ACTIVATE

Co-funded by
the European Union

Curriculum framework

AUTISTIC ADVOCACY ACADEMY

Developed by
IMPACTsci

May, 2026

Project number: 2023-2-KA2-KA220-YOU-5EC53AC6

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Directorate for Disability Issues
Malta

CRPD

IMPACT sci.

VOZ DO AUTISTA

KU LEUVEN

eucap
European Council of Autistic People

ACTIVATE

Co-funded by the European Union

Deliverable Factsheet

Project Number	2023-2-KA2-KA220-YOU-5EC53AC6
Project Acronym	ACTIVATE
Project Title	Autistic Community through Advocacy, Learning and Empowerment
Programme	Erasmus+
Deliverable	The Autistic Advocacy Academy Framework
Please cite as	Morgado, A., Lebre, R., Attard, T., Gouder, E., Pukki, H., Murray, S., Rocha, M., Bonvalot, B., Palmer, C., Garland, R., Gergis, A., Zammit, A., Mifsud, C., Dalmonte, G., De Rechter, T., Minnaert, A., Noens, I., & Vanaken, G. (2025). *The Autistic Advocacy Academy Framework*. Erasmus+ ACTIVATE Project (2023-2-MT01-KA220-YOU-000178709).
Copyright	Creative Commons — Attribution 4.0 International — CCBY4.0

Directorate for Disability Issues Malta · CRPD · IMPACT sci. · Voz do Autista · KU Leuven · eucap

Index

Deliverable Factsheet 1
1. Introduction 4
1.1 Project overview 4
1.2 Purpose of the curriculum 4
1.3 Target audience 4
2. Alignment with EU youth strategies 5
3. Non-Formal Education Approach 6
4. Pedagogical principles 7
5. Teaching and Learning Methods 8
5.1 Cognitive Development Methods 9
5.2 Affective Development Methods 10
5.3 Psychomotor Development Methods 12
6. Accessibility principles and accommodations 13
6.1. Guiding Principles 13
6.2. Accessibility in Curriculum Structure 14
6.3. Accommodations and Design Features 14
6.4. Role of Facilitators in Ensuring Accessibility 15
6.5. Optional Learner Profile Template 16
7. Assessment and Feedback strategy 16
7.1 Assessment Methods 16
Individual Reflection 16
Group Reflection and Dialogue 16
Self-paced Activities 17
7.2 Facilitator Feedback 17
8. Curriculum Structure 17
8.1 Learning Units 20
9. Future Recommendations 5
10. References 8
ANNEX I - ACTIVATE Learner Profile 9

Basic Information 9
How I Learn Best 9
Sensory & Emotional Support 10
Communication & Participation 10

1. Introduction

ACTIVATE – Autistic Community through Advocacy, Learning and Empowerment – is an Erasmus+ funded transnational project under Key Action 220-YOU – Cooperation Partnerships in Youth, dedicated to increasing the visibility, agency, and self-determination of autistic youth across Europe. The project brings together six partner organisations from Malta, Portugal, Belgium, and the Czech Republic, working collaboratively to establish the foundation for a sustainable and impactful autistic advocacy school.

1.1 Project overview

ACTIVATE's core mission is to elevate the voices of autistic youth, providing them with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to self-advocate for their needs and rights. Through a variety of tailored initiatives—ranging from the advocacy academy to digital campaigns—the project ensures that autistic youth are not only heard but also actively engaged in shaping policies and societal norms that impact their lives. Among its key activities, ACTIVATE hosts an Autism Acceptance Month Campaign, delivers #AskAnAutistic Q&A sessions, and facilitates #MyAutismJourney personal stories. Additionally, the project aims to build an innovative European Community of Practice for autistic youth, empowering them to connect and share knowledge on a regional, national, and international level. For more information visit: https://neuroadvocacy.eu/

1.2 Purpose of the curriculum

This document presents the full curriculum framework for the **Autistic Advocacy Academy**, including:

- The pedagogical methodology based on non-formal education principles
- Thematic learning units with defined learning outcomes and sessions plans
- Recommended educational methods, materials and accessibility adaptations
- Guidelines for training facilitators and ensuring quality learning experiences

Rooted in the principles of equity, accessibility, and empowerment, this curriculum provides a roadmap for supporting autistic youth in shaping the policies, institutions, and narratives that impact their lives. It is designed for practical application, equipping learners with effective tools to navigate the world more confidently and autonomously. The intended outcome is for participants to develop real-life advocacy skills they can apply in everyday contexts.

1.3 Target audience

The Autistic Advocacy Academy curriculum is specifically designed based on the feedback provided by **autistic youth aged 16 to 29 living across Europe**. This age

range captures a critical developmental period where individuals are transitioning into adulthood, higher education, employment, and civic life—stages that often come with heightened needs for self-determination, identity development, and systems navigation.

