). This challenge is intensified for autistic learners due to the broad range of associated difficulties affecting assessment (Hodges et al. 2020). Review of assessment accommodations practices for autistic learners is important as the prevalence of autism is increasing, and likewise, the number of autistic learners within the inclusive education system (Anderson et al. 2018; Hodges et al. 2020). Such reviews should explore the perspectives of stakeholders in the education of autistic learners as these persons are central to recommending and implementing accommodations (Happé and Frith 2020; Pellicano et al. 2014).

Educators, as stakeholders, experience difficulty managing barriers to assessments, particularly for autistic learners (Erasmus et al. 2019; Witmer and Ferreri, 2014). Performance in assessment for autistic learners can be impeded by challenges with language, problem-solving, metacognition and executive functioning (Lindsay et al. 2014). Anxiety, challenges with self-regulation, and sensory processing also contribute to difficulties in assessment (Ashburner, Ziviani and Rodger 2010; den Houting et al. 2019). Educators mitigate barriers by recommending and implementing assessment accommodations as guided by existing policies (Larson et al. 2020; Wilkinson and Twist 2010). Assessment accommodations need to be responsive to barriers experienced by learners to prepare and support them in assessment (Songlee et al. 2008; Tyrrell and Woods 2018). Learners may benefit from specific and direct training that compliment accommodations to help them manage the assessment environment (Songlee et al. 2008; Tyrrell and Woods 2018). In South Africa, summative assessments in the form of tests and exams are conducted at least at the end of each academic year from Grade 4 (DBE, 2012).

South Africa has adopted a social model of disability in education, whereby inclusion and participation of learners with disability is valued (Nel et al. 2016). Inclusive education in South Africa is currently detailed in two policy documents, ‘Education White Paper 6’ (Department of Education [DoE] 2001) and the ‘Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support’, commonly referred to as the SIAS policy (Department of Basic Education [DBE] 2014a). For assessment accommodations, these policies are supported by Annexure C1 of the ‘National policy pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the national senior certificate examination’ (DBE 2014b), which establishes eligibility and outlines available accommodations to learners with barriers to assessment. Autistic learners are included within the broader disability group covered in the policies (DBE, 2014b).

According to policy, management of barriers to learning and assessment, including the

recommendation of assessment accommodations is supported through stakeholder partnership (DBE 2014a). As stakeholders in inclusive education, speech-language therapists (SLTs) and other allied-health professionals support educators and learners in schools (Wium and Louw 2013). Stakeholders provide insight for translation of educational policy to practice (Roberts and Simpson 2016), and conversely, stakeholder practises can inform policy (Lord 2010). Well-informed research in autism involves the community, educators, and clinicians; responding to the needs of autistic learners, and thereby supporting better translation into policy and practice (Pellicano 2020; Saggars, et al. 2019).

Policy guiding assessment accommodations should be responsive to the varied and complex learning challenges experienced by autistic learners, because assessment can only be as inclusive as the broader education system will allow (Douglas et al. 2016; Larson et al. 2020). Internationally there has been a move towards universal design for learning and assessment, to allow for more broad-based inclusive practice (O’Neill and Padden 2021). Universal design highlights that through proactive planning, learning environments and curricula can be designed to be responsive to all learners’ needs thereby reducing the need to make retrospective adjustments for individual learners (Capp 2020). Despite the move towards universal design, educational practices for assessment remain largely unchanged (O’Neill and Padden 2021).

Flexibility in learning and teaching as proposed by White Paper 6 in South Africa (DoE 2001) may be facilitated by universal design (Brown and Coomes 2016; Wood and Happé 2020). Exploring stakeholder perspectives of assessment accommodations for autism may be a valuable starting point, as autism has been recommended as a basis on which to build universal design, to include the wider range of learners with communication, executive function and sensory processing difficulties (Burgstahler and Russo-Gleicher 2015; Sarrett 2018). Furthermore, description of stakeholder perspectives of assessment accommodations for autism are important due to the increase in prevalence of autism in schools (Pillay et al. 2021) as well as the unique needs of autistic learners (Lindsay et al. 2014). The aim of this study was therefore to describe the perspectives of stakeholders on different aspects of assessment accommodations as they relate to autistic learners in Grades 4 to 12 within South African schools.

## **Method**

Institutional Research Board clearance was obtained for the study (HUM022/0720). A mixed-method survey design was used. Stakeholders’ perspectives were collected through a researcher-designed, self-administered, web-based questionnaire distributed by Qualtrics software (Version: June 2021). Informed consent was required and was presented as a document prior to entering the questionnaire.

## ***Respondents***

Stakeholder groups included autistic adults, caregivers of autistic persons, psychologists, SLTs, and occupational therapists (OTs). Caregivers of autistic persons who had completed at least Grade 4 of a mainstream curriculum qualified for inclusion, as did autistic adults having completed at least Grade 4 in South Africa. Criteria for selection to professional groups (educators, psychologists, SLTs, and OTs) included experience with autistic learners (Grade 4 to 12) or experience in adjudication of assessment accommodations at district or provincial education offices. All respondents needed to be over 18 years of age and have sufficient proficiency in English language literacy to complete the questionnaire.

One hundred and eighteen (118) individuals consented to participate. Sixteen questionnaires were, however, largely incomplete and were discarded, leaving 102 respondents demonstrating an 86.4% completion rate. Respondents had to self-identify their stakeholder groups. Ten individuals identified with two stakeholder groups and were removed from the sample to avoid over-representation, resulting in a final sample size of 92 respondents.

Where respondents did not identify with the closed-ended options provided for the identification of stakeholder groups but did qualify their involvement in autism by choosing ‘other’ and specifying, they were included in the stakeholder group closest to their stated involvement/profession. ‘Child psychiatrist’ was grouped with psychologists, ‘social worker’ was grouped with psychologists and ‘sibling with autism’ was grouped with caregivers. In the final sample, there were four autistic adults (n=4/92; 4.3%), 14 caregivers (n=14/92; 15.2%), 15 educators (n=15/92; 16.3%), 27 OTs (n=27/92; 29.3%), 10 psychologists (n=10/92; 10.9%), 18 SLTs (n=18/92; 19.6%), three ‘other’ (n=3/92; 3.3%) responses, where the involvement was not qualified, and one respondent did not select a group (n=1/92; 1.1%).

The majority of respondents were English speaking (n=59/92; 64.1%), from Gauteng (n=34/92; 37.0%) and the Western Cape provinces (n=24/92; 28.3%), the two most densely populated provinces within South Africa. Many respondents were noted to work in more than one setting, but predominantly in private practice (25/70; 35.7%); private centre or school (23/70; 32.9%) and state special school (15/70; 21.4%). Almost a third (19/70; 27.1%) of the respondents in the professional groups (educators, psychologists, SLTs and OTs) had more than ten years’ experience with autistic learners; 22.9% (16/70) had six-to-nine years’ experience; 22.9% (16/70) had three-to-five years’ experience; 21.4% (15/70) had less than three years’ experience and 5.7% (4/70) did not indicate their experience level.

### ***Material***

Questions in the questionnaire were compiled by reviewing policy documents related to assessment accommodations within South Africa, including Annexure C1 of the ‘National policy pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the national senior certificate examination’ (DBE 2014b; DoE 2001). The table summarising accommodations from this document was included in the questionnaire for participant perusal. Additionally, literature referencing accommodations for various barriers to assessment was consulted (Elliot, Kratochwill and Schulte 1999; Larson et al. 2020). Consideration was given to characteristics associated with autism that could impact assessment performance at school-level (Ashburner, Ziviani and Rodger 2010; Tamm et al. 2020).

The questionnaire was designed to be completed within 15 to 20 minutes. It consisted of closed-ended questions in the form of dichotomous, nominal multiple-choice and Likert-type questions, as well as open ended questions to obtain rich in-depth information on elicited perspectives.

### ***Procedures***

Links to the web-based questionnaire were posted on the Facebook™ pages of South African professional organisations and South African therapist groups, teacher groups and autism groups. All had granted permission to have the link shared on their pages. Upon clicking the link, the informed consent letter was presented, requiring consent before entering the questionnaire. Organisations (South African Speech-Language-Hearing Association; Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa; South African Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions; Autism South Africa) were also approached to distribute the link to their member databases.

### ***Data Analysis***

All data were analysed using SPSS Statistics software, version 27. The two-proportions  $z$ -test was used to make pairwise comparisons between stakeholder groups. A  $p$ -value less than 0.05 indicated that the responses differ significantly. The 5-point Likert-scales were collapsed into three categories: disagreement, neutrality, and agreement. Qualitative information was coded by inductive thematic analysis.

## Results

Despite having experience with autistic learners, or being involved in the adjudication of assessment accommodations, 63.0% (n=58/92) of the respondents were not aware of Annexure C1 (DBE 2014b), as the guiding document for the selection and implementation of assessment accommodations in South Africa. This document combines barriers to assessment related to ‘behaviour, anxiety, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism and other psycho-social disorders’. When questioned whether the grouping of conditions was appropriate, approximately half of the respondents who answered the question (49.1%, n=30/61) found it inappropriate. A total of 46.6% (n=34/73) of the respondents who responded to the question felt that the accommodations summarised in Annexure C1 (DBE 2014b) met the needs of autistic learners during assessment. The majority of respondents (80.3%; n=61/76) to the question, however, indicated that more assessment accommodations options should be allowed for autistic learners.

It is also important to consider accommodations for barriers that do not have a clear academic outcome (Brown and Coomes 2016; Ashburner, Ziviani and Rodger 2010). Anxiety is commonly associated with autism (Dieckhaus et al. 2021). A total of 48.3% (n=28/58) of respondents felt that the accommodation options in Annexure C1 (DBE 2014b) did not accommodate autistic learners’ needs regarding anxiety experienced during assessments. Just over half (n=29/56; 51.8%) of the respondents indicated that the use of ‘additional time’ would alleviate anxiety felt by autistic learners during assessments. Respondents across the sample, however, responded that changes to the environment would not support the anxiety (90.9%, n=50/55), nor sensory regulation difficulties experienced by learners (100.0%; n=55/55). Additionally, almost half of the respondents (48.3%; n=39/58) reported that the current options offered in Annexure C1 do not accommodate the sensory needs of autistic learners during assessments.

Most respondents (80.3%; n=61/76 respondents) indicated that additional assessment accommodation options should be allowed for autistic learners. Prominent additions selected by respondents included: ‘specialised setting (low-arousal, special lighting and/or acoustics)’ (6.0% of all 866 responses), ‘use of noise buffers/headphones’ (5.9% of 866 responses), ‘all directions and prompts in simplified language’ (5.8% of 866 responses), ‘redundancy – questions presented auditorily and in written form’ (5.8% of 866 responses), ‘familiar administrator/invigilator’ (5.5% of 866 responses), ‘no two examination in the same day; (5.1% of 866 responses), ‘all questions starting on a new page (5.1% of 866) and ‘simplified language, including the restating of questions with more appropriate vocabulary or provision of definitions of vocabulary’ (5.0% of 866 responses) [Table 3-1].

Between stakeholder groups, caregivers selected accommodations for specialised settings

significantly less than psychologists ( $z=1.706, p=0.044$ ). There were significantly more selections by psychologists for ‘no two examinations on the same day’ compared to OTs ( $z=1.685, p=0.046$ ). There were significantly more selections by autistic adults ( $z=2.226, p=0.013$ ) and caregivers ( $z=1.787; p=0.037$ ) compared to OTs for the use of an ‘encourager or motivator’ to provide ‘verbal encouragement of the learner’s efforts’.

