



MAPPING ME

A Toolkit for Exploring Identity,
Learning Needs & Strengths



Introduction

This toolkit is designed to help you as a student to recognise and communicate your learning needs which reflects your own identity and life experience - to support your time at university.

This toolkit can be kept private, shared with a tutor, or used as a conversation starter. You are not required to disclose anything you are not comfortable sharing.



Contents

1	USING THIS TOOLKIT	4
2	MAPPING MY JOURNEY	5
	Identity Mapping	6
	Learning Needs Inventory	8
	Reflecting on Intersecting Barriers	9
	Access Practices That Support Me	11
	Strengths Mapping	12
3	COMMUNICATING MY NEEDS	15
	Scripts for Communicating Needs	16
	Exploring What's Possible	18
	Managing Feelings of Being Overlooked or Singled Out	18
	Asking for Support	19
	Sharing in Different Ways	20
	What to do if you don't get the response you hoped for	21
4	WHERE ELSE TO TURN	23
	UAL Support	24
	External Support	25
5	YOUR NOTES	28

Using This Toolkit



Scan the QR code to access a digital version of this toolkit. The digital version can be edited on Adobe Acrobat using the fill in forms fields (for text) and drawing tools.



You can:



Highlight, circle, write and draw in it



Share it with a tutor:
Scan the above QR code for a staff guidance pack)



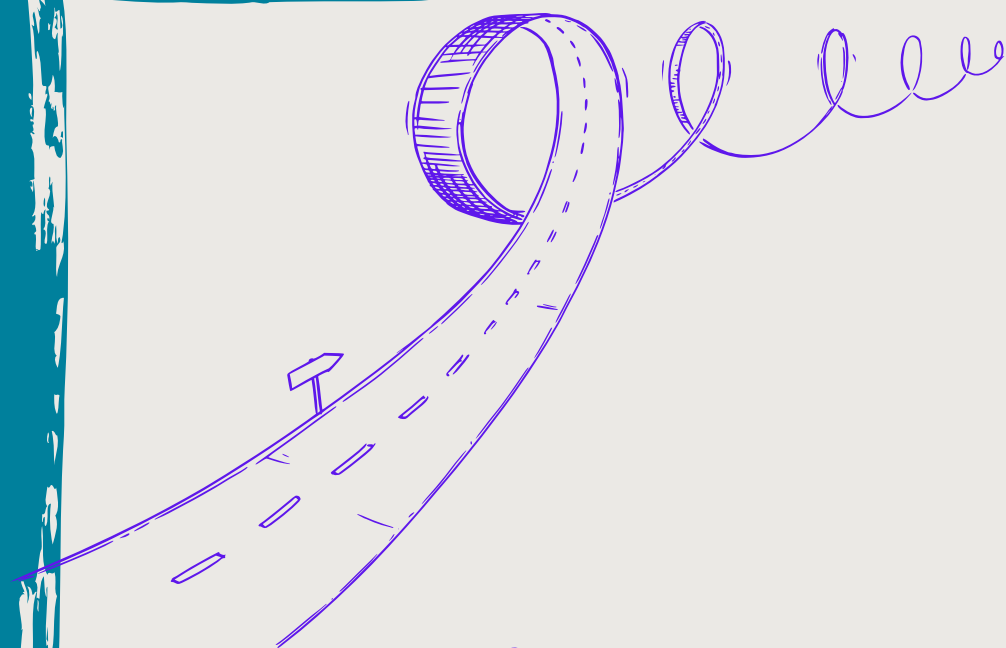
Take your time and feel free to skip steps you don't want to do



Remember: You are always in control of what you choose to share.

Use this booklet as a tool for empowerment, not a form to complete.

Tip: Look at the areas you'd like to share, then use the conversation starters at the end of this document to help you express them in your own words.



Mapping My Journey

This section is designed for you to pause, reflect, and respond.

Through a series of activities, you can develop a deeper understanding of how you learn, and what helps you thrive.

Identity Mapping



Why do this?

Reflecting on your identity can help you understand how you learn best and what you might need to feel supported. Learning isn't just about what we know, it's shaped by who we are, our experiences, and how we've been understood (or misunderstood) in the past.