This curriculum recognises that autistic youth are not a homogenous group. The learning approach and content have been shaped through participatory research to reflect the diversity within the community, and to accommodate a wide spectrum of:

- Cognitive and communication styles
- Support needs
- Cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- Gender identities and expressions
- Socioeconomic and educational pathways
- Life experiences, including multiply marginalised identities

Special care has been taken to ensure that the curriculum is inclusive of:

- Autistic youth with and without formal diagnoses
- Non-speaking autistic individuals or those using AAC (augmentative and alternative communication)
- Autistic LGBTQIA+ youth
- Autistic youth from migrant, racialised, or minority ethnic communities
- Autistic youth with disabilities or chronic health conditions

The curriculum also targets a secondary audience of **facilitators, trainers, and youth workers** who will support the delivery of the academy. These professionals will benefit from dedicated guidance on accessibility, inclusive facilitation, and neurodiversity-affirming practices to ensure that the learning environment is safe, respectful, and empowering for all participants.

This dual focus on both **autistic learners** and their **facilitators** is key to ensuring the sustainability and scalability of the ACTIVATE model across Europe.

2. Alignment with EU youth strategies

The ACTIVATE curriculum is fully aligned with the principles and priorities of the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027, particularly in relation to empowering young people to engage meaningfully in democratic life, fostering social inclusion, and supporting their personal development through non-formal education (NFE). It also reflects the broader values of the Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy and Erasmus+'s commitment to inclusive, rights-based learning environments.

Key EU Youth Strategy Priorities Reflected in ACTIVATE

- **Youth Goal #3: Inclusive Societies**

The curriculum ensures that autistic youth are not only included but also empowered to shape the learning process, policy dialogue, and social narratives about autism.

- **Youth Goal #5: Mental Health and Wellbeing**

The curriculum contributes to the wellbeing, confidence, and self-advocacy capacities of autistic young people by prioritising accessibility, autonomy, and neuro-affirming approaches.

- **Youth Goal #6: Moving Rural Youth Forward**

The blended learning model (b-learning) including online and in-person participation options enables access for participants from geographically remote or underserved areas, tackling educational inequity.

- **Youth Goal #9: Space and Participation for All**

The curriculum encourages civic engagement and prepares youth for active participation in several spheres of life.

3. Non-Formal Education Approach

Non-formal education involves intentional and organised learning programmes aimed at developing personal and social skills, usually taking place outside traditional school systems. It typically occurs in settings like associations, NGOs, youth groups, sports clubs or community projects—where people might collaborate on activities, play games, camp, or create music and theatre.

Non-formal education is a voluntary and inclusive process, open to everyone. It is structured around clear educational goals and encourages active participation, placing the learner at the centre of the experience. Its focus extends beyond academic content, aiming to build life skills and prepare individuals for active citizenship. It promotes both personal and collective learning, emphasising collaboration and shared responsibility. Rooted in real-life experiences and practical action, non-formal education is holistic, process-driven, and tailored to meet the evolving needs of participants.

As such, the ACTIVATE partners developed a **neurodiversity-affirming** curriculum grounded in values that prioritise the autonomy, dignity, and diverse realities of its learners. Participation is entirely voluntary, giving individuals the freedom to choose how and when to engage with the programme and its modules. The learning approach is firmly learner-centred, built around each person's interests, lived experiences, and goals, rather than predefined content. Advocacy skills are developed through experiential methods—practice, reflection, and simulations rooted in real-life situations—encouraging meaningful and embodied learning. The curriculum supports

holistic development by fostering not only knowledge, but also emotional resilience, self-awareness, and connection with others. It promotes democratic engagement by empowering learners to challenge existing systems and shape their own narratives. ACTIVATE curriculum embraces inclusion and diversity, affirming neurodivergent identities and striving to eliminate barriers to participation as much as possible.

4. Pedagogical principles

The ACTIVATE curriculum is grounded in principles that have emerged from both the academic literature on inclusive, non-formal education, human rights education and the participatory research carried out with autistic youth and stakeholders during the project. These principles reflect a commitment to designing learning environments that are **accessible, meaningful, and empowering**, particularly for neurodivergent learners. Each principle below is informed by evidence gathered through the project's co-produced research, including preferences for **flexibility, multimodality, applied learning**, and **emotional safety** in group settings.

Holistic Learning

Rooted in non-formal education and rights-based learning, holistic learning supports the development of the **whole individual, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and creatively**. The ACTIVATE curriculum responds to the research finding that autistic learners value opportunities to reflect not only on knowledge, but also on personal strengths, values, and wellbeing. It integrates emotional awareness, self-advocacy, and peer connection, rather than focusing solely on cognitive tasks.

Open-Ended Learning

This approach welcomes complexity and multiple perspectives. Participants in our research expressed a **preference for open reflection**, **exploration**, **and space to make meaning** in their own way. Instead of directing participants toward a single "correct" answer, it acknowledges that real-life issues are nuanced and often ambiguous. Open-ended learning builds critical thinking skills and the confidence to express personal opinions, embracing diversity in thought and interpretation.