**Table 3-1**  
**Selections by stakeholders to be included as assessment accommodations for autistic learners within South African schools**

Accommodation	Currently in Annexure C1 (yes/no) Name in Annex C1 Restrictions on use according to Annex C1	Number of responses	% out of 866 responses	% out of 92 Respondents
<b>Specialised Settings</b>				
Specialised setting: low arousal; special lighting/acoustics	No	52	6.0%	56.5%
Specialised setting: Playing of calming music to minimise distractions	No	34	3.9%	37.3%
<b>Special Equipment</b>				
Use of noise buffers/headphones	No	51	5.9%	55.4%
Use of stimulation toys	No	28	3.2%	30.4%
Use of headphones with music	No	34	3.5%	32.6%
<b>In-Person Supports</b>				
Familiar administrator/invigilator	No	48	5.5%	52.2%
Encourager/motivator: May provide verbal encouragement of learner’s efforts. Encouraging words to sustain effort	No	32	3.7%	34.8%
<b>Language Supports</b>				
All directions and prompts in simplified language	No	50	5.8%	54.3%
Simplified Language (Restate question with more appropriate vocabulary or define vocabulary)	Yes <b>Rephrasing</b> <i>Only for Deaf/Hearing Impaired and learners who are aphasic</i>	43	5.0%	46.7%
Visual Supports for language	No	42	4.8%	45.7%
Individual assistance with directions of assessment (including interpretation)	No	34	3.9%	37.0%
Colour-coding of instructions to emphasise steps	No	32	3.7%	34.8%
Key-words highlighted	No	27	3.1%	29.3%
<b>Timing/Scheduling</b>				
No two examinations on the same day	No	44	5.1%	47.8%
<b>Learner Allowances</b>				
Allowing learners to voice ideas while engaging with the question paper	No	42	4.8%	45.7%
<b>Redundancy</b>				
Redundancy (question presented auditorily and written)	Yes <b>Reader</b> <i>Not for the grouping that includes Autism</i>	50	5.8%	54.3%
Oral-delivery: in-person (i.e., reader)	Yes <b>Reader</b> <i>Not for the grouping that includes Autism</i>	39	4.5%	42.4%
Oral-delivery: recorded	Yes <b>Reader</b> <i>Not for the grouping</i>	35	4.0%	38.0%

Accommodation	Currently in Annexure C1 (yes/no) <b>Name in Annex C1</b> <i>Restrictions on use according to Annex C1</i>	Number of responses	% out of 866 responses	% out of 92 Respondents
	<i>that includes Autism</i>			
Oral-delivery: reading pen or text-to-voice technology	Yes <b>Computer voice to text/text to voice</b> <i>Not for the grouping that includes Autism</i>	33	3.8%	35.9%
<b>Presentation Supports</b>				
All questions starting on a new page	No	44	5.1%	47.8%
Enlarged Print (18pt)	Yes <b>Enlarged Print</b> <i>Not for the grouping that includes Autism</i>	19	2.2%	20.7%
Coloured Question Paper	No	20	2.3%	21.7%
<b>Other / No Options</b>				
Other Accommodations		7	0.8%	7.6%
Other Universal Design Options		2	0.2%	2.2%
None of the Universal Design Options selected		1	0.1%	1.1%
None of the options were selected for either Accommodations or Universal Design Options		27	3.1%	29.3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>866</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	-

\*Note: Multiple response option. The total number of responses (866) is larger than the sample size (92) as the respondents could select more than one option

In inclusive education settings, autistic learners may benefit from specific and direct training (as a pre-assessment accommodation) to help them manage the assessment environment (Songlee et al. 2008; Tyrrell and Woods 2018). Table 3-2 shows that 20.8% of selections made for pre-assessment accommodations indicated that ‘teaching management of examination anxiety’ may help, whereas only 15.2% of the selections were for study guides and information about examinations. The z-proportions test showed no significant differences between stakeholder groups for the information presented in Table 3-2.

**Table 3-2**  
**Specific and direct training to be considered to support learners in preparation for assessment (pre-assessment accommodations)**

Pre-assessment accommodations	Number of responses	% out of 289 responses*	% out of 92 respondents	Autistic Adult	C/giver <sup>1</sup>	Educator	Psych <sup>2</sup>	SLT	OT	Other			
				Number of responses to multiple response question (n)							Percentage of responses to multiple response question within stakeholder category (%)		
Teaching how to manage examination anxiety	60	20.8%	65.2%	3 21.4%	10 25.6%	8 20.0%	10 22.7%	9 16.4%	19 21.3%	1 14.3%			
Teaching of test-taking skills	56	19.4%	60.9%	4 28.6%	7 17.9%	7 17.5%	9 20.5%	10 18.2%	18 20.2%	1 14.3%			
Pictures of examination invigilators / administrators	51	17.6%	55.4%	2 14.3%	8 20.5%	6 15.0%	9 20.5%	10 18.2%	15 16.9%	1 14.3%			
Information about examinations, why they are important and provision of motivation in preparation for examinations	44	15.2%	47.8%	1 7.1%	5 12.8%	6 15.0%	9 20.5%	9 16.4%	14 15.7%	1 14.3%			
Study guide with practice questions	44	15.2%	47.8%	3 21.4%	4 10.3%	5 12.5%	8 18.2%	8 14.5%	15 16.9%	1 14.3%			
Other	5	1.7%	5.4%	1 7.1%	1 2.6%	2 5.0%	0 0.0%	1 1.8%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%			
None of the options were selected	29	10.0%	31.5%	0 0.0%	4 10.3%	6 15.0%	0 0.0%	8 14.5%	8 9.0%	2 28.6%			
Total	289	100.0%	-	14 100.0%	39 100.0%	40 100.0%	44 100.0%	55 100.0%	89 100.0%	7 100.0%			

\*Note: Multiple response option. The total number of responses (289) is larger than the sample size (92) as the respondents could select more than one option

<sup>1</sup>c/giver=caregivers; <sup>2</sup>psych = psychologists

Table 3-3 shows the differences between stakeholder groups in recommending how pre-assessment accommodations should be implemented. Almost a third of the selections made indicated that ‘educators should carry-out specific and direct training for autistic learners as a matter of course’ (29.2%; n=47/161). Almost one-fifth (18.6%; n=30/161) of responses were for a pre-approved programme that offers specific and direct training by education districts’. The z-proportions test showed no significant differences between the responses of the different stakeholder groups, as presented in Table 3-3.

**Table 3-3**  
**Implementation of pre-accommodations programme**

How should training be administered?	Number of responses	% out of 161 responses	% out of 92 respondents	Autistic Adult	C/giver <sup>1</sup>	Educator	Psych <sup>2</sup>	SLT	OT	Other
				Number of responses to multiple response question (n)						
Educators should provide such programmes for autistic learners as a matter of course	47	29.2%	51.1%	3 27.3%	8 36.4%	8 36.4%	8 36.4%	6 17.6%	13 28.9%	1 25.0%
Should be a specific training that has been approved by Province or District Education Offices and run in accordance with specific guidelines	30	18.6%	32.6%	3 27.3%	3 13.6%	2 9.1%	5 22.7%	8 23.5%	8 17.8%	1 25.0%
Should be included as an accommodation, and thus approved by the District/Provincial accommodations committees	28	17.4%	30.4%	2 18.2%	2 9.1%	2 9.1%	4 18.2%	9 26.5%	9 20.0%	0 0.0%
No application necessary for such pre-assessment accommodations	13	8.1%	14.1%	2 18.2%	2 9.1%	1 4.5%	3 13.6%	0 0.0%	5 11.1%	0 0.0%
Educators should only provide such programmes for autistic learners should they feel it necessary	9	5.6%	9.8%	0 0.0%	1 4.5%	3 13.6%	2 9.1%	2 5.9%	1 2.2%	0 0.0%
Such pre-assessment accommodations should <u>not</u> need to be documented	4	2.5%	4.3%	1 9.1%	1 4.5%	1 4.5%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 2.2%	0 0.0%
Such pre-assessment accommodations should not be provided unless requested, and then it should be approved by Province or District	1	0.6%	1.1%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 2.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
No options selected	29	18.0%	31.5%	0 0.0%	5 22.7%	5 22.7%	0 0.0%	8 23.5%	8 17.8%	2 50.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>175.0%</b>	<b>11 100.0%</b>	<b>22 100.0%</b>	<b>22 100.0%</b>	<b>22 100.0%</b>	<b>34 100.0%</b>	<b>45 100.0%</b>	<b>4 100.0%</b>

\*Note: Multiple response option. The total number of responses (161) is larger than the sample size (92) as the respondents could select more than one option

<sup>1</sup>C/giver = caregivers; <sup>2</sup>Psych = psychologists

## Discussion

The findings from this South African study have contributed to the body of research on assessment accommodations for autistic learners by describing the perspectives of different stakeholders involved in education of autistic learners and autistic persons themselves. Stakeholder perspectives are important in autism research as they reflect on the practical and immediate concerns of the community (Pellicano 2020; Sagers, et al. 2019).

Findings from the current study concur with previously documented inconsistencies in educator knowledge regarding assessment accommodations (Hodgson, Lazarus and Thurlow 2011).

The incidence of autism and the enrolment of autistic learners is increasing, as shown by studies in the Western Cape province of South Africa and elsewhere in the world (Lindsay et al. 2014; Pillay et al. 2021; Pillay et al. 2022). Autistic learners are therefore at risk, as educators and other support staff may not be aware of the support that can be offered, as documented in policy. Similarly, lack of knowledge of education policies hinders lobbyists for change and for the translation of policy to practice. Consequently, there is a need for training and collaboration regarding assessment accommodations for autistic learners across inclusive and special schools (Larson et al. 2020; Wilkinson and Twist 2010). It has been recommended that special interest groups consisting of a variety of stakeholders, such as a special interest group for autism, should be identified to collaborate with district education offices in supporting learners with diverse educational needs (Wium and Louw 2013). Collaboration and training between stakeholders, district education offices and schools would strengthen the South African education system to support autistic learners (Pillay et al. 2022).

Previous research has indicated that there is need to recognise ‘more individualised, unique and autism-specific needs’ of autistic learners (Saggers et al. 2019, 3857) rather than grouping autism with other conditions as was also recommended by the majority of respondents in the current study. It may be difficult to have specific accommodation guidelines per disability group, as is seen in the global paucity of information on reasonable assessment accommodations for autistic learners (Jansen et al. 2017; Tay et al. 2019). However, expanding the number of assessment accommodation options available, to be selected in bespoke manners to support specific individual needs of autistic learners is a realistic recommendation and supported in literature (Brown and Coomes 2015; Witmer and Ferreri 2014).

Almost half of the respondents felt that the accommodations summarised in Annexure C1 (DBE, 2014b) accommodated the needs of autistic learners during assessment, and yet, the majority of respondents indicated that additional assessment accommodations would be valuable. This may be related to the fact that respondents felt that the existing accommodations support assessment, as they have a clear academic focus, but do not support barriers affecting participation in assessments such as anxiety and sensory regulation needs common in autism. In the United States, a study indicated that over 90% of post-secondary school institutions used academically focused accommodations, but only a third provided sensory accommodations (Brown and Coomes 2016). Global research has indicated that it is necessary to address sensory and other non-academic support for autistic learners in the classroom and hence also in assessment (Ashburner, Ziviani and Rodger 2010; Brown and Coomes 2016).