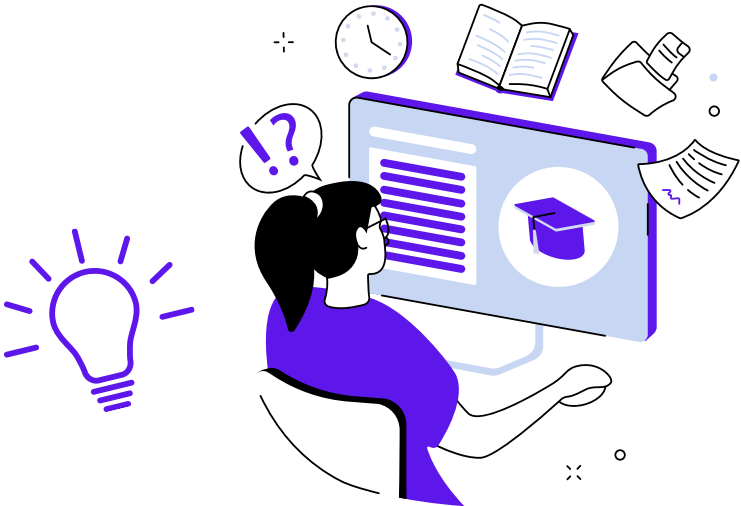
Use the prompts below to reflect on who you are and your experiences..
Circle what feels relevant, and feel free to add your own on the next page.



Identity Mapping



Aspect of my identity	How this shapes my learning or experience	So I learn best when...



Learning Needs Inventory



Why do this?

Everyone learns differently. This checklist helps you notice what support helps you thrive without needing to label yourself.

I need support with sensory regulation (e.g. light, sound, textures)

☐

I experience anxiety or mental health needs that affect how I learn

☐

I need physical access considerations (e.g. fatigue, chronic pain, mobility)

☐

I need flexibility around time, energy or attendance

☐

I benefit from trauma-informed spaces (e.g. feeling safe, supported)

☐

I have cultural or religious needs that affect how I learn

☐

Other

☐

Use this space to expand on anything you've selected.

This can help you think through what you need, and may also help staff support you - if you choose to share it.

Reflecting on Intersecting Barriers



Why do this?

Sometimes parts of your identity overlap and affect your experiences. Check out the example below, then try your own on the next page – use words, sketches, or whatever feels right.

Have you ever felt excluded or misunderstood in a learning environment?

Describe what happened

I was called disruptive and asked to leave the class.

How did it make you feel?

It makes me feel misunderstood and isolated in class.

Do any cultural or personal values affect what information you share about yourself?

Stigma in my community means I don't always share my ADHD, even when I need support.

What intersecting barriers were at play?

I'm a black woman with ADHD

What could have helped in that moment?

If my teachers had more understanding of ADHD and offered flexible ways to participate, like alternative assignments or check-ins, instead of assuming I was misbehaving.



Reflecting on Intersecting Barriers

Have you ever felt excluded or misunderstood in a learning environment?

Describe what happened

1

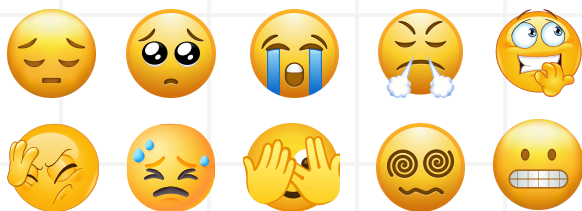
What intersecting barriers were at play?

2

How did it make you feel?

3

If it's easier pick an emoji



What could have helped in that moment?

4

Do any cultural or personal values affect what you share information about yourself?

5

Access Practices That Support Me



Why do this?

This section helps you name what works for you in learning spaces, so you can feel more confident asking for it or setting it up for yourself.

Complete the sentence:

Use words, sketches, or whatever feels right.

1

I learn best when...

(e.g... I can process information quietly before discussing it.)

2

It helps me when...

(e.g... instructions are written clearly.)

3

I feel more confident when...

(e.g... I can ask questions without judgment.)

4

I need others to know that...

(e.g... I work better with short, focused tasks.)