Participation

Survey and interview responses confirmed that many autistic learners value **having a choice** in how they engage and **some control over session dynamics**. Participation in ACTIVATE is always voluntary, and each session is built with **opt-in group activities**, **flexible prompts**, and space for **facilitators to adapt to the group's energy and needs**.

Co-operative Learning

Co-operative learning emphasises collaboration rather than competition. It nurtures respect, teamwork, and mutual benefit, contributing to improved academic performance, stronger social skills, and increased self-esteem. Unlike competitive models, which can lead to division or discouragement, co-operative learning encourages collective growth, care, and inclusion. Although some participants reported discomfort with social activities, many also recognised the value of learning through peer experiences if carefully facilitated. ACTIVATE uses small group formats and structured peer learning moments that **balance social engagement with emotional safety**. Group norms and role options are co-defined when possible.

Experiential Learning

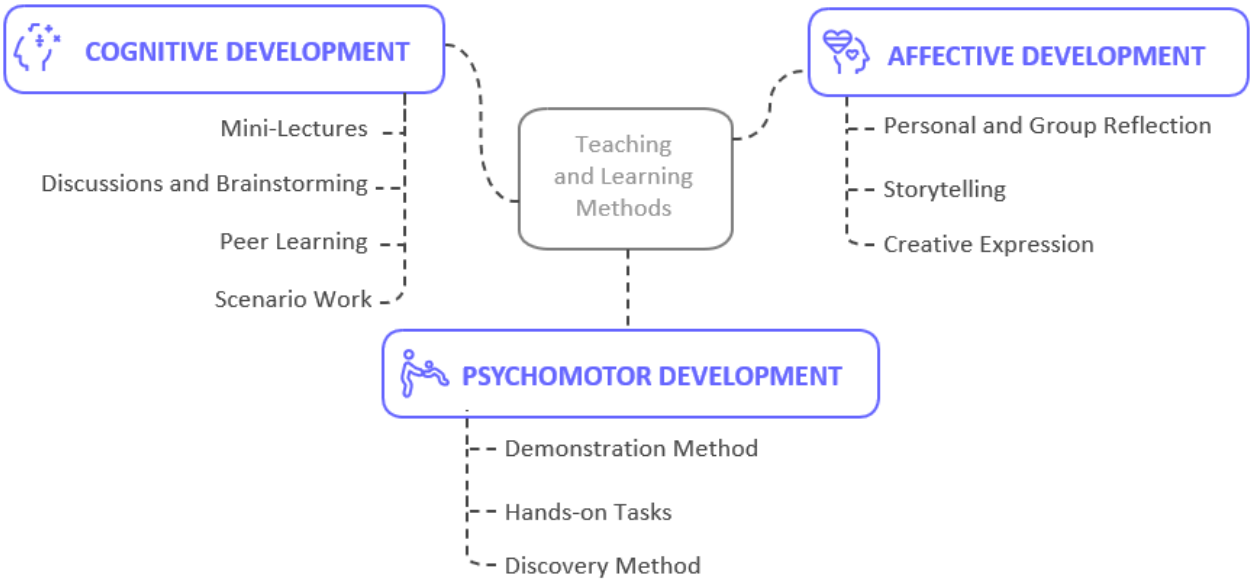
Experiential learning places real-world experience at the heart of the process, allowing participants to learn by doing. Our research affirmed that **practical exercises and applied activities help learners stay engaged and better process complex information**. While these activities can be challenging, they were also highlighted as necessary for skills like advocacy. ACTIVATE prioritises experiential learning, especially through script writing, scenario work, and communication planning while giving learners the option to participate at their own pace or in alternative formats.

Learner-Centredness

The relevance and meaning of learning are determined by the participant's **engagement, context**, and **interpretation**. Whether or not a topic resonates or has practical value is a key part of the learning process. Survey data highlighted the need for flexibility, predictability, and choice. Every unit of ACTIVATE is **modular** and self-contained, allowing learners to select the topics that are most relevant. Within each session, learners are guided through tasks that are relevant to their lived experience, with facilitators acting as mentors rather than instructors.

5. Teaching and Learning Methods

The ACTIVATE curriculum integrates a range of teaching and learning methods aligned with **inclusive pedagogy, non-formal education principles**, and the **findings of our co-produced research**.



These methods are selected to support cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning across a variety of participation styles. Our survey and interview data showed strong preference for:

- **Flexible formats**, including a mix of asynchronous and synchronous learning
- **Multimodal delivery**, with support for written, visual, and oral communication
- **Opportunities to reflect individually before engaging socially**
- **Well-facilitated interactive sessions**, with opt-in group work and real-life application
- **Simple, structured formats** that provide clarity and predictability

We have responded by balancing information delivery, personal exploration, and peer-supported practice across all units.