Interestingly, the most selected additional assessment accommodation was ‘specialised

settings: low arousal; special lighting/acoustics’ and yet, the majority of respondents felt that changes to the environment would neither reduce anxiety nor support sensory regulation difficulties. While sensory friendly environments as an assessment accommodation do not appear to be widely studied in the literature (Lai and Berkley 2012; Leifler, et al. 2021), one study found that low-distraction venues can have a positive effect on concentration for students with sensory defensiveness (Lewis and Nolan 2013). It is further noted that the autism community continually advocates for sensory-related accommodations (Sarrett 2018). This would support the use of low-arousal settings as an assessment accommodation, as selected by respondents in this study.

Provision of additional time has been recommended as a reasonable accommodation for ‘exam stress and anxiety’ (Jansen et al. 2017). The respondents in this study concur, with just over half of the respondents who answered the question indicating that the use of additional time would alleviate anxiety felt by autistic learners during assessment.

There was large variability in the selected assessment accommodation options to include for autistic learners (866 total responses). These differences may stem from the unique and varied needs of specific autistic learners, as well as the diverse population involved with these learners (Keen, Webster and Ridley 2016; Witmer and Ferreri 2014). Accommodations should be selected in a bespoke fashion to accommodate individual needs (Brown and Coomes 2016; Saggars et al. 2019). Education White Paper 6 indicates ‘the most important way of addressing barriers arising from the curriculum is to make sure that the process of learning and teaching is flexible enough to accommodate different learning needs and styles’ (DoE 2001, 20). It is therefore important to expand the number of available assessment accommodations to accommodate individual needs as well as allowing flexibility across the education system to support all learners with executive function, communication difficulties and sensory needs, as proposed by universal design for both assessment and day-to-day teaching and learning.

Inclusive education frameworks around the world have called for universal design for learning and assessment (Capp 2020; Dolan and Hall 2001), but as yet there has been limited change in assessment practices (O’Neill and Padden 2021). Universal design elements prioritized by respondents in this study included: ‘all directions and prompts in simplified language;’ ‘redundancy (questions presented auditorily and in written form)’ and ‘all questions starting on a new page’. These accommodations are not currently available within South African policy (DBE 2014b), except redundancy which is offered to learners with specific learning disabilities related to reading and writing. Respondents also called for pre-assessment accommodations as a specific training approved by provincial or district education offices to be provided as a matter of course. This can be included

as an element of universal design as it may benefit all learners and offers flexibility from the planning stage and not a later adaptation. It also shows the need for strengthening the education system to support autistic learners (Pillay et al. 2022), as materials should be available for teachers to use in support of learners with barriers to learning, including autistic learners.

The pre-assessment training suggestions recommended by the respondents in this study correlate with that proposed in earlier research (Simpson, Griswold and Smith Myles, 1999) to support autistic learners in preparation for assessment and assists to reduce anxiety and support executive functioning (Songlee et al. 2008; Tamm et al. 2020; Tyrell and Woods 2018). Respondent perspectives aligned with current literature with regard to provision of study guides, teaching test-taking strategies and information about the assessment (Songlee, et al., 2008; Tyrell and Woods, 2018). As a caveat to this, one of the autistic respondents gave deeper insight into the unique needs of autistic learners that may not be understood by non-autistic persons:

‘The reason why I didn't mark the first one [Information about examinations, why they are important as well as provision of motivation in preparation for examinations] was because I thought that people may mess it up, by providing information which is logical to THEM, but which is illogical to an autistic person; and in the end it just leads to gaslighting...’

This comment underpins the need for collaboration when developing material to strengthen the education system, as proposed by Pillay et al. (2022).

There were not many significant differences in the perspectives across the various stakeholder groups. One significant difference was noted between psychologists and caregivers regarding the use of specialised settings. Caregivers may not value the need for specialised settings as highly, as they already adapt their environments for autistic learners in their care and are therefore less aware of the impact of the environment. It has previously been reported that there are different strategies, including sensory adjustment strategies, that parents employ instinctively to support participation in activities of daily living in the home and the community (Schiavone et al. 2018) Alternatively, as caregivers frequently have limited access to classroom settings, caregivers may be unaware of the barriers within a classroom.

Autistic adults and caregivers selected the use of an encourager/motivator significantly more times than OTs. Although no further evidence in this regard could be found in the literature, it is possible that the lived experiences of those impacted by autism points to the value of external motivation, particularly for scholastic assessment tasks.

Psychologists selected ‘no two exams on one day’ significantly more times than OTs. The role of education psychologists is to assist learners to succeed academically, socially, behaviourally

and emotionally (Kellems et al. 2016). Psychologists may therefore have a better understanding of the emotional and behavioural aspects that two assessments on one day could cause; possibly even more so than OTs whose primary role revolves around enhancing ability of individuals to engage in activities that they want to, need to or are expected to do (WFOT, 2012).

This South African study has demonstrated that there is a need for collaboration and training on assessment accommodations across the education system and for relevant stakeholders, to allow for adequate support of autistic learners. Further, additional accommodations are needed to manage barriers to assessment experienced autistic learners. This should include the development of pre-assessment accommodations programmes. Implementation of policy should evolve over time and research findings, such as this study, should inform policy and practice (Lazarus et al. 2009). The different stakeholder perspectives on assessment accommodations for autistic learners help identify needs and priorities for support (Saggers et al. 2019; Wood and Happé 2020).

### **Strengths, limitations, and opportunities for further research**

The strength of this study was that it incorporated perspectives from a range of stakeholders. This type of participatory research is valued as it can lead to contextually appropriate suggestions for easy translation of research into policy and practice thereby maximising success (Pellicano 2020; Pillay et al. 2022; Saggers et al. 2019). The study findings can be used to motivate for assessment policy evolution in line with Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) and the SIAS policy (DBE, 2014a) in support of autistic learners in assessment.

Respondents were predominately from urban settings in South Africa and were English and Afrikaans first language speakers. This was found to be a limitation in this study. Perspectives from stakeholders from varied geographic settings, languages, cultures, and socio-economic settings are needed to gather a comprehensive view.

Future research should consider the effectiveness and differential benefits of the suggested accommodations for autistic learners, leading to evidence-based practice. Additionally, the needs of educators in providing support and accommodations for autistic learners in both day-to-day teaching-and-learning tasks and assessment, should be explored. Further opportunities lie in the development of universal design strategies of benefit to autistic learners in curriculum and assessment.

### **Conclusion**

Results from this South African study provided insight from stakeholder practice to inform and

motivate for policy evolution. Currently, it appears that assessment accommodations policy is not well translated into practice within South Africa. There is therefore a need for awareness campaigns, collaboration and training in terms of the available assessment accommodations to support autistic learners during assessment. The results also support the need for expanding the offering of assessment accommodations for autistic learners. This would underpin the move from deficit-driven accommodations towards social-inclusion and neurodiversity (Happé and Frith, 2020; Sarrett, 2018), which can be facilitated through universal design principles. The spectrum of characteristics unique to autistic learners can be used to build universal design for assessment accommodations. Changes to policy and practice are necessary to support the needs of the growing number of autistic learners in South African schools, and indeed all learners with communication, sensory and executive function difficulties.

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## CHAPTER 4: IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

*The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the most relevant results of the study and to discuss the implications of the findings. More extensive discussion of the results than was allowed in the article is presented. Strengths and limitations of the study are brought to light and recommendations for future research are made. Final conclusions regarding the study are drawn.*

### 4.1 Summary of main findings

The findings of this study contribute to the body of research on supporting autistic learners in inclusive manners, particularly in assessment. The study revealed that stakeholders serving the population are unaware of the DBE policies guiding the support of learners with barriers, and particularly autistic learners during assessment.

Respondents recommended an expanded number of assessment accommodations that can be specifically selected to support autistic learners, including traditional supports of an academic focus as well as supports for executive function, sensory needs, and anxiety. The suggested assessment accommodations by the respondents for autistic learners included: the provision of specialised settings (low arousal settings with special lighting and acoustics); the use of noise buffers/headphones; directions and prompts in simplified language, redundancy (question presented both in written form and auditorily); use of a familiar invigilator/administrator; no two examinations on the same day; all questions starting on a new page; as well as simplified language (where questions can be restated with more appropriate vocabulary or a definition of vocabulary is provided).

Respondents further indicated a need for programmes to support learners in preparation for assessments. It was suggested that there should be a specific training programme approved by Provincial or District education departments that educators can routinely use to prepare autistic learners for assessment. The suggested content of such programmes included the teaching of techniques to manage examination anxiety; the teaching of test-taking strategies; pictures of examination invigilators/administrators; information about

examinations, why they are important, and the provision of motivation in preparation for examinations; as well as a study guide with practice questions.

#### **4.2 Implications for Policy Development and Practice**

Lack of knowledge by stakeholders regarding the assessment accommodations policies in South Africa as identified in the current study is concerning as autistic learners may be enrolled in schools where staff do not have sufficient knowledge of assessment accommodations to support them. Similarly, stakeholders without knowledge of policies can neither lobby for translation of policy to practice nor advocate for change to existing policies in education. Without adequate knowledge and with an increase in the number of autistic learners enrolled within an inclusive education system (Pillay et al., 2022), school staff may find it difficult to select specific assessment accommodations. This supports the notion previously presented by researchers that collaboration and training between stakeholders and the provincial/district education department is fundamental for successful implementation of support for autistic learners thereby strengthening the education system (Pillay et al., 2022; Nel et al., 2016; Wium & Louw, 2013).

In a strengthened education system, it is envisaged that educators and other support staff will be well informed about the needs of autistic learners and the supports available to them. While educators are not sufficiently informed to make decisions on appropriate assessment accommodations it would be difficult for the DBE to expand the number of assessment accommodations available, as suggested by the respondents of the study. Without adequate training to understand the needs of autistic learners, and the accommodations that support those needs, educators may resort to selecting all accommodation options available for approval by the District and Provincial Assessment Accommodations Committees. Selecting all options, rather than selecting only what is needed to overcome specific barriers experienced during assessment would result in “overaccommodation” or the use of unbeneficial accommodations (Lai & Berkley, 2012).

In practice, educators frequently take guidance from allied health professionals. Allied health professionals can identify needs within their specific scope of practice but may not be experienced in differentiating specific needs within the classroom and during assessment (Hosterman et al., 2019). Research has shown that educators and allied health

professionals may have different perspectives, possibly due to the wide range of learners that allied health professionals manage versus the specific difficulties in a classroom noted by educators (Saggers, et al., 2019; Hosterman et al., 2019). Different perspectives reinforces the need for collaboration in decision-making. Accommodations should be selected specifically and intentionally to overcome barriers to assessment. Specific selection of accommodations is realistic when stakeholders understand the purpose of assessment accommodations fully, as well as the individual autistic learner's specific difficulties in assessment.

During assessment, difficulties in language experienced by autistic learners may interfere with equitable assessment. Findings from this study concur, with high numbers of responses for accommodations offering redundancy and language supports. It is therefore imperative that the DBE considers language and vocabulary use in the formulation of questions for the National Senior Certificate exams and instruct provinces and districts to do the same for all levels of examination papers. Using simplified vocabulary and plainly worded questions gives language support as a pre-designed support, also known as universal design. Not only will these pre-designed supports in questions support autistic learners, but also other learners with language difficulties, including those with specific learning disabilities and those who are learning in a second language. This is especially important to consider for South Africa, where English is the medium of instruction and assessment in the majority of schools, while the majority of learners are African language speakers (du Plessis & Letshwane, 2020; Probyn, 2019). Universally designed assessments support the needs of the diverse learner populations in present-day classrooms by considering the student characteristics in the conceptualisation, creation and implementation of the assessment task (Ketterlin-Geller, 2007).