Strengths Mapping

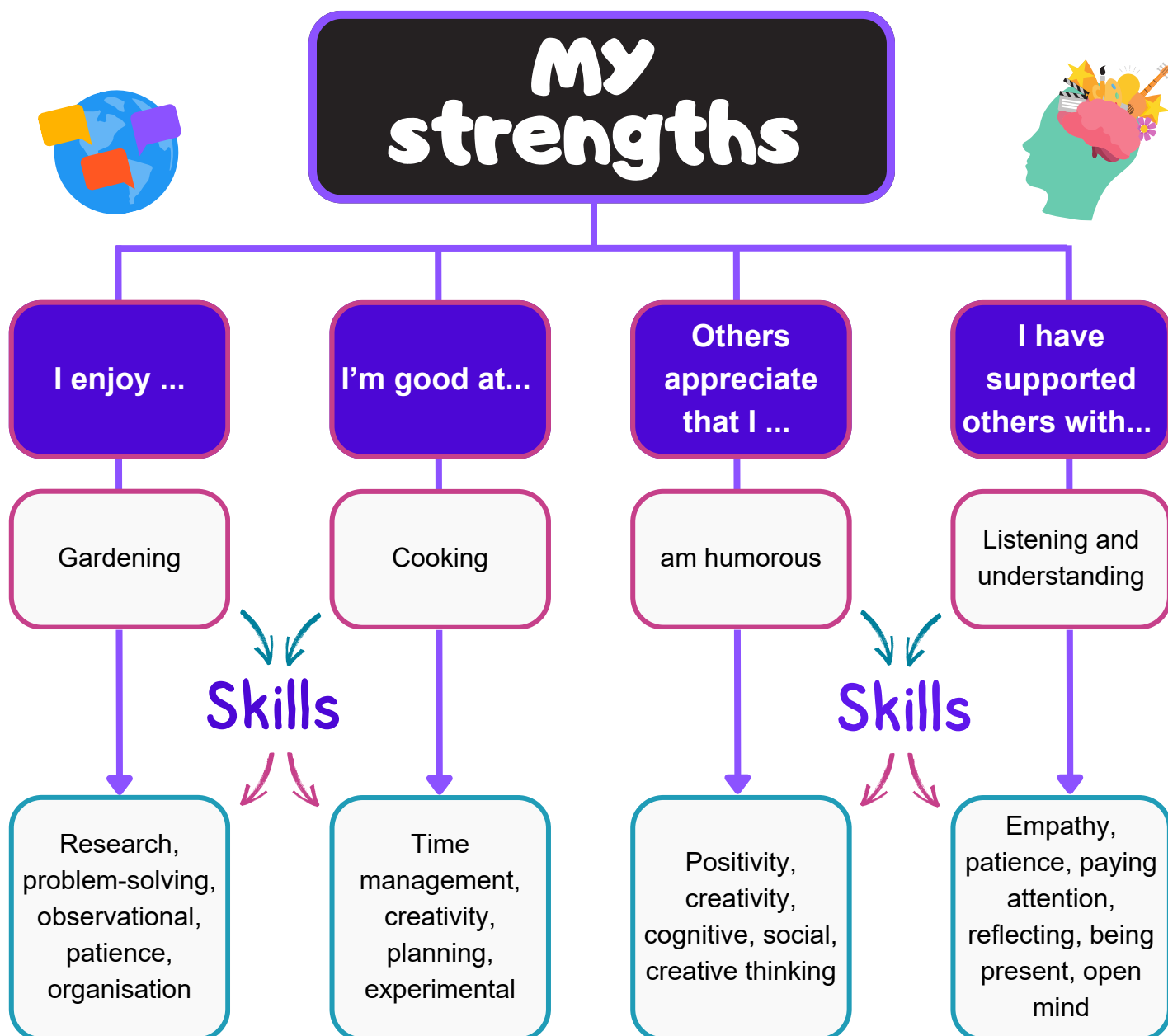


Why do this?

You bring valuable skills and experiences. This section helps you recognise your strengths shaped and enriched by your background.

Recognise your unique strengths, skills and knowledge:

The examples below show things you might be good at and the skills they reflect. Circle any that apply to you, and/or map out your own ideas on the next page.



Strengths Mapping

Map out more of your strengths and skills here. Need a hand? Ask friends, family, or colleagues - or try the free VIA Strengths test: embrace-autism.com/via.



MY strengths

I enjoy ...

I'm good at...

Others appreciate that I ...

I have supported others with...

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills



13



Communicating My Needs

This section provides scripts and guidance to help you share barriers you experience and request changes, if you choose to.

Remember, you are not required to share any personal information.

Scripts for Communicating Needs



Why do this?

It can be hard to explain what you need. These short scripts give you a starting point for expressing yourself clearly and confidently.

Use or adapt these simple scripts to express your learning needs:



The conditions that help me focus and succeed are...



I find it easier to engage when...

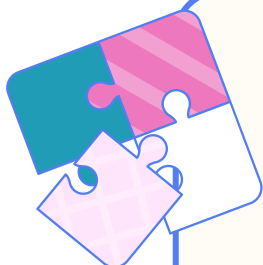


One thing I'd like you to know is...

Scripts for Communicating Needs



Can we talk about how I work best on tasks like this?



Sometimes I feel a bit singled out - is there a way we could approach this that feels more comfortable for me?