5.1 Cognitive Development Methods

Cognitive methods in the ACTIVATE curriculum support learners in acquiring key knowledge, processing information, deepening self-understanding, and developing advocacy strategies through applied thinking. These approaches are designed to be accessible, structured, and flexible, reflecting the diverse cognitive preferences and feedback from autistic participants.

Mini-Lectures

Each unit begins with a short, focused mini-lecture that introduces core concepts. These are paired with visual summaries to support different processing styles and increase accessibility. Based on research findings, ACTIVATE delivers all mini-lectures asynchronously (via video or audio), allowing learners to engage with the material at their own pace. This format supports comprehension for those unfamiliar with the topic and establishes a shared knowledge foundation for further learning.

Discussions and Brainstorming

Discussion-based activities invite learners to explore complex topics, share perspectives, and co-construct meaning. They include both small group discussions and open brainstorming sessions. Discussions are structured with concrete prompts and clear contexts to enhance focus and accessibility. Brainstorming encourages the rapid, non-judgemental generation of ideas, supporting creativity and reducing performance anxiety. Participants in our survey noted that such structured, well-facilitated discussions help maintain attention and engagement.

Peer Learning

Learners share strategies, reflect together, and provide feedback in low-pressure, collaborative formats such as pair dialogues or small group exchanges. This mutual exchange fosters trust, reinforces shared experience, and shifts the learning dynamic from teacher-led to community-driven. Research participants especially valued these moments when activities were framed around strengths-based reflection, rather than evaluation or critique.

Scenario Work

Scenario-based learning includes methods like modelling, script-building, and role-play, allowing learners to apply new knowledge in realistic or imagined settings. These activities help develop communication, problem-solving, and self-advocacy skills. Recognising that scenario work can be emotionally and cognitively demanding, ACTIVATE makes these activities optional and carefully scaffolded: learners are prepared individually beforehand, and offered multiple modes of participation (speaking, writing, or observing).

5.2 Affective Development Methods

Affective methods focus on emotional, social, and values-based learning. These approaches are essential for nurturing empathy, self-awareness, identity development, and a meaningful connection to advocacy. In ACTIVATE, affective learning is not only about what participants feel, but how they reflect, relate, and grow at their own pace and in ways that are accessible to them.

Personal and Group Reflection

Each synchronous session begins and ends with a structured reflection moment. These activities invite learners to explore their feelings, beliefs, and prior experiences in relation to the session's topic, either individually or in a group setting.

To accommodate diverse processing styles and access needs:

- Learners may reflect through writing, drawing, movement, voice, or silence—adapted to the online or in-person context.

- Reflections can be private, shared anonymously, or discussed in small groups; participation is always voluntary.
- Prompts are concrete and open-ended (e.g. "What am I feeling right now?") to reduce ambiguity.
- Learners are encouraged to take notes between sessions and revisit reflections as needed.

This approach creates space for self-expression without pressure and avoids time constraints that may be challenging for those needing more time to process.

Storytelling

Storytelling allows learners to share their lived experiences in their own voice and preferred format—spoken, written, drawn, visual, or digital. It fosters connection, mutual recognition, and emotional depth, while affirming diverse identities and experiences.

To ensure emotional safety and accessibility:

- Participation in storytelling is always optional and never requires disclosing trauma or sensitive details.
- Prompts are theme-based (e.g. identity, support, access) and designed to honour different lived realities.
- Learners can choose to observe, contribute later, or use non-verbal storytelling methods such as images, symbols, timelines, or pre-recorded messages.
- Prompts are theme-based (e.g. identity, belonging, access) and designed to validate diverse experiences.
- Learners may observe, listen, contribute later, or tell stories through alternative methods (e.g. images, pre-recorded voice notes, symbolic representations).

When possible, preference will be made to engage facilitators that are already trained to support a trauma-informed and neuro-affirming storytelling environment, ensuring emotional safety and participation on the learner's own terms.

Creative Expression

Creative expression offers learners non-verbal ways to engage with content, emotions, and self-reflection. Activities such as drawing, collage-making, mapping, or poster creation allow participants to process ideas visually and symbolically.

This method is especially helpful for learners who:

- Prefer non-verbal communication
- Express and process emotions through movement, tactile engagement, or visual media
- Experience verbal overload or slower language processing

Creative tasks are also offered as an alternative or complement to other tasks. They can be used:

- During sessions to support emotional reflection
- Between sessions as self-paced activities
- As advocacy tools (e.g. visual self-advocacy maps)

Research showed that these multimodal approaches can reduce cognitive overload and open deeper pathways for reflection especially for learners with co-occurring disabilities or multiple neurodivergent identities.

5.3 Psychomotor Development Methods

Psychomotor methods engage learners in active, hands-on experiences that develop functional skills through practice. These approaches are particularly important for enabling learners to translate theoretical knowledge into tangible actions, whether writing a script, designing a campaign, or creating a communication tool.