Universal design can also be used in the preparation of learners for assessment. Through proactive planning, programmes that support learner preparedness to complete assessments can be designed for all learners to the greatest extent possible reducing the need to make adjustments *post facto* (Capp, 2020). It is recommended that such a programme can be designed through stakeholder partnership, which Provincial education departments can make available for educators to routinely use. Stakeholder partnership, as recommended by Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), will ensure that perspectives of autistic adults are considered, as respondents in this study revealed deeper insight into the needs of autistic persons that may not be understood by non-autistic persons. Stakeholder

partnerships are acknowledged as a means to strengthen the education system (Pillay et al., 2022) and are regarded as valuable in research and support of autistic persons (Pickard et al., 2022). Respondents in this study indicated that training programmes to prepare autistic learners for assessment should include: “how to manage examination anxiety”; “teaching of test-taking skills” and “provision of pictures of examination invigilators/administrators”, “information about examinations, why they are important and the provision of motivation in preparation for examinations”, as well as a “study guide with practice questions”.

Change to universal design in assessment appears to be protracted and therefore accommodations will continue to be beneficial in supporting learners in assessment (O’Neill & Padden, 2021; Lazarus et al., 2009). This South African study has demonstrated the need for a wider offering of assessment accommodations for autistic learners to support them during assessment. This is congruous with the vision of Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) which acknowledges that there are many aspects that can lead to barriers to learning and assessment. The implication of Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) would be that accommodations should not only support the academic aspects but also the non-academic aspects, such as those needs arising from anxiety, sensory defensiveness, and executive functioning.

Implementation of policy should evolve over time and research findings, such as this study, should inform policy and practice (Lazarus et al., 2009; Pillay et al., 2022). The collective voice of stakeholders for autistic learners in education helps to identify needs and prioritise support in education (Pickard et al., 2022; Saggars et al., 2019; Wood & Happé, 2020).

### **4.3 Strengths, limitations, and opportunities for further research**

The strength of this study was that it incorporated perspectives from a range of stakeholders. It describes the use and application of assessment practices of and by autistic persons and their allies. This is an emerging field in autism research and is considered best practice as study findings can have a direct impact on the lives of persons participating in the study (Parsons et al., 2020; Pellicano, 2020; Pickard et al., 2022). Findings from this study can be used to motivate for assessment policy evolution in line with Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) and the SIAS policy (DBE, 2014a).

A resource poor country such as South Africa experiences significant challenges in inclusive

education and support for autistic learners (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Erasmus, et al., 2019b; Nel et al., 2016; Pillay, 2022). It has been reported that approximately 90% of autistic persons live in low to middle income countries (LMIC), and yet most of our knowledge about the condition is from high-income countries (de Vries, 2016). A strength of this study therefore, is that this study considers perspectives of stakeholders for autistic education from within South Africa.

Limitations were found in that few participants were situated in rural areas. It is acknowledged that research needs to broaden data collection to underserved regions (Grinker et al., 2012). Previous research in South Africa has reflected on the disproportionate representation of autistic learners in terms of ethnicity and language when compared to the population demographics of the country (Pillay et al., 2022). This could possibly explain why the findings from this study showed the respondent demographics as it did.

The findings of this study made recommendations for additional assessment accommodations. The effectiveness and reliability of these accommodations has not been established. Autistic learners should not gain unfair advantage from their accommodations (Lazarus et al., 2009). Hence there is an opportunity for further research to study the effectiveness and differential benefits of the accommodations recommended by respondents in this study.

Further research should also investigate educators' needs regarding the provision of support and accommodations for autistic learners in both day-to-day teaching-and-learning tasks as well as in assessment. This study established that there is a lack of knowledge of education policies across stakeholder groups. Research has found that educators find implementation of inclusive education practices overwhelming (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). Likewise, barriers related to autism have been found to be particularly difficult to manage within the inclusive education system (Erasmus et al., 2019a; Waddington & Reed, 2017; Witmer & Ferreri, 2014). It is therefore important to consider educators' needs in terms of training, resources, and support, thereby encompassing participatory research practices of educators to bring about positive change in the field of autism education.

There is opportunity to investigate and develop universal design in curricula and assessment. It has been suggested that curricula and assessment should be developed with autism in mind as it could benefit all learners with communication, sensory, executive

function difficulties (Sarrett, 2018). Language supports embedded into the curriculum and assessment could have a positive impact on the outcomes for autistic as well as second-language learners in the multilingual society of South Africa. This warrants special investigation.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

Results from this South African study provided insight into stakeholder perspectives on assessment accommodations for autistic learners, which can be used to inform and motivate policy evolution. Currently, it appears that the assessment accommodations policy in South Africa is not well translated into practice as most participants were unaware of the policy regarding assessment accommodations available to autistic learners. Hence there is need for collaboration and training between stakeholders and awareness campaigns regarding accommodations to support autistic learners during assessment. It was recommended that the assessment accommodations offering for autistic learners be expanded, allowing educators and other stakeholders opportunities to select accommodations that cater to the diversity of challenges that autistic learners experience. This would support the move from deficit-driven accommodations towards social-inclusion and neurodiversity, which can be further facilitated through universal design principals. Changes to policy and practice are necessary to support the needs of the growing number of autistic learners within South African Schools and indeed all learners with communication, sensory and executive function difficulties, thereby strengthening the inclusive education system in-line with Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001)

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## **APPENDIX A:**

### **A.1 Available Accommodation Options as per the Department of Basic Education, at the discretion of the Provincial Assessment Accommodations Committee**

Excerpt from Annexure C1 of the "National policy pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the national senior certificate examination" (DBE, 2014).

Differentiation strategy or accommodations	Visual impairment/ Colour blindness	Deaf/ Hard of hearing/ Deaf blind	Physical barriers	Learning difficulty	Behaviour, Anxiety, ADD/ ADHD/ Autism/ Psycho-social disorders	Limited functional speech	Other medical conditions
Adaptation of questions	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Additional time	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Digital player/Recorder	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Braille	✓						
Computer/Voice to text/Text to voice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enlarged print	✓		✓				
Handwriting	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Medication/food intake	✓		✓				✓
Oral examination	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Personal assistant			✓				✓
Prompter				✓	✓		
Reader	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Rest breaks	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Scribe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Separate venue	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sign language interpreter		✓					
Spelling		✓		✓		✓	
Transcription of braille	✓						
Video/DVD recorder/Webcam		✓				✓	

## **A.2 Glossary of Terms related to Annexure C1 of the “National policy pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the National Senior Certificate examinations (DBE, 2014b)**

### **Additional Time**

Additional time is granted as x mins per hour. An amount up to 20 minutes can be given for perusal/formulating/writing and checking answers. Used for slow work speed due to processing, reading and writing difficulties, physical difficulties and those finding it difficult to maintain concentration.

### **Digital Player / Recorder**

Can be used to present the question paper auditorily. It serves the same purpose as a reader

### **Computer/voice to text/text to voice**

Computer use is recommended for learners with physical disabilities or severe handwriting difficulties. The use of a computer including voice to text and text to voice software, however, can be used to present and respond to the question paper. Similar to a reader-scribe.

### **Handwriting**

A sticker is placed on the answer sheet alerting examiners that the candidate may not be penalized due to untidy handwriting (only applies to NCS papers).

### **Oral Examination**

This has not been clearly defined. Whether it relates to exemption from oral examinations or whether it refers to oral examination as opposed to a written examination (i.e., takes the place of an examination with a scribe).

### **Prompter**

The purpose of a prompter is to encourage the learner to complete the paper and keep his attention to the task at hand. The prompter may use a verbal cue (“Focus on your work”) or a physical cue (tap on the shoulder/desk). The prompter may not communicate with the learner other than that outlined.

### **Reader**

An authorised person reads the questions to the learner.

### **Scribe**

The scribe writes down the learner’s responses verbatim. A scribe is used for learners who cannot produce written communication by another means.

## **Separate Venue**

Change of location. This will be required for learners who have a reader/scribe, reading to a small group, prompter, rephrasing, severe anxiety, are easily distracted or may distract others, or any other reason that prohibits a learner to do the test/examination in a group setting.

## APPENDIX B: Ethics Clearance Certificate



### Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotho



8 October 2020

Dear Mrs Y Nell

**Project Title:** Perspectives of key stakeholders in assessment accommodations for learners with autism Spectrum Disorder (grades 4-12)  
**Researcher:** Mrs Y Nell  
**Supervisor(s):** Prof AM Kritzinger  
Ms R Eccles  
**Department:** Speech Language Path and Aud  
**Reference number:** 97141284 (HUM022/0720)  
**Degree:** Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was approved by the Research Ethics Committee on 1 October 2020. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,

**Prof Innocent Pikirayi**  
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Studies and Research Ethics  
Faculty of Humanities  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
e-mail: PGHumanities@up.ac.za

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotho

**Research Ethics Committee Members:** Prof I Pikirayi (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Mr A. Biso; Dr A M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Ms KT Gwinder; Andrew; Dr P. Gubisa; Dr T Johnson; Prof P Mame; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Ncube; Dr C. Buthe; Prof D. Bevan; Prof M. Suet; Prof E. Tsebe; Prof V. Tsebe; Ms B. Tsebe; Ms D. Mkhabela

## **APPENDIX C: Potential Places to Recruit Participants**

### **Organizations without a Facebook™ presence**

Inclusive Education South Africa

SAACAPAP – South African Adolescent and Child Psychiatry and Allied Professions

### **Organizations without a Facebook™ presence**

A;SA – Autism South Africa

INSTOPP – Institute for Occupational Therapists in Private Practice

OTASA – Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa

PsySSA – Psychology Society of South Africa

SAALED – South African Association for Learners with Education Difficulties

SASLHA – South African Speech-Language-Hearing Association

### **Facebook™ Groups**

Aspergers Parent Support Group Durbanville

Autism Eastern Cape

Autism Western Cape

Autism Support Group South Africa

Children with Disabilities of South Africa

Institute of Specialist Practitioners in Inclusive Education

LSEN Teachers South Africa

Makaton South Africa

Neurodiversity Centre

Psychologists in South Africa

South African Audiologists and Speech-Language Therapists

South African Teachers

Special Needs Kids South Africa

STs, PTs, OTs, DTs and Audios

Teachers for Real Change South Africa

Teaching Posts in South Africa (Teachers' Forum)

The Autism Awareness Network

Two Proudly South African Teachers

## APPENDIX D

### Permission letters from organisations having a Facebook page and Facebook group pages

#### D.1



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Letapho la Bontzho

Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology



**THE ADMINISTRATOR**  
**Autism South Africa**

20 June 2020

To Whom it May Concern

**PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE 4-12)**

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask permission to post a link to the web-based questionnaire on your Facebook™ group, Autism South Africa.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher

**Mrs R. Eccles**  
Supervisor

**Prof. A. Kritzing**  
Co-supervisor

**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

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e-mail: info@autismsouthafrica.org  
web page : www.autismsouthafrica.org

24 August 2020

To Whom It May Concern

**Provisional permission for research proposed by Ms Yvonne Nell**

Autism South Africa is willing to grant Ms Nell conditional permission to use the Autism SA database to recruit research participants, pending the following two conditions:

- Autism SA must receive the ethical clearance letter from the University of Pretoria for this study; and
- the questionnaire meets the approval of Autism SA.