I'm not sure my experiences are being fully considered - could we chat about how to make things work better for me?



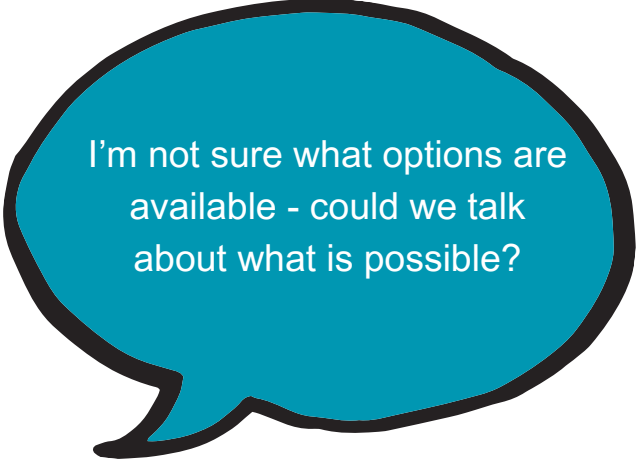
Exploring What is Possible



Why do this?

You might not always know what kinds of support are available, asking doesn't mean you're asking for too much.

Try saying:



I'm not sure what options are available - could we talk about what is possible?

Managing Feelings of Being Overlooked or Singled Out



Why do this?

Sometimes teaching approaches don't meet learning needs, it's okay to speak up if you feel excluded or misunderstood.

Try saying:



Sometimes I feel a bit singled out, is there a way we could approach this that feels more comfortable for me?

Asking for Support



Why do this?

Asking for support can feel risky, especially if you're not sure how it will be received. You deserve to feel safe when expressing your needs.

Try saying:

I'm still figuring out what works for me, thank you for being open to talking it through.

I know this might be a bit different. I really appreciate your support.

I'd like to share something, but I'm a bit nervous about how it might be received.



Sharing in Different Ways



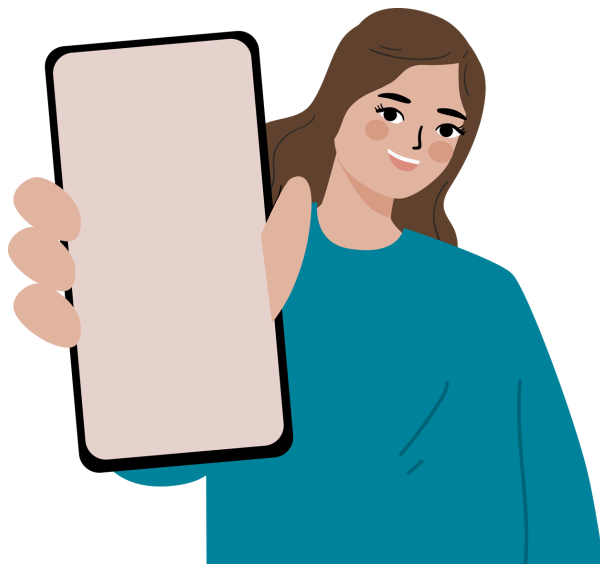
Why do this?

You might prefer to communicate in writing, or at a different time - that's okay.

Try saying:

I've written some notes about what helps me, can I share them with you?

I'm not ready to talk right now, but I'd like to send you something later if that's okay.



What to do if you don't get the response you hoped for

Why this matters:

Asking for what you need takes courage and sometimes, you might not get the reaction you expected. That doesn't mean your needs aren't valid.

This section is here to help you keep going, even if things don't feel easy right away.



It's not about you

Sometimes people respond based on their own limitations, stress, or lack of understanding. That doesn't mean you did anything wrong by speaking up.



Try not to get discouraged

One person's "no" doesn't mean everyone will respond the same way. Is there someone else (e.g. a different teacher, tutor, or support staff) who might be more open or helpful?



Keep the conversation going

If a teacher says your request doesn't fit the curriculum or space, you can say:

"Can we work together to explore how to address this, as it might also affect other students?"

Collaboration can open up creative solutions.



Where Else to Turn



This section lists UAL departments and external organisations providing additional or alternative support.

UAL Support

UAL offers wellbeing, disability, and learning support services designed to help you succeed.

We recognise that seeking support can be challenging, and sometimes the services may not meet all your needs. If that happens, it's okay to keep asking questions, explore other options, and set boundaries that feel right for you. You deserve support that works for you.