Demonstration Method

Facilitators use demonstrations to model key actions, tools, or processes. Each demonstration follows a structured three-step sequence:

- Verbal Explanation – introducing the skill or concept clearly
- Live Demonstration – showing the process in real-time or via video
- Guided Repetition – supporting learners as they attempt the task themselves

This method offers a clear and predictable learning structure, especially useful for developing communication techniques, digital tools, or creative outputs. It allows learners to imitate, adapt, and build competence at their own pace.

Hands-on Tasks

Hands-on tasks are embedded throughout the curriculum as core learning experiences. These may include:

- Creating advocacy scripts or conversation guides
- Designing role cards or communication aids
- Producing infographics, posters, or social media posts

Tasks are adapted for individual, pair, or group work. This practical approach nurtures skill development, self-expression, and real-world application. It aligns with project-based learning principles, empowering learners to take ownership and produce meaningful outputs that reflect their interests and lived experiences.

Discovery Method

Discovery learning invites learners to explore, investigate, and construct knowledge through experimentation and problem-solving. Rather than receiving fixed instructions, participants are encouraged to:

- Test solutions and strategies
- Observe and reflect on outcomes
- Draw their own conclusions

This method promotes autonomy and creativity and is particularly well-suited to neurodivergent learners who may benefit from non-linear and personalised learning paths. Discovery learning validates diverse thinking styles and embraces multiple ways of reaching success.

6. Accessibility principles and accommodations

6.1. Guiding Principles

The accessibility framework of ACTIVATE is grounded in the following core principles:

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

ACTIVATE offers multiple ways for learners to access content, express themselves, and engage in activities.

Flexibility over rigidity

Learners are not expected to participate in one set way; instead, multiple participation modes are accepted and encouraged.

Autonomy and informed choice

Learners are empowered to decide how, when, and to what extent they engage in sessions, reflections, and group work.

Neuroaffirming pedagogy

Differences in attention, communication, sensory processing, and pacing are expected and supported, not corrected.

Emotional safety

No activity requires disclosure, and participation is always voluntary. Facilitators are trained to avoid emotional overwhelm and honour boundaries.

Low-demand environment

Sessions avoid placing unexpected demands and are structured to reduce anxiety and executive function overload.

6.2. Accessibility in Curriculum Structure

Each unit in ACTIVATE follows a blended learning model with a predictable rhythm:

- Three 90-minute synchronous sessions with optional participation, multimodal activities, and consistent opening/closing rituals.
- Three asynchronous, self-paced components (pre-session prep, between-session reflection, skill practice), allowing for extended processing time and privacy.

This structure allows for learners to skip live sessions without losing access to learning; flexibility in energy levels and sensory needs; and preparation time to reduce anxiety and improve confidence.

6.3. Accommodations and Design Features

Communication	• All discussion prompts are provided in writing in advance • Learners can contribute via voice, writing, drawing, or emoji • Visual symbols and sentence starters support expression
Participation	• All group activities are optional • Participants can observe silently, join late, or leave early without penalty • Peer storytelling and reflection can be written or shared anonymously
Sensory Regulation	• Online: cameras optional, breaks encouraged, sensory-friendly visuals • In-person: access to quiet space, low-stimulation materials, and optional movement breaks
Pacing and Processing	• Learners can access all materials in advance • Asynchronous work replaces in-session individual reflection to allow more time • Recorded mini-lectures and visual summaries available for review

Emotional Safety	• No requirement to share personal or traumatic experiences • Concrete, non-triggering prompts used in reflection activities • Facilitators trained in neuro-affirming approaches
Visual Supports	• All concepts include visual summaries, icons or mind maps • Reflection tools and self-advocacy exercises offer templates, visuals, and mapping options
Multimodal Learning	• Each activity includes alternatives: write/draw, speak/type, visual/audio • Creative expression (e.g. collage, mapping) is available in every unit
Access to Content	• All videos include captions • Transcripts or slide decks accompany each mini-lecture • Printed alternatives available when needed
Executive Function Support	• Session agendas shared in advance • Reminders, checklists, and structured templates included • Consistent routines for opening/closing reduce decision fatigue

6.4. Role of Facilitators in Ensuring Accessibility

Facilitators are required to:

- Recognise and respond to diverse communication, emotional and sensory needs
- Offer alternatives without requiring learners to self-advocate repeatedly
- Monitor group dynamics to avoid unintentional exclusion or pressure
- Use trauma-informed and strength-based facilitation techniques

- Adapt activities in real-time and validate different learning rhythms

6.5. Optional Learner Profile Template

To support proactive accommodation, learners may complete a voluntary **Learner Profile** before the course (see annex I). This includes:

- Preferred communication methods
- Participation preferences
- Known sensory or cognitive access needs
- Emergency or distress signs and suggested responses

This helps facilitators build trust and reduce uncertainty for participants who benefit from predictability and control over their learning environment.

7. Assessment and Feedback strategy

Assessment in ACTIVATE is not based on grades, tests, or standardised performance metrics. Instead, it emphasises **reflection, self-awareness, personal growth**, and the **development of practical advocacy skills** in a supportive environment.