Ms Nell plans to conduct a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of autistic learners and autistic adults) on assessment accommodation for autistic learners. (Ms Nell's letter should reflect identity first language - autistic adult.)

Ms Nell will use a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. The invitation will be emailed to Autism SA's network to allow any interested person to voluntarily contact the researcher directly and/or to complete the online questionnaire by following the link in the letter. It is understood that participation is strictly voluntary, and participants may withdraw from the research at any stage. This is letter of permission is conditional upon Autism South Africa receiving a letter from the university stating that the researcher has full ethical clearance and secondly, the questionnaire meets the approval of Autism SA.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Carter', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Mrs J B Carter  
National Director

NPO: 000-454 Section 18A and PBO Ref No: 130002213  
Level 4 B-BBEE Contributor



**Yvonne Nell**

---

**From:** Anne Friedrichs <aspieparentsdubanville@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 9, 2020 1:22 PM  
**To:** Yvonne Nell  
**Subject:** Re: Permission to post link to research questionnaire on FB page

Dear Yvonne

You may post the link. I will complete the form for you.

Regards  
Anne Friedrichs

On Thu, 09 Jul 2020, 8:56 am Yvonne Nell <[Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za)> wrote:

Please find attached letter for your kind attention.

*Yvonne Nell*

**B.Communication Pathology (Pret.)**

**Education Therapist Specialist**

**Speech-Language Therapist and Educational Audiologist**

**STA0019704**

**0832739011**

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### D.3



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Faculty of Humanities

Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology



THE ADMINISTRATOR  
Autism Eastern Cape

20 June 2020

To Whom it May Concern

PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR  
LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE 4-12)

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask permission to post a link to the web-based questionnaire on your Facebook™ group, Autism Eastern Cape.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher

**Mrs R. Eccles**  
Supervisor

**Prof. A. Kritzinger**  
Co-supervisor

**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Room 3-4, Communication Pathology Building  
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20  
Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel +27 (0)12 420 2854  
Email [reneita.nesoca@up.ac.za](mailto:reneita.nesoca@up.ac.za) | [www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities](http://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities)

#### REPLY SLIP

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (full name) hereby give permission to Mrs. Yvonne Nell to post an electronic link to a web-based questionnaire in the Facebook group \_\_\_\_\_ (name of group) for the purposes of data collection for a Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Designation \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**AUTISM EASTERN CAPE**

P.O. Box 13276, Humewood, Port Elizabeth  
247 Main Road, Walmer, Port Elizabeth  
Telephone Number: 060 375 2653  
Website: [www.autismec.com](http://www.autismec.com) e-mail: [info@autismec.co.za](mailto:info@autismec.co.za)  
NPO NO: 053-329/PBO NO: 930 040 197

*Get behind it, shed light on it!*

31 July 2020

Dear Mrs Nell,

**RE: REQUEST TO POST LINK TO RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON  
AUTISM EASTERN CAPE FACEBOOK PAGE**

Thank you for your request to post a link on the Facebook page of Autism Eastern Cape. We welcome this, as we are grateful for any research and/or information that will help to support people with Autism Spectrum Disorders, their families, caregivers and educators.

We would like to wish you the best success with your research project and look forward to the outcome.

Once more, we are in agreement for you to post a link on our Facebook page, and we hope your research project is successful and fulfilling.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Jorritsma: Chairperson and Educational Consultant of  
Autism Eastern Cape

D.4



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Letapho la Bontsho

Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology



THE ADMINISTRATOR  
Autism Western Cape

20 June 2020

To Whom it May Concern

**PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR  
LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE 4-12)**

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask permission to post a link to the web-based questionnaire on your Facebook™ group, **Autism Western Cape**.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher

**Mrs R. Eccles**  
Supervisor

**Prof. A. Kritzing**  
Co-supervisor

**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Room 3-4, Communication Pathology Building  
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20  
Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel: +27 (0)12 420 2854  
Email: [Remata.mosca@up.ac.za](mailto:Remata.mosca@up.ac.za) | [www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities](http://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities)

**REPLY SLIP**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (full name) hereby give permission to Mrs. Yvonne Nell to post an electronic link to a web-based questionnaire in the Facebook group \_\_\_\_\_ (name of group) for the purposes of data collection for a Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Designation \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Yvonne Nell**

---

From: Zaida - Autism Western Cape <zaida@awc.org.za>  
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2020 2:46 PM  
To: Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za>; Admin - Autism Western Cape <admin@awc.org.za>  
Cc: Nicole Rudlin <nicoleemilyrudlin@gmail.com>  
Subject: RE: REQUEST TO POST LINK TO RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON AWC FACEBOOK PAGE

Dear Yvonne

This email serves as permission to post the link to the questionnaire.  
You may send the link to the media liaison officer, who for purposes of this organisation will be Nicole Rudlin.

Regards,

*Zaida Frank-Ebrahim*  
Outreach & Education Manager  
Registered Counsellor: PRC 0033936



e [zaida@awc.org.za](mailto:zaida@awc.org.za) | m +27 (0)67 770 6071  
2nd Floor, The Armoury, Buchanan Square, 160 Sir Lowry Road, Woodstock, 7925  
<http://www.awc.org.za>



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**Yvonne Nell**

---

**Sent:** Thursday, August 13, 2020 2:14 PM  
**Subject:** FW: REQUEST TO POST LINK TO RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE ISPIE FACEBOOK PAGE

---

From: Kalie Naidoo <Kalie.Naidoo@bellavistaschool.co.za>  
Sent: Monday, August 3, 2020 11:59 AM  
To: Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za>  
Cc: Debbie <info@ispie.org.za>  
Subject: Re: REQUEST TO POST LINK TO RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE ISPIE FACEBOOK PAGE

Dear Yvonne,  
We would be happy to post your questionnaire once you have obtained UP ethical clearance.  
Our administrator would do so, when you send the link.

Please note ISPIE is managed by volunteers, many of whom are teachers and presently on vacation until the end of August.

Kind Regards,

---

From: Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za>  
Date: Wednesday, 29 July 2020 at 14:15  
To: "info@ispie.org.za" <info@ispie.org.za>  
Subject: REQUEST TO POST LINK TO RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE ISPIE FACEBOOK PAGE

Kindly consider the attached request.

Kind regards

*Yvonne Nell*

B.Communication Pathology (Pret.)  
Education Therapist Specialist  
Speech-Language Therapist and Educational Audiologist  
STA0019704

0832739011

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**Yvonne Nell**

**Subject:** FW: permission to post a link to a questionnaire on FB page

---

From: Instopp Chairperson <instopp@otasa.org.za>  
Sent: Tuesday, July 14, 2020 6:46 AM  
To: Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za>; 'Herculene van Staden' <herculene@workrehab.co.za>  
Subject: Re: permission to post a link to a questionnaire on FB page

Dear Yvonne,

we grant you permission to post a link to your questionnaire on the INSTOPP Facebook page.

Kind regards

---



**Haneke Jonas**

**INSTOPP Chairperson and Representative to EXCO**

Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTASA)

e: [instopp@otasa.org.za](mailto:instopp@otasa.org.za)

p: +27 12 362 5457 / Fax 086 651 5438

a: 1A Hatfield Bridge Office Park, 213 Richard Street, Hatfield, Pretoria, 0028

w: [www.otasa.org.za](http://www.otasa.org.za)

On 2020-07-09 08:44, Yvonne Nell wrote:

Please find attached letter for your kind attention.

*Yvonne Nell*

**B. Communication Pathology (Pret.)**

Education Therapist Specialist

Speech-Language Therapist and Educational Audiologist

STA0019704

D.7



Faculty of Humanities

Tekollet Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefaphu la Bomothe

Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology



THE ADMINISTRATOR  
LSEN Teachers South Africa

20 June 2020

To Whom it May Concern

PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR  
LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE 4-12)

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask permission to post a link to the web-based questionnaire on your Facebook™ group, LSEN Teachers South Africa.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

Yvonne Nell  
Researcher

Mrs R. Eccles  
Supervisor

Prof. A. Kritzinger  
Co-supervisor

Prof. J. van der Linde  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Room 3-4, Communication Pathology Building  
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Tel +27 (0)12 420 2854  
Email [remata.mosca@up.ac.za](mailto:remata.mosca@up.ac.za) | [www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities](http://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities)

**REPLY SLIP**

I, Mariette du Plessis (full name) hereby give permission to Mrs. Yvonne Nell to post an electronic link to a web-based questionnaire in the Facebook group LSEN Teachers SA (name of group) for the purposes of data collection for a Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria.

Signature

Administrator

Designation

30/07/2020

Date

## D.8



### Faculty of Humanities

Fakulta 1 Geesteswetenskappe  
Umfapho le Bumanthe

Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology



**THE ADMINISTRATOR**  
**Makaton South Africa**

20 June 2020

To Whom it May Concern

**PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR  
LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE 4-12)**

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD.

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask permission to post a link to the web-based questionnaire on your Facebook™ group, **Makaton South Africa**.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher

**Mrs R. Eccles**  
Supervisor

**Prof. A. Kritzinger**  
Co-supervisor

**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Room 3-4, Communication Pathology Building  
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20  
Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel +27 (0)12 420 2554  
Email: [Renata.mosca@up.ac.za](mailto:Renata.mosca@up.ac.za) | [www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities](http://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities)

**Yvonne Nell**

---

**Subject:** FW: PERMISSION TO POST LINK TO RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON FACEBOOK PAGE

---

From: administrator makaton <admin@makaton.co.za>  
Sent: Friday, July 10, 2020 1:41 PM  
To: Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za>  
Cc: Amanda Mellor <amandam@makaton.co.za>  
Subject: Re: PERMISSION TO POST LINK TO RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON FACEBOOK PAGE

Hi Yvonne

I have cleared it with members of our NEC.

You are welcome to post a link to your research questionnaire on our Makaton Facebook page.

Please send your post information to Amanda Mellor, our Secretary and Facebook administrator when you are ready.

[amandam@makaton.co.za](mailto:amandam@makaton.co.za)

Regards  
Marina

On Thu, Jul 9, 2020 at 7:29 PM Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za> wrote:

Thank you for your consideration to do that.  
I appreciate it

Regards  
Yvonne

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

---

From: administrator makaton <admin@makaton.co.za>  
Sent: Thursday, July 9, 2020 7:27:23 PM  
To: Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za>  
Subject: Re: PERMISSION TO POST LINK TO RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON FACEBOOK PAGE

Hi Yvonne

I have forwarded your request to our National Executive Committee and will get back to you asap.

All the best for your research.

Regards  
Marina

On Thu, Jul 9, 2020 at 9:26 AM Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za> wrote:

Please find attached letter for your kind attention.  
Your consideration of this request will be appreciated.

## D.9



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomatohe

Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology



**THE ADMINISTRATOR**  
**Neurodiversity Centre**

20 June 2020

To Whom it May Concern

**PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR  
LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE 4-12)**

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD.