Creative Shift

UAL's Creative Shift helps underrepresented students grow networks, confidence, and opportunities to succeed in the creative industries.

www.arts.ac.uk/creative-shift

Counselling, Health Advice and Chaplaincy

Support for your physical health, mental health or wellbeing. Appointments are available on college sites in person, online or on the phone.

www.arts.ac.uk/students/student-services/counselling-health-advice-and-chaplaincy

Disability Service

Professional advice and support for students who are disabled and neurodivergent.

www.arts.ac.uk/students/student-services/disability-and-dyslexia

Academic support

Face-to-face tutorials, workshops and other learning development activities to support with your academic skills, including essay writing.

www.arts.ac.uk/students/welcome/your-journey-to-UAL/get-support/skills#academic

Arts Student Union

Wellbeing resources and advice service - www.arts-su.com/support/

Clubs and Societies - www.arts-su.com/communities/groups

External Support

Community groups, peer networks, and charities can also help you understand your rights, build confidence, or talk through next steps. You don't have to figure this out alone.

Mental Health



The Ultimate Graduate Resource

Not just for graduates - this resource has a section dedicated to mental health charities, plus packed with links to support your creative career.

<https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/uai/the-ultimate-graduate-resource>



Student Minds

UK's student mental health charity.

www.studentminds.org.uk/



Student Space (from student Minds)

Support services designed for students - whether it's your mental health, your studies, money, housing or relationships.

studentspace.org.uk/support-services



Mind

Student life and mental health information and resources.

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/



Top Neurodiverse Charities for Support in the UK.

Finding neurodiverse support can be tough when you are already struggling to cope. Here's a list of registered UK neurodiverse charities.

thruday.com/top-neurodiverse-charities-available-in-the-uk

Resources & Guidance



NeuroTribe UK

A neurodivergent-affirming, multicultural therapy service.

neurotribe.uk/



Disabled Students UK

Resources for disabled students including student guidance and knowing your rights.

disabledstudents.co.uk/resources/



National Autistic Society

Advice on disability discrimination in colleges, universities - www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/education/resolving-differences/disability-discrimination-in-further-and-higher-ed

Advice and guidance directory - <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance>



The Balance App

A meditation mobile app to support you with stress, mood, sleep, working with ADHD, burnout and more - sign up for 1-year free access.

balanceapp.com/

Networks and Mentoring



One2One Mentoring Network

Tailored one-to-one mentoring and coaching for Black and minority ethnic individuals in higher education or starting their careers.

one2onementoring.com



Arts Emergency

A charity connecting underrepresented young people (ages 16–26) in the arts and humanities with professional mentors to help with career pathways.

www.arts-emergency.org/young-people/get-a-mentor



The 93% Club

Networks for state-educated students and staff, providing access to connections, knowledge, and opportunities traditionally reserved for the privately educated.

www.93percent.club

Government Support



Access to Work

Access to Work can help you get or stay in work if you have a physical or mental health condition or disability.

You can apply for:

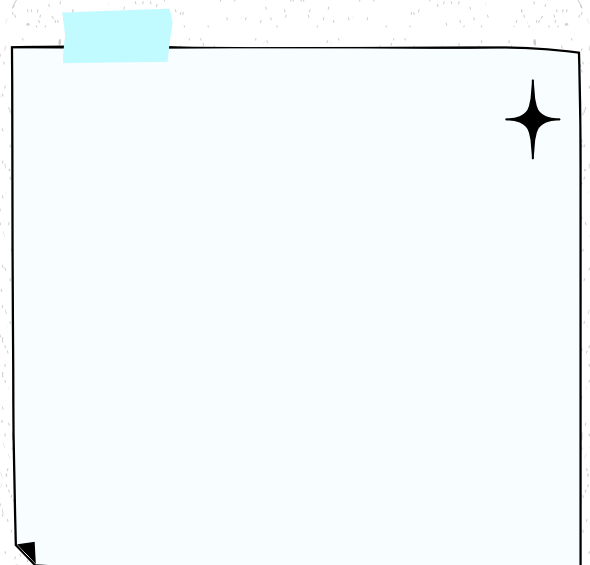
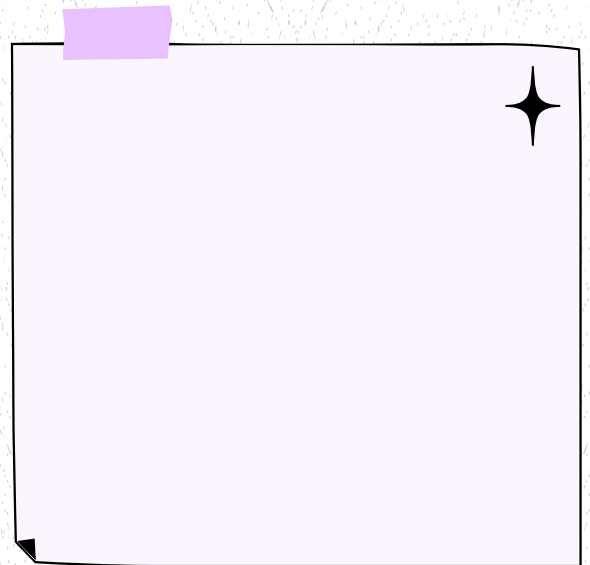
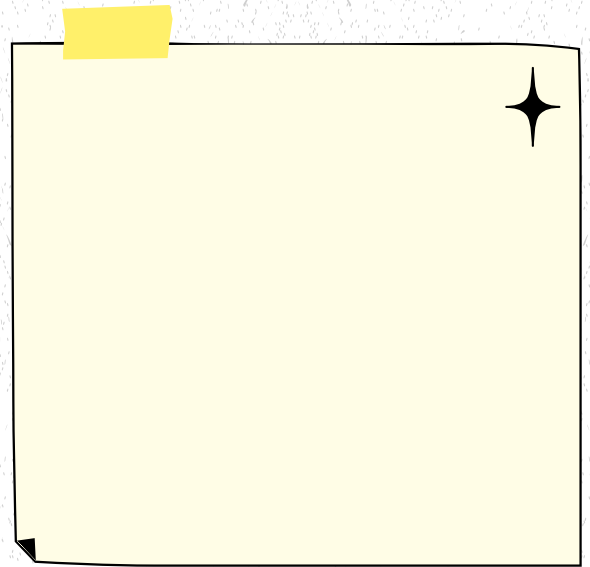
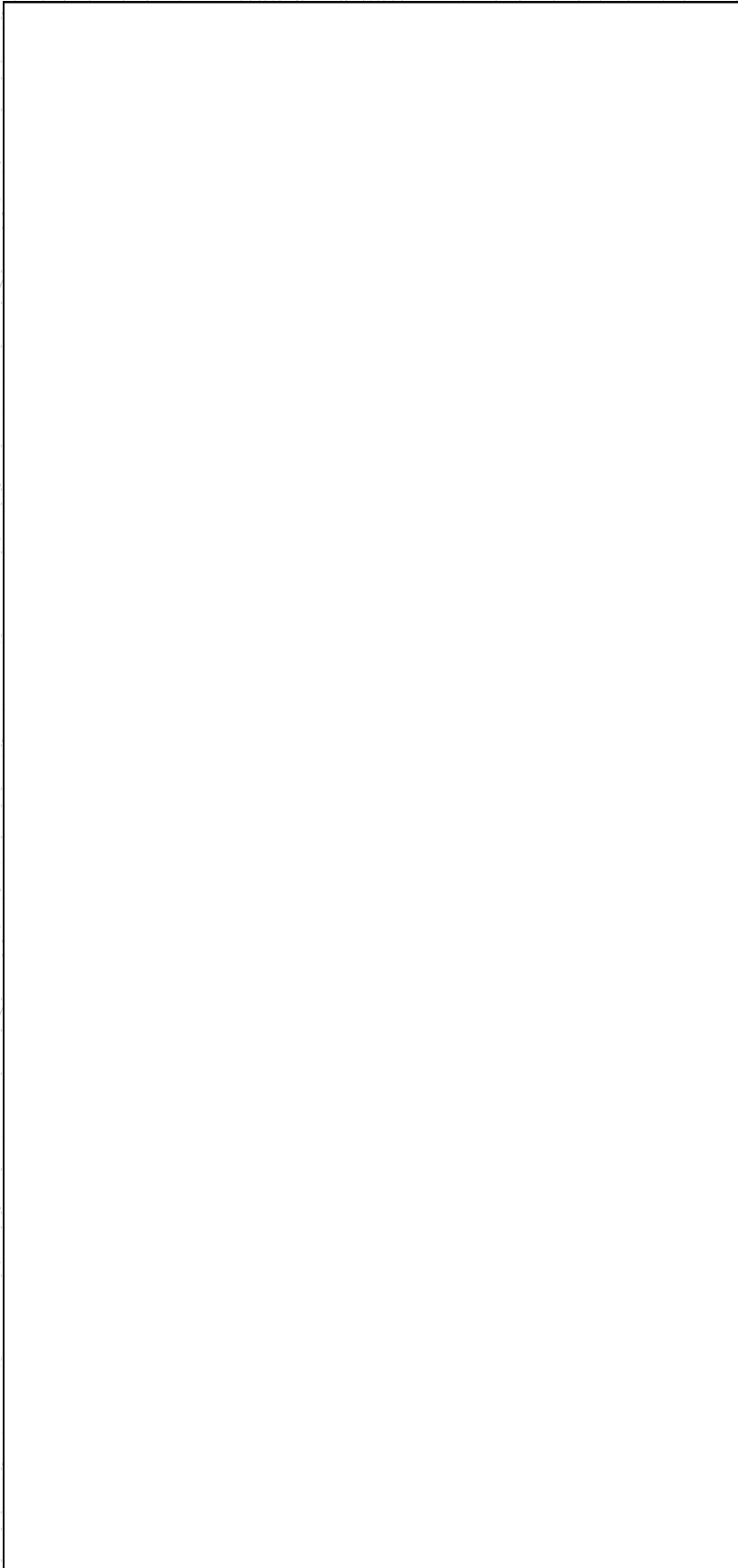
- a grant to help pay for practical support with your work
- support with managing your mental health at work
- money to pay for communication support at job interviews