7.1 Assessment Methods

Assessment activities are embedded throughout the programme in accessible, low-pressure formats. These include:

Individual Reflection

Each session ends with short, structured reflection prompt (e.g., “What did I discover about myself today?” or “What strategy might I try next?”). Learners are invited to respond using writing or journaling, drawing, mapping, or visual expression, quiet thinking or body-based responses (e.g., gestures, movement). Reflections can be private, shared with the facilitator, or discussed voluntarily during the session.

Group Reflection and Dialogue

In group settings, learners may engage in:

- Voluntary debriefs and closing circles
- Peer discussions about advocacy strategies and lived experiences
- Collaborative brainstorming or storytelling

These collective reflections promote shared insight, build confidence, and strengthen peer learning without requiring self-disclosure.

Self-paced Activities

Asynchronous exercises (e.g., mapping tools, script writing, visual campaigns) serve as self-assessment opportunities. They allow learners to apply knowledge in meaningful ways, track their own development, and prepare for group interaction.

7.2 Facilitator Feedback

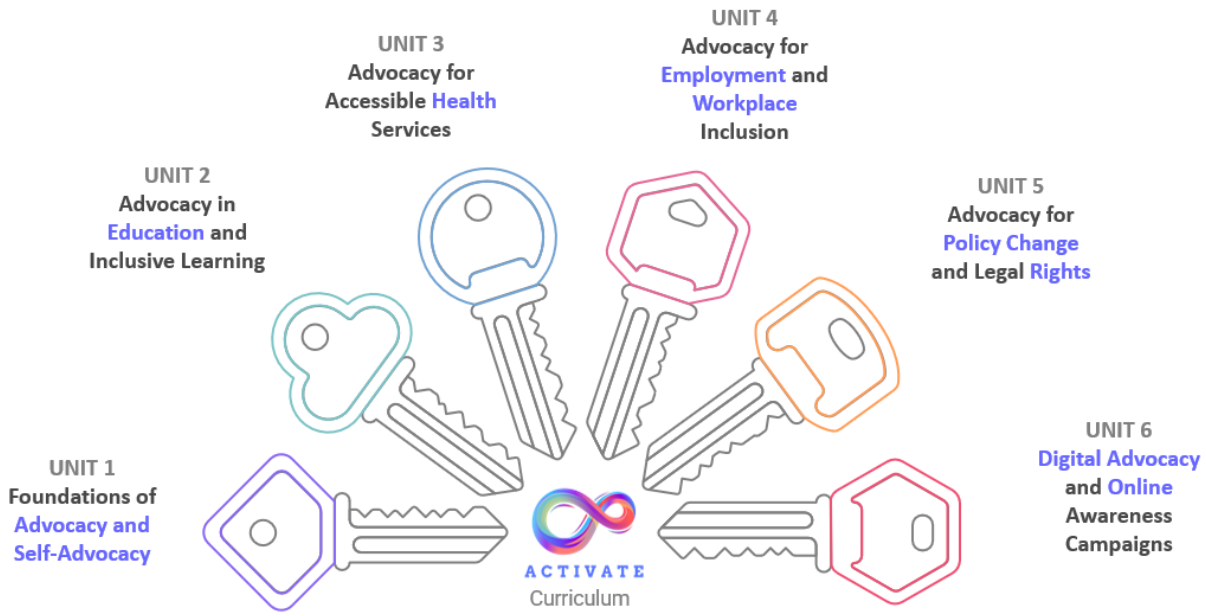
Facilitators support learning by:

- Offering affirming, strengths-based feedback during group discussions or 1:1 check-ins
- Noticing and acknowledging growth, effort, and initiative
- Providing space for peer-to-peer encouragement and modelling respectful dialogue

Facilitators **are not evaluators**. Their role is to create psychologically safe conditions for learners to reflect, express, and build confidence at their own pace.

8. Curriculum Structure

The ACTIVATE curriculum is structured into six thematic units, each addressing a key area of advocacy relevant to autistic youth. These units are:



Each of the six thematic units follows a **blended learning format combining asynchronous and synchronous activities**.