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask permission to post a link to the web-based questionnaire on your Facebook™ group, Neurodiversity Centre.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher

**Mrs R. Eccles**  
Supervisor

**Prof. A. Kritzing**  
Co-supervisor

**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Room 3-4, Communication Pathology Building  
University of Pretoria, Private Bag 200  
Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel: +27 (0)12 420 2814  
Email: [beneta.mossa@up.ac.za](mailto:beneta.mossa@up.ac.za) | [www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities](http://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities)

**REPLY SLIP**

I, Cornel Claassen (full name) hereby give permission to Mrs. Yvonne Nell to post an electronic link to a web-based questionnaire in the Facebook group Neurodiversity Centre (name of group) for the purposes of data collection for a **Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria.**

	Director	02.09.2020
<b>Signature</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Date</b>

## D.10



Faculty of Humanities

Fakultie 1: Geesteswetenskappe  
Letefakultie: Bonekultie

Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology



THE ADMINISTRATOR  
Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTASA)

20 June 2020

To Whom it May Concern

**PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE 4-12)**

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD.

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask permission to post a link to the web-based questionnaire on your Facebook™ group, OTASA.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher

  
**Mrs R. Eccles**  
Supervisor  
**Prof. A. Kritzinger**  
Co-supervisor  
**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

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Tel: +27 (0)12 428 2854  
Email: [Renata.mosca@up.ac.za](mailto:Renata.mosca@up.ac.za) | [www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities](http://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities)

### REPLY SLIP

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (full name) hereby give permission to Mrs. Yvonne Nell to post an electronic link to a web-based questionnaire in the Facebook group \_\_\_\_\_ (name of group) for the purposes of data collection for a Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria.

Signature	Designation	Date
-----------	-------------	------

**Yvonne Nell**

---

Sent: Tuesday, July 14, 2020 1:45 PM  
Subject: FW: Permission to post link to a research questionnaire on FB page

---

From: o'toffice@uitweb.co.za <o'toffice@uitweb.co.za>  
Sent: Saturday, July 11, 2020 12:32 AM  
To: Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za>  
Subject: RE: Permission to post link to a research questionnaire on FB page

Hello Yvonne – I would happily distribute this for you to our members as soon as you have the clearance number

Would you be interested in email to members as well ?

Kindest Regards

*El-lerisa Mahomed*

Administrative Coordinator  
Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTASA)

WhatsApp : 0794527274

e: [officefn@uitweb.co.za](mailto:officefn@uitweb.co.za)

p: +27 12 362 5457 / Fax 086 651 5438

a: 1A Hatfield Bridge Office Park, 213 Richard Street, Hatfield, Pretoria, 0028

w: [www.otasa.org.za](http://www.otasa.org.za)

"Don't let a cruel word escape your mouth. There's no greater sin than breaking a heart."  
—Kamand Kojouri

---

From: Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za>  
Sent: Thursday, 09 July 2020 8:46 AM  
To: 'o'toffice@uitweb.co.za' <o'toffice@uitweb.co.za>  
Subject: Permission to post link to a research questionnaire on FB page

Please find attached letter for your kind attention.

*Yvonne Nell*

B. Communication Pathology (Pret.)  
Education Therapist Specialist  
Speech-Language Therapist and Educational Audiologist  
STA0019704

0832739011

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**Yvonne Nell**

---

**From:** Daniel De Freitas <defreitasdr@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 29, 2020 2:44 PM  
**To:** Yvonne Nell  
**Subject:** Re: REQUEST TO POST LINK TO RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON PSYCHOLOGISTS IN SOUTH AFRICA FB PAGE

Hi Yvonne,

Apologies - I have not been able to print the slip.

I can confirm via email that I will post the research on the Psychologists in South Africa Facebook group.

(Please excuse any Typos, I am responding on the move)

Warm regards,  
Daniel de Freitas

On 29 Jul 2020, at 13:06, Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za> wrote:

As per our discussion on Messenger for the group. Could you please provide confirmation via email?

*Yvonne Nell*

**B. Communication Pathology (Pret.)  
Education Therapist Specialist  
Speech-Language Therapist and Educational Audiologist  
STA0019704**

0832739011

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<Psychologists in South Africa.pdf>



**Yvonne Nell**

---

Subject: FW: Permission to post link to research questionnaire on FB page

---

From: shirley.gray@saaled.org.za <shirley.gray@saaled.org.za>  
Sent: Saturday, July 11, 2020 8:43 AM  
To: Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za>  
Cc: 'Fleur D' <fleur@iafrica.com>  
Subject: RE: Permission to post link to research questionnaire on FB page

Good morning Yvonne

Thank you for your mail. Please will you send me a copy of the questionnaire and the link and I will ask our communication consultant to post it onto our FB page.

Our FB page does not enjoy much traffic, but having viewed the questionnaire, I am sure we would be happy to post it. Obviously you would be responsible for all responses.

Kind Regards  
*Shirley Gray*  
Chairperson SAALED  
Email: [shirley.gray@saaled.org.za](mailto:shirley.gray@saaled.org.za)

NPO 013 - 241



---

From: Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za>  
Sent: Thursday, July 9, 2020 8:49 AM  
To: 'info@saaled.org.za' <[info@saaled.org.za](mailto:info@saaled.org.za)>  
Subject: Permission to post link to research questionnaire on FB page

Please find attached letter for your kind attention.

*Yvonne Nell*  
B. Communication Pathology (Pret.)  
Education Therapist Specialist

1

## D.13



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Letapha le Bomchitho



Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

**THE ADMINISTRATOR**  
**South African Speech-Language-Hearing Association (SASLHA)**

20 June 2020

To Whom it May Concern

**PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR  
LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE 4-12)**

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask permission to post a link to the web-based questionnaire on your Facebook™ group, SASLHA.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher

**Mrs R. Eccles**  
Supervisor

**Prof. A. Kritzing**  
Co-supervisor

**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Room 3-4, Communication Pathology Building  
University of Pretoria, Private Bag 320  
Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel +27 (0)12 430 2854  
Email [Renata.mosca@up.ac.za](mailto:Renata.mosca@up.ac.za) | [www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities](http://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities)



Local Tel : 0864 133 287  
Address : P. O. Box 1690 Umlaango Road  
4370  
Email : admin@saslha.co.za  
Web : www.saslha.co.za

---

15 July 2020

Email: [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za)

Dear Ms Nell

**Research: Perspectives of key stakeholders in assessment accommodation for learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders (Grade 4-12)**

This communication has reference to your request to use the South African Speech Language and Hearing Association (SASLHA) as a platform to recruit participants to participate for your research study. I wish to inform you that SASLHA, hereby has given permission to recruit participants through the membership database. The research has been explained to me and I understand what the participation will involve. The research committee is fully aware of your research process.

Kind regards

Ursula Zsilavec  
Past President

**REPLY SLIP**

I, Ursula Zsilaveq (full name) hereby give permission to Mrs. Yvonne Nell to post an electronic link to a web-based questionnaire in ~~the Facebook group~~ SASHA Members (name of group) for the purposes of data collection for a Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria.

<u>U Zsilaveq</u>	<u>Past President</u>	<u>15 June 2020</u>
Signature	Designation	Date
	<u>SASHA</u>	

D.14



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Letapha la Bonaetho

Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology



**THE ADMINISTRATOR**  
**South African Audiologists and Speech-Language Therapists**

20 June 2020

To Whom it May Concern

**PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR  
LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE 4-12)**

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask permission to post a link to the web-based questionnaire on your Facebook™ group, **South African Audiologists and Speech-Language Therapists**.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher

**Mrs R. Eccles**  
Supervisor

**Prof. A. Kritzing**  
Co-supervisor

**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Room 3-4, Communication Pathology Building  
University of Pretoria, Private Bag 320  
Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel +27 (0)12 420 3004  
Email [Remata.mosca@up.ac.za](mailto:Remata.mosca@up.ac.za) | [www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities](http://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities)

**REPLY SLIP**

I, <sup>KC</sup> Karyn Casey (full name) hereby give permission to Mrs. Yvonne Nell to post an electronic link to a web-based questionnaire in the Facebook group South African Audiologists and Speech-Language Therapists (name of group) for the purposes of data collection for a Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria.

 Signature	Page administrator Designation	16 July 2020 Date
--	-----------------------------------	----------------------



## D.16



### Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bontz'ha

Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology



#### THE ADMINISTRATOR STs, PTs, OTs, DTs and Audios

20 June 2020

To Whom it May Concern

#### PERSPPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE 4-12)

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD.

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask permission to post a link to the web-based questionnaire on your Facebook™ group, STs, PTs, OTs, DTs and Audios.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher

**Mrs R. Eccles**  
Supervisor


**Prof. A. Kritzinger**  
Co-supervisor

**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Room 3-4, Communication Pathology Building  
University of Pretoria, Private Bag 2020  
Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel +27 (0)12 430 2854  
Email [remata.mooce@up.ac.za](mailto:remata.mooce@up.ac.za) | [www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities](http://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities)

**REPLY SLIP**

I, SARAME GEERTSEMA (full name) hereby give permission to Mrs. Yvonne Nell to post an electronic link to a web-based questionnaire in the Facebook group ST's, PT's, DT's, DT's & <sup>Phd's</sup> (name of group) for the purposes of data collection for a Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria.

	Administrator	2020/08/28
Signature	Designation	Date

## D.17



### Faculty of Humanities

Fakultei Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapho la Bomchulo

Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology



#### THE ADMINISTRATOR Teacher's Posts in South Africa (Teacher's Forum)

20 June 2020

To Whom it May Concern

#### PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE 4-12)

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask permission to post a link to the web-based questionnaire on your Facebook™ group, Teacher's Posts in South Africa (Teacher's Forum).

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher

**Mrs R. Eccles**  
Supervisor

**Prof. A. Kritzinger**  
Co-supervisor

**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

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University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20  
Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel +27 (0)11 420 2854  
Email [Remata.mosca@up.ac.za](mailto:Remata.mosca@up.ac.za) | [www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities](http://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities)

#### REPLY SLIP

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (full name) hereby give permission to Mrs. Yvonne Nell to post an electronic link to a web-based questionnaire in the Facebook group \_\_\_\_\_ (name of group) for the purposes of data collection for a Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria.

Signature

Designation

Date

**Yvonne Nell**

---

**From:** Collins Matlala <ramogolotlou@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 13, 2020 4:17 PM  
**To:** Yvonne Nell  
**Subject:** Re: PERMISSION TO POST LINK TO RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON TEACHING POSTS IN SOUTH AFRICA - TEACHER'S FORUM FACEBOOK PAGE

Good afternoon Yvonne

You're welcome to post your link to your research questionnaire on our group.

Kind regards,  
Tiou

On Thu, 13 Aug 2020, 16:12 Yvonne Nell, <[Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za)> wrote:

Kindly find the attached for your attention

*Yvonne Nell*

**B.Communication Pathology (Pret)**

**Education Therapist Specialist**

**Speech-Language Therapist and Educational Audiologist**

**STA0019704**

**0832739011**

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**Yvonne Nell**

---

From: Andy Kieswetter <infot4rc@gmail.com>  
Sent: Saturday, July 18, 2020 10:50 AM  
To: Yvonne Nell  
Subject: Permission

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, ANDREW KIESWETTER, hereby grant Yvonne Nell permission to post a link to my Facebook group, Teachers for Real Change, to a web-based questionnaire for the purposes of data collection towards research in her master's studies.

The link follows below.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/educationbroken/>

Regards.