www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Notes :

This image shows a blank sheet of primary-ruled paper. It features a vertical solid line on the left side, creating a margin. The rest of the page is filled with horizontal dashed lines, providing a guide for handwriting practice. There are no markings or text on the page.A blank, cream-colored page with a yellow sticky note at the top left and a black starburst icon at the top right.[illegible][illegible]

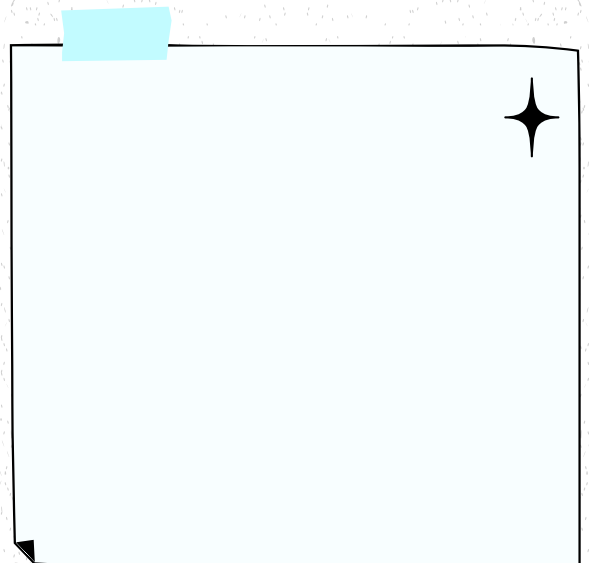
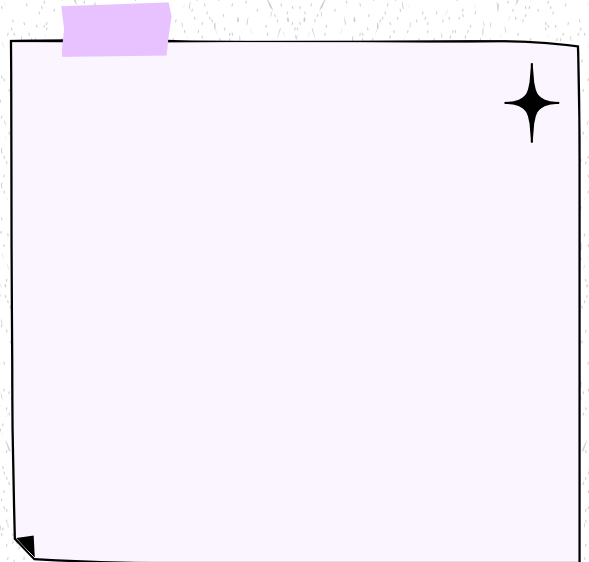