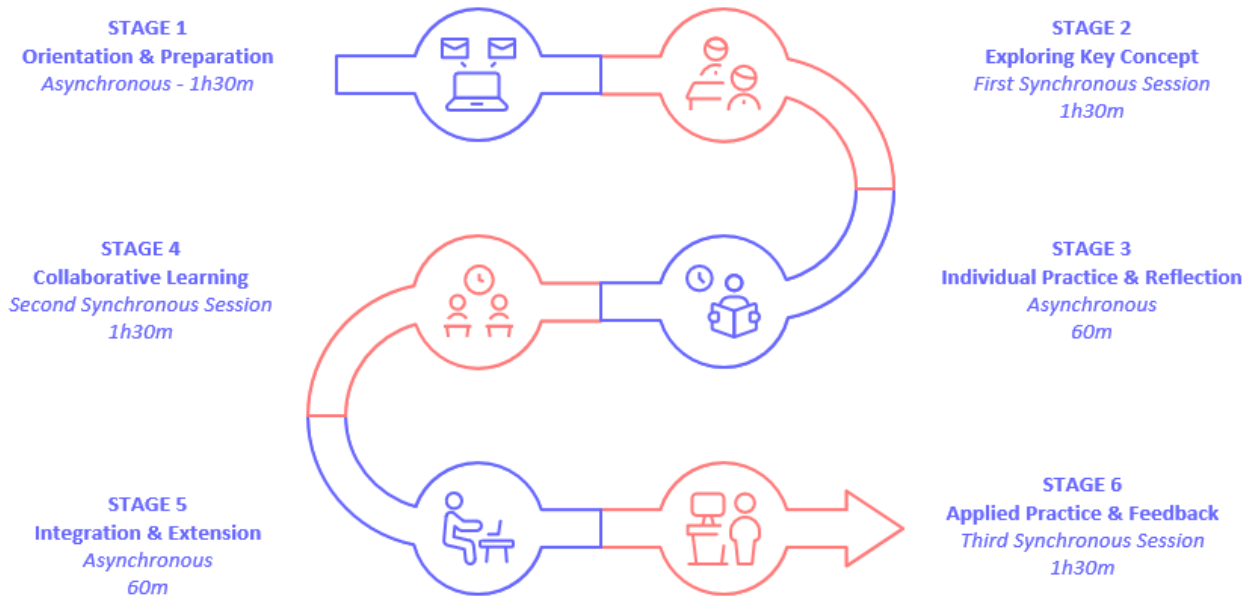
Every unit begins with a first asynchronous stage of 1 hour and 30 minutes, during which facilitators share the learning outcomes, session structure, calendar, and materials, followed by self-paced preparatory work. This stage sets the tone and introduces learners to the unit's materials and structure.

This is complemented by two additional asynchronous tasks of 1 hour each, assigned between the live sessions. The first self-paced task allows for processing and applying initial learning and the second allows for deepening of theoretical and practical components.

Learners also take part in three synchronous sessions of 1 hour and 30 minutes each, which focus on interactive learning, discussion, and skill-building. The first synchronous session allows for discussion and shared understanding of core ideas.

Second synchronous session focused on peer exchange, group exercises, and dialogue. Final synchronous session focused on skill application and peer feedback.

The learning journey is as follows:



This structure results in **4 hours and 30 minutes of contact time** and a **workload of 8 hours per unit**.

Across all six units, the curriculum comprises **27 hours of contact time** and an **overall workload of 48 hours**:

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	TOTAL
Contact Hours	4h30m	4h30m	4h30m	4h30m	4h30m	4h30m	27h
Workload	8h	8h	8h	8h	8h	8h	48h

Each unit is standalone and modular, meaning learners can choose the units that align with their interests, needs, and readiness. This flexible structure allows for personalised learning pathways and supports autonomy, a core value of the curriculum.

The programme can be delivered in-person or online and adapted to different group contexts and facilitation styles.

The dimension of intersectionality is embedded throughout all units, ensuring that diverse identities and experiences are considered and respected across the entire programme.

8.1 Learning Units

UNIT 1 - FOUNDATIONS OF ADVOCACY AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Overview

This foundational unit introduces the concept of advocacy and supports learners in developing core self-advocacy skills. It encourages participants to explore their personal needs, communication styles, and strengths as emerging advocates.

Relevance

Many autistic youth have limited access to structured self-advocacy learning. This unit empowers learners to recognise their rights, identify supportive strategies, and confidently express their needs. It sets the groundwork for more advanced and thematic advocacy skills in later modules.

Contact hours: 4h30m

Total workload: 8 hours

Sessions: 3 synchronous, 3 self-directed (asynchronous)

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy
Define the concept of advocacy and differentiate between self-advocacy and systems advocacy.	Identify and articulate one's own support needs in several settings. Identify communication techniques to express needs and preferences in the most efficient way to achieve the desired result.	Reflect on personal strengths and challenges, and take initiative in identifying advocacy skills to navigate everyday situations.

UNIT 1 - FOUNDATIONS OF ADVOCACY AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Stage 1 – Orientation & Preparation *Asynchronous*				1h30m
Phase	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Introduction & Preparation for next session	Mini-Lecture	Watch a short video introducing advocacy and self-advocacy	Pre-recorded video Visual slides PDF glossary Email with: Learning outcomes, session's structure and calendar and unit materials	30 minutes
	Personal Reflection	Reflect on past moments where advocacy was needed	Editable PDF worksheet "Journaling prompt"	30 minutes
	Hands-on Task	Read discussion prompt and prepare notes for next session.	Editable PDF worksheet "Paired discussion"	30 minutes