Andy Kieswetter  
(Founder of group Teachers for Real Change)



**Yvonne Nell**

---

**From:** Emile Gouws <mieliemeel93@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 18, 2020 11:53 PM  
**To:** Yvonne Nell  
**Subject:** Re: PERMISSION TO POST LINK TO RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE TO AUTISM AWARENESS NETWORK FACEBOOK PAGE

Hi

I spoke to my fellow admin and you have permission to proceed.

Thank you

Emile

On Thu, Aug 13, 2020 at 1:52 PM Yvonne Nell <[Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za)> wrote:  
Dear Mr Gouws

As per your request on FB messenger, I am forwarding you the request letter.  
I previously spoke to Mr Badenhorst, but I think he misunderstood that I want to post to the page so that the whole page community could potentially participate.

I appreciate your assistance in this matter.

Kind Regards

*Yvonne Nell*  
B.Communication Pathology (Pret.)  
Education Therapist Specialist  
Speech-Language Therapist and Educational Audiologist  
STA0019704

Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) assumes no liability for direct and/or indirect damages arising from the user's use of ECDoE's e-mail system and services. Users are solely responsible for the content they disseminate. ECDoE is not responsible for any third-party claim, demand, or damage arising out of use the ECDoE's e-mail systems or services

D.20



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
i-efapha la Rhoetho

Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology



THE ADMINISTRATOR  
Two Proudly South African Teachers

20 June 2020

To Whom it May Concern

**PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR  
LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE 4-12)**

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, caregivers of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask permission to post a link to the web-based questionnaire on your Facebook™ group, Two Proudly South African Teachers.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher

**Mrs R. Eccles**  
Supervisor

**Prof. A. Kritzinger**  
Co-supervisor

**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Room 3-4, Communication Pathology Building  
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Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel +27 (0)12 420 2814  
Email [reneia.mosca@up.ac.za](mailto:reneia.mosca@up.ac.za) | [www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities](http://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities)

**REPLY SLIP**

I, VICTORIA LAMB (full name) hereby give permission to Mrs. Yvonne Nell to post an electronic link to a web-based questionnaire in the Facebook group Two Proudly SA Teachers (name of group) for the purposes of data collection for a Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria.

Signature

Owner  
Designation

21/06/2020  
Date

## APPENDIX E:

### Permission letters from organizations without a Facebook presence

#### E.1



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
LeFaphela Bororo/lo



Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

The President  
SAACAPAP

20 July 2020

To Whom it May Concern

**PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT  
ACCOMMODATIONS FOR LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS  
(GRADE 4-12)**

I, Yvonne Nell, am a speech-language pathology Masters' student at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project to determine the perspectives of key stakeholders (psychologists, speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, educators, parents of learners with ASD and adults with ASD) on assessment accommodation for learners with ASD

I am using a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes to complete. Responses will be recorded anonymously. I would like to ask for your permission and assistance in disseminating the link to the questionnaire to members of your organisation.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Nell at [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za).

Kind Regards

**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher

**Mrs. R. Eccles**  
Supervisor

**Prof. A. Kritzinger**  
Co-supervisor

**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

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Tel +27 (0)12 420 2814  
Email [Renata.mosca@up.ac.za](mailto:Renata.mosca@up.ac.za) | [www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities](http://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities)

**REPLY SLIP**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (full name) hereby give permission to Mrs. Yvonne Neil to send an electronic link to a web-based questionnaire for distribution to the members of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of organization) for the purposes of data collection for a Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Designation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



SA-ACAPAP  
South African Association for Child and  
Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions  
kim@compartner.co.za  
[www.saacapap.org.za](http://www.saacapap.org.za)

3 September 2020

Attention: Ms Yvonne Neil

On behalf of the National Executive Committee of the South African Association for Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions, (SA-ACAPAP), I am happy to give permission to Mrs Yvonne Neil to send an electronic link to a web-based questionnaire for distribution to the members of SA-ACAPAP (South African Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions) for the purposes of data collection for a Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria.

The link will be sent to the SA-ACAPAP members through the administration office of SA-ACAPAP.

Yours sincerely

Prof Petrus J de Vries MBChB, FRCPsych, PhD  
President: SA-ACAPAP

## **APPENDIX F**

### Questionnaire

## PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GR 4-12)



**Faculty of Humanities**

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotheo



**STUDY TITLE: PERSPECTIVES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS ON ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (GRADE FOUR-12)**

**Principal Investigator:** Yvonne Nell (B Communication Pathology)  
**Supervisor:** Mrs. R Eccles (M Communication Pathology)  
Prof. A. Kritzinger (D.Phil)  
**Institution:** University of Pretoria  
**Daytime telephone number:** 0832739011

**DATE AND TIME OF INFORMED CONSENT DISCUSSION:**

<b>dd</b>	<b>month</b>	<b>year</b>

:
<b>Time</b>

## Dear Prospective Research Participant

### INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study, where you as a professional working with learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), or being part of the Autism Community will have the opportunity to add valuable perspectives on the use of assessment accommodations for learners with ASD (Grades 4-12).

I am doing this research as part of the requirements for a Master's Degree in Speech-Language Pathology at the University of Pretoria. The information in this document is provided to help you to decide if you would like to participate. Before you agree to take part in this study, you should fully understand what is involved. If you have any questions, which are not fully explained in this document, do not hesitate to ask the researcher. You should not agree to take part unless you are completely happy with the kind of questions that will be asked.

### THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

Learners with ASD frequently have difficulty during assessments, due to difficulties accessing the exam and expressing their knowledge. This study aims to understand the perspectives of key stakeholders with regard to assessment accommodations for learners with ASD (Grade 4-12).

### EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES AND WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED FROM PARTICIPANTS

This study involves answering questions regarding your perspectives on assessment accommodations for learners with ASD (Grade 4-12). Should you agree to participate, and indicate your consent by ticking the checkbox below, the questionnaire will launch. It will take approximately 20 minutes of your time to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consists of three parts:

The first part will include biographical information such as your involvement with learners with ASD (be it professional, a caregiver, or an adult with ASD), experience and home-language. The next part will investigate your perspectives on assessment accommodations for learners with ASD (Grades 4-12). Then you will be asked to make suggestions regarding assessment accommodations for learners with ASD (Grades 4-12).

### INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPANTS

General criteria for all participants:

- Over 18 years old
- English language proficient enough to read and understand basic English

Selection criteria for professionals (speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and educators) includes:

- At least 3 years experience with learners with ASD in either the intermediate (Grade 4 - 6), senior (Grade 7 - 9) or Further Education and Training (FET) phase (Grade 10 - 12) of education, OR
- At least 2 years' experience in the adjudication of assessment accommodations at either a District Education Office or Provincial Education Office.

Selection criteria for adults with ASD

- Should have completed school above Grade 4 level

Selection criteria for caregivers of learners with ASD

- Caregiver of an individual with ASD having completed Grade 4 or above

**RISK AND DISCOMFORT INVOLVED**

There are no risks involved for participants. However, should you feel any discomfort, you are welcome to stop and exit the questionnaire at any time.

**POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY**

This study aims to gain insight into key stakeholders' perspectives on assessment accommodations for learners with ASD (Grade four-12). Information from these perspectives may contribute to improving policy on assessment accommodations for learners and the acceptable practice of accommodations for learners with ASD.

**ETHICS APPROVAL**

Ethical clearance to conduct this research study was obtained from the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee, University of Pretoria. The study has been structured following the Declaration of Helsinki (last update: October 2013). A copy of the Declaration may be obtained from the investigator should you wish to review it.

**INFORMATION**

If you have any questions concerning this study, you may contact: Yvonne Nell, [yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:yvonne.nell@ecdoe.gov.za)

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

No identifying information will be requested from participants. As information is anonymous, participants will not be able to withdraw following the submission of the questionnaire. Adults with ASD are requested to provide contact details of a caregiver, to request further consent. Caregivers will be assigned an alphanumeric codes. All records from this study will be regarded as confidential. All results will be published or presented in such a way that it is not possible to identify the participants or their caregivers. All data collected will be securely stored at the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology for a period of 15 years, as per university regulations.

**COMPENSATION**

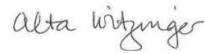
You will not be paid to take part in the study. There are no costs involved for you to be part of the study.



**Yvonne Nell**  
Researcher



\_\_\_\_\_  
**Mrs R. Eccles**  
Supervisor



\_\_\_\_\_  
**Prof. A. Kritzinger**  
Co-supervisor



\_\_\_\_\_  
**Prof. J. van der Linde**  
Head: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

---

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY**

- I confirm that the person requesting my consent to take part in this study, **Perspectives of key stakeholders on assessment accommodations for learners with autism spectrum disorders (Grade four-12)**, has told me about the nature and process, any risks or discomforts, and the benefits of the study.
- I have also received, read and understood the above-written information about the study.
- I have had adequate time to ask questions and I have no objections to participate in this study.
- I am aware that the information obtained in the study will be anonymously processed and presented in the reporting of results.
- I understand that I will not be penalised in any way should I wish to discontinue the study.
- I am participating willingly.
- I have received a signed copy of this informed consent agreement.

Please mark whether you give permission that the data collected may be used for future research.

Yes  No

Please mark whether you give consent to participate in this study

Yes  No

### Section 1: Consent

1. Kindly read through the consent form and provide feedback
  - I give my full consent as stipulated
  - I do not want to participate
2. Will you give permission for data collected to be used in future research?
  - Yes
  - No

### Section 2: Biographical details

3. Kindly indicate your involvement with ASD. *Check all applicable boxes*
  - Adult with ASD
  - Parent of a child with ASD
  - Educator
  - Psychologist
  - Speech-language therapist
  - Occupational therapist
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
4. I work with children with ASD
  - Yes
  - No (*Skip to question 8*)

### Section 3: Branching for persons working with persons with ASD

5. I work in the following environments. *Check all applicable boxes*
  - Not currently employed
  - Private Centre / School
  - Public Special School
  - Public Full-Service School
  - Public Ordinary School
  - Private Practice
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. I am a member of the following teams. *Check all applicable boxes*

- School Based Support Team (SBST)
- District Based Support Team (DBST)
- District Assessment Accommodations Committee
- Provincial Assessment Accommodations Committee
- NOT APPLICABLE
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your experience with ASD. *Check all applicable boxes*

- Young children (birth to 5 years)
- Foundation Phase (Grade R to Grade 3)
- Intermediate Phase (Grade 4 to Grade 6)
- Senior Phase (Grade 7 to Grade 9)
- Further Education and Training Phase (Grade 10 and 12)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. How many years of experience do you have working with the ASD population.