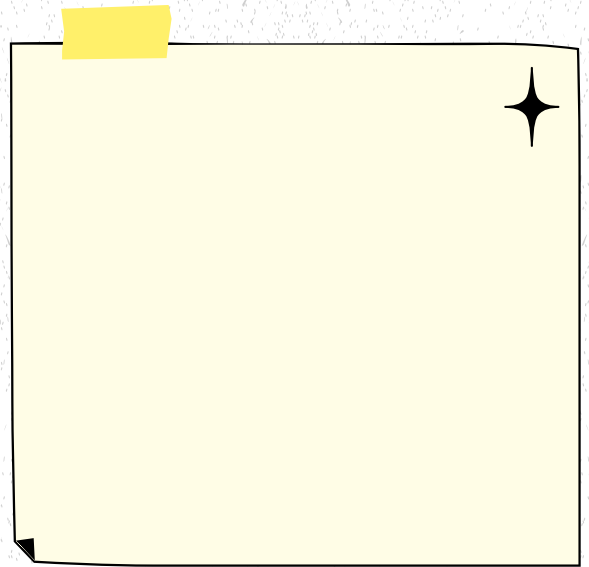
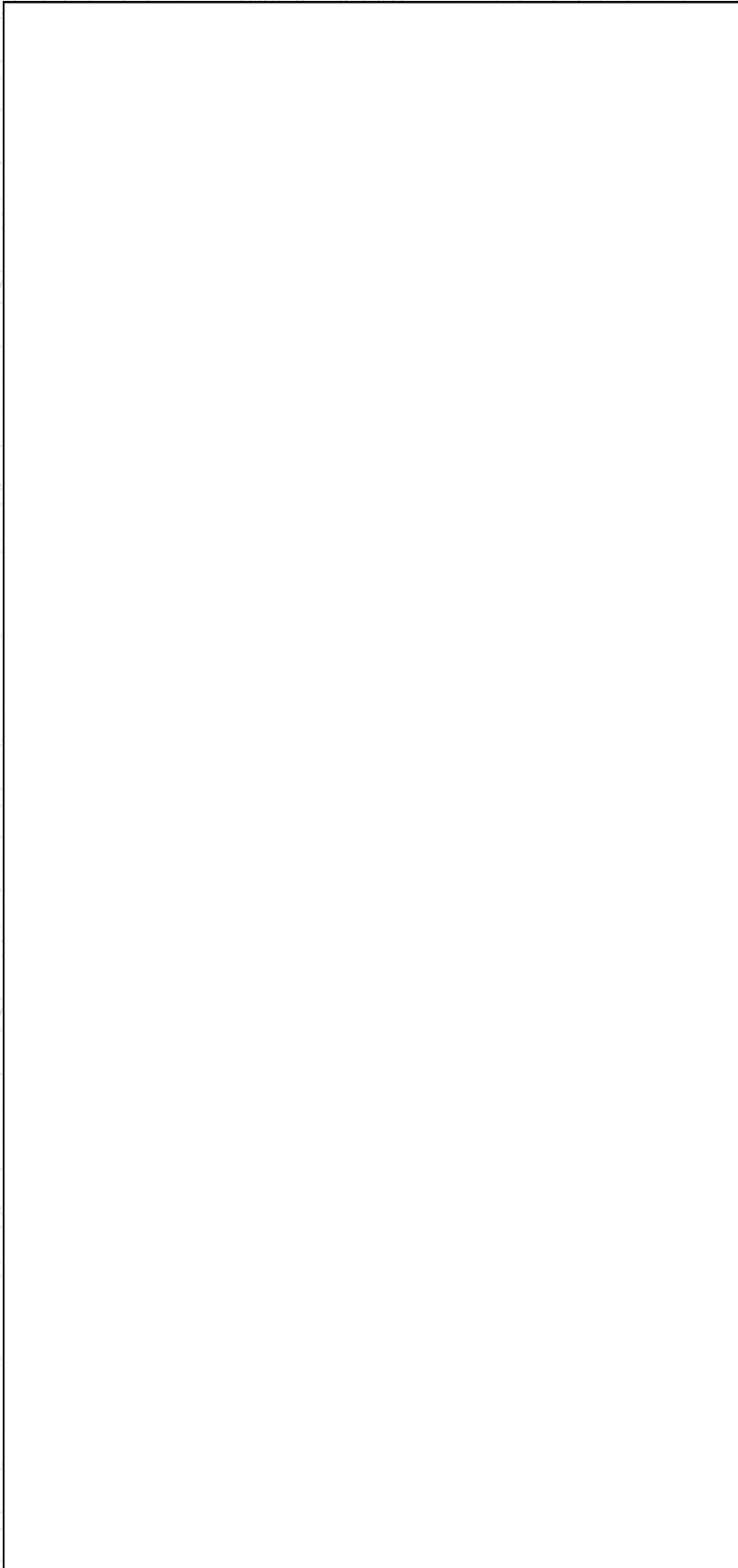
Notes :



Notes :

[illegible]A blank, cream-colored page with a yellow sticky note at the top left and a black starburst icon at the top right.[illegible]

Notes :



ual:

creative shift

shaping
diversity
in the
creative
industries



arts.ac.uk/creativeshift



[@ual_creativeshift](https://www.instagram.com/ual_creativeshift)



[UAL Creative Shift](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ual-creative-shift)



creativeshift@arts.ac.uk