*Mark only one*

- <3 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-9 years
- >10 years

#### Section 4: Biographical Details continued

9. My home language is...

*Check all applicable boxes*

- Afrikaans
- English
- isiNdebele
- isiXhosa
- isiZulu
- Sepedi
- Sesotho
- Setswana
- siSwati
- Tshivenda
- Xitsonga
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

10. I work (reside if not currently working) in...

*Mark only one*

- Eastern Cape
- Free State
- Gauteng
- KwaZulu-Natal
- Limpopo
- Mpumalanga
- Northern Cape
- North West
- Western Cape
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 5: Assessment Accommodations from Department of Basic Education

11. With regard to the Department of Basic Education, are you aware of Annexure C1 of the “*National Policy Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination*” (DBE 2014)

Mark only one

- ◇ Yes
- ◇ No
- ◇ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Excerpt from Annexure C1 of the “*National Policy Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination*” (DBE, 2014). Available accommodation options as per the Department of Basic Education, at the discretion of the Provincial Assessment Accommodations Committee

Differentiation strategy or accommodations	Visual impairment/ Colour blindness	Deaf/ Hard of hearing/ Deaf blind	Physical barriers	Learning difficulty	Behaviour, Anxiety, ADD/ ADHD/ Autism/ Psycho-social disorders	Limited functional speech	Other medical conditions
Adaptation of questions	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Additional time	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Digital player/Recorder	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Braille	✓						
Computer/Voice to text/Text to voice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enlarged print	✓		✓				
Handwriting	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Medication/food intake	✓		✓				✓
Oral examination	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Personal assistant			✓				✓
Prompter				✓	✓		
Reader	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Rest breaks	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Scribe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Separate venue	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sign language interpreter		✓					
Spelling		✓		✓		✓	
Transcription of braille	✓						
Video/DVD recorder/Webcam		✓				✓	

## **Glossary of terms related to Annexure C1 of the “National policy pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the National Senior Certificate examinations” (DBE, 2014b)**

### **Additional Time**

Additional time is granted as x mins per hour. An amount up to 20 minutes can be given for perusal/formulating/writing and checking answers. Used for slow work speed due to processing, reading and writing difficulties, physical difficulties and those finding it difficult to maintain concentration.

### **Digital Player / Recorder**

Can be used to present the question paper auditorily. It serves the same purpose as a reader

### **Computer/voice to text/text to voice**

Computer use is recommended for learners with physical disabilities or severe handwriting difficulties. The use of a computer including voice to text and text to voice software, however, can be used to present and respond to the question paper. Similar to a reader-scribe.

### **Handwriting**

A sticker is placed on the answer sheet alerting examiners that the candidate may not be penalized due to untidy handwriting (only applies to NCS papers).

### **Oral Examination**

This has not been clearly defined. Whether it relates to exemption from oral examinations or whether it refers to oral examination as opposed to a written examination (i.e., takes the place of an examination with a scribe).

### **Prompter**

The purpose of a prompter is to encourage the learner to complete the paper and keep his attention to the task at hand. The prompter may use a verbal cue (“Focus on your work”) or a physical cue (tap on the shoulder/desk). The prompter may not communicate with the learner other than that outlined.

### **Reader**

An authorised person reads the questions to the learner.

### **Scribe**

The scribe writes down the learner’s responses verbatim. A scribe is used for learners who cannot produce written communication by another means.

### **Separate Venue**

Change of location. This will be required for learners who have a reader/scribe, reading to a small group, prompter, rephrasing, severe anxiety, are easily distracted or may distract others, or any other reason that prohibits a learner to do the test/examination in a group setting.

12. Consider the excerpt from Annexure C1 of the “National Policy Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination” (DBE, 2014). To what degree do you believe that these options accommodate the needs of autistic learners (Grades 4-12) in assessment?

Extremely inadequate 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 Extremely adequate

13. Are there any items that you would remove from the options when considering autistic learners? *Mark only one*

- Yes
- No

14. Are there items that you would like to see added to accommodate learners with ASD *Mark only one*

- Yes
- No

15. What is your opinion on the grouping of ASD, ADHD, anxiety, behaviour and other psycho-social disorders within Annexure C1 of the “National Policy Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination” (DBE, 2014).

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16. Are you aware of restrictions on the granting of assessment accommodations regarding cognitive functioning (candidates should have IQ scores within the average range)? *Mark only one*

- Yes
- No

17. Do you believe that IQ should be a consideration when granting assessment accommodations for autistic learners? *Mark only one*

- ◇ Yes
- ◇ No
- ◇ Unsure

18. Kindly explain your answer above concerning consideration of IQ for learners with ASD.

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### **Section 6: Other Assessment Accommodation Options**

19. Learners with barriers to learning may benefit from specific and direct training to help them to manage the examination environment. This can include orientation to answering a question paper, orientation to what invigilators are allowed / are not allowed to do. How do you believe such pre-assessment accommodations should be implemented for autistic learners?

*Check all applicable boxes*

- Should be a specific training that has been approved by province or District Education and run in accordance with specific guidelines
- Should be included as an accommodation approved by the District / Provincial Accommodations Committees
- Educators should carry out such programmes for autistic learners as a matter of course
- Educators should only carry out such programmes for autistic learners should they feel it necessary
- Such pre-assessment accommodations should not need to be applied for
- Such pre-assessment accommodations should not need to be documented

- Pre-access accommodations should not be carried out unless requested, and then it needs to be approved
- Pre-access accommodations should not be carried out unless requested, but does not need to be approved
- Is not necessary

20. Have you ever had need to ask for an assessment accommodation that was not granted based on its not appearing within the “*National Policy Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination*” (DBE 2014)? *Mark only one*

- Yes
- No (*Skip to question 22*)

21. What were the accommodations that you were looking for that were not granted? Kindly provide further information

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22. Do you believe that any of the following assessment accommodations should be added to the available list of accommodations for learners with ASD.

*Check all applicable boxes*

- Oral delivery: recorded
- Oral delivery: reading pen or text-to-voice technology
- Oral delivery: in-person (reader)
- Specialised setting (e.g., low arousal; special lighting/acoustics)
- Specialised setting (playing of calming music to minimise distractions)
- Familiar administrator
- Key words highlighted
- Simplified language (restate question with more appropriate vocabulary or define unknown vocabulary)

- Visual supports for language
- Colour coding instructions to emphasize steps
- Use of stimulation toys
- Use of noise buffers/headphones
- Use of headphones with music
- Time-tabling of examinations (no two exams on one day)
- Encourager/motivator (may provide verbal encouragement of student's efforts and encouraging words to sustain effort longer)
- Individual assistance with directions of test (including interpretation)
- Allowing learner to voice ideas while engaging with the question paper
- None
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

23. Should any of the following pre-assessment accommodations be considered for autistic learners? *Check all applicable boxes*

- Information about examinations, why they are important as well as provision of motivation in preparation for examinations
- Teaching of test-taking skills
- Study guide with practice questions
- Teaching how to manage examination anxiety
- Pictures of examination invigilators/administrators
- None
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

24. The following assessment accommodations options frequently fall under "Universal Design" as they are adaptations that may suit any candidate.

Which options could be considered for autistic learners?

*Check all applicable boxes*

- Access to information available both auditorily and written text (redundancy)
- All directions and prompts written in simplified language
- 18-point font size
- All questions starting a new page
- Coloured question paper
- None

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 7: Addressing the less academic needs of autistic learners**

25. Please consider the “National Policy Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination” (DBE, 2014), particularly annexure C1.

The current assessment accommodation options accommodate learners with ASD in terms of anxiety during assessments

Strongly disagree 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 Strongly agree

26. The current assessment accommodation options accommodate the sensory regulation needs of learners with ASD during assessment.

Strongly disagree 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 Strongly agree

27. Provision of additional time alone will alleviate anxiety felt by learners with ASD?

Strongly disagree 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 Strongly agree

28. What do you believe, if any, are other considerations with regard to timing/scheduling that should be available for autistic learners?

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29. There are changes to assessment environments that can be made to help alleviate anxiety for autistic learners.

Strongly agree 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 Strongly disagree

30. There are changes to assessment environments that can be made to help manage sensory regulation difficulties for autistic learners

Strongly agree 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 Strongly disagree

31. What do you believe could assist autistic learners and regulation or anxiety difficulties during assessment?

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME**

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**SHOULD YOU BE FEELING ANY ANXIETY FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AND WOULD LIKE TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT IT KINDLY CONTACT YOUR HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONER OR THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY GROUP**

**08H00 TO 20H00**

**0800 456 789**

## APPENDIX G:      Permission to use the SADAG number in the questionnaire

**Yvonne Nell**

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**From:** zane@sadag.org  
**Sent:** Monday, August 24, 2020 9:06 PM  
**To:** Yvonne Nell  
**Subject:** FW: PERMISSION TO USE SADAG CONTACT DETAILS ON RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Yvonne,

If you could use 0800 456 789 please.

WE wish you success with your research,

Best wishes,

Zane

Zane M Wilcox Ms.  
Founder  
SA Depression and Anxiety Group  
[www.sadag.org](http://www.sadag.org)



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**From:** Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 24, 2020 6:58 AM  
**To:** 'Zane@sadag.org' <Zane@sadag.org>  
**Subject:** PERMISSION TO USE SADAG CONTACT DETAILS ON RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Zane

I received your name from Daniel de Freitas (administrator of the Psychologists in South Africa Facebook Page).

I had contacted him in order to request permission to post a link to my research questionnaire on their Facebook Page.

My research is entitled "Perspectives of key stakeholders in assessment accommodations for learners with autism spectrum disorder (grade 4-12)"

The key stakeholders include: psychologists, therapists, educators, caregivers of persons with ASD and adults with ASD.

In my proposal, I made note that adults with ASD may experience some increased anxiety should they answer questions as they may remember their own difficulties at school.

When my proposal went under review by the Research Committee of the Department of Speech-Language Therapy and Audiology at the University of Pretoria, it was suggested that we should put a referral link for counselling at the

end of the questionnaire, something like do you feel anxiety after answering this questionnaire, would you like to talk to someone about it.

I noticed that the Psychologists in South Africa uses the SADAG hotline numbers, I was wondering whether I would be able to use these contact details at the end of my questionnaire.

Your consideration of this request will be appreciated. Kindly let me know should you require any further information.

Regards

*Yvonne Hall*

B.Communication Pathology (Pract.)  
Education Therapist Specialist  
Speech-Language Therapist and Educational Audiologist  
ETA0019704

0882789011

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## APPENDIX H

### Proof of submission to Journal

6/26/22, 3:36 PM

Mali - Yvonne Nell - Outlook

Fwd: Submission received for International Journal of Inclusive Education (Submission ID: 227299573)

Renata Mosca <renata.mosca@up.ac.za>

Sun 6/19/2022 2:11 PM

To: Alta Kritzinger <alta.kritzinger@up.ac.za>; Yvonne Nell <Yvonne.Nell@ecdoe.gov.za>; Yvonne Nell <yvonnenell77@gmail.com>

Well done Yvonne!

----- Forwarded message -----

From: <[journalshelpdesk@taylorandfrancis.com](mailto:journalshelpdesk@taylorandfrancis.com)>

Date: Sun, 19 Jun 2022 at 14:05

Subject: Submission received for International Journal of Inclusive Education (Submission ID: 227299573)

To: <[renata.mosca@up.ac.za](mailto:renata.mosca@up.ac.za)>



Dear Renata Eccles,

A manuscript has been submitted on your behalf.

Submission ID 227299573

Manuscript Title Perspectives of stakeholders in assessment accommodations for autistic learners in grade 4-12 within South African schools  
Journal International Journal of Inclusive Education

You have been identified as the main contact for this submission and will receive further updates from the Editorial Office. If you are requested to make a revision to your manuscript, the person who made the original submission will need to action this request.

If you are not aware of the submission and would like to find out more please contact [journalshelpdesk@taylorandfrancis.com](mailto:journalshelpdesk@taylorandfrancis.com).

Kind Regards,  
*International Journal of Inclusive Education* Editorial Office

<https://outlook.office.com/mail/id/AAQkAGZINjQwNzhhLW4YmUtnDgwMI1MTFILWNIOI3NW1xNzZM2NgAQANv4yFVqYCJAuDLWw87uIQa%3D>

1/2