UNIT 1 - FOUNDATIONS OF ADVOCACY AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Stage 2 – Exploring Key Concepts *First Synchronous Session*					1h30m
Phase	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Reflection	"How do I feel right now?" Group temperature check	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Peer Discussion	Paired discussion: "When have I needed to speak up?"	Breakout Rooms, Guided prompts	Guided prompts	30 minutes
	Storytelling	Voluntary group story circle on moments of advocacy or missed opportunities.	Guided prompts	Guided prompts	30 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Closing round: "What did I learn? How do I feel now?"	Visual reflection slide, poll or chat	Sticky notes, whiteboard	20 minutes

UNIT 1 - FOUNDATIONS OF ADVOCACY AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Stage 3 – Individual Practice & Reflection *Asynchronous*				1h
Phase	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Preparation for next session	Hands-on Task	Complete sensory and communication map	Editable PDF worksheet “Sensory and communication map”	60 minutes

UNIT 1 - FOUNDATIONS OF ADVOCACY AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Stage 4 – Collaborative Learning *Second Synchronous Session*					**1h30m**
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Reflection	"How do I feel right now?" Group temperature check	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Peer Discussion	Discussion: "One strength and one challenge when asking for support."	Breakout rooms Guided prompts	Guided prompts	30 minutes
	Group Storytelling	Story Circle Voluntary discussion	Guided prompts	Guided prompts	30 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "What did I discover about myself today?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

UNIT 1 - FOUNDATIONS OF ADVOCACY AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Stage 5 – Integration & Extension *Asynchronous*				1h
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Preparation for next session	Demonstration Method	Watch/read/listen to examples of people advocating for their needs	Examples (Multi-media format)	15 minutes
	Hands-on Task	Build a personal script for asking for support	Editable PDF worksheet "Script for Asking for Support"	45 minutes

UNIT 1 - FOUNDATIONS OF ADVOCACY AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Stage 6 – Applied Practice & Feedback *Third Synchronous Session*					**1h30m**
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Reflection	"How do I feel right now?" Group temperature check	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Scenario Work	Paired or group practice using scripts, voice, or written communication	Scenario Cards	Scenario Cards	60 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "What is one strategy I might use this week?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

Recommended accessibility adaptations

The accessibility adaptations for Unit 1 respond directly to the needs, preferences, and barriers identified in WP2, particularly the fact that many autistic learners enter advocacy spaces with **limited prior experience, high levels of uncertainty, and significant emotional and cognitive load**.

Given that this is a foundational unit, accessibility in Unit 1 prioritises **psychological safety, low entry thresholds, and choice**, ensuring that learners can engage without pressure to perform, disclose, or "already know how to advocate".

Structure and Participation

- Clear session structure, agendas, and discussion prompts are shared in advance to support predictability and reduce anxiety.
- Participation is fully optional across all activities; observing, listening, or engaging asynchronously are recognised as valid forms of participation.
- Learners may join late, leave early, or step away temporarily without explanation or penalty.

Communication and Expression

- All activities can be completed through multiple modes: spoken, written, visual, symbolic, AAC, or silent reflection.
- Oral participation is never treated as the default or expected mode of engagement.
- Written prompts and sentence starters are provided to support processing and reduce pressure during discussions.

Social Interaction and Group Work

- Group activities are carefully structured and facilitated to avoid unregulated social demands.
- Small group or paired formats are prioritised.
- Learners may take observer or reflective roles during peer discussions or scenario work.
- Storytelling and scenario-based activities are strictly voluntary and signposted in advance.

Sensory and Emotional Regulation

- Online sessions allow cameras and microphones to remain off at all times.
- Learners are explicitly encouraged to take breaks, regulate their energy, and prioritise wellbeing.
- Emotional prompts are concrete and non-intrusive, avoiding forced introspection or disclosure.

Energy and Sustainability

- Advocacy is framed as something that must be balanced with rest.
- Learners are reassured that choosing not to act, not to share, or not to practise in a given moment is a legitimate and informed decision.

Guidelines for training facilitators

Facilitators in Unit 1 play a critical role in shaping learners' first contact with advocacy concepts. WP2 findings highlight that many autistic youth experience advocacy as risky, exhausting, or inaccessible, often due to past dismissal, misunderstanding, or unequal power dynamics.

Facilitation in this unit must therefore focus on **trust-building, power awareness, and consent-based learning**.

Neuroaffirmative and Rights-Based Facilitation

- Facilitators treat autistic communication styles, pacing, and regulation needs as valid and complete.
- Advocacy is framed as a matter of rights and access, not as a personal coping skill or confidence exercise.
- Compliance-oriented language and deficit-based framings are actively avoided.

Power Awareness and Safety

- Facilitators acknowledge that advocacy does not carry the same level of risk for everyone.
- Learners are never pressured to practise advocacy skills in ways that feel unsafe or inappropriate for their context.
- Silence, hesitation, and refusal are respected as meaningful choices.

Intersectional Considerations

Facilitators actively consider how advocacy experiences are shaped by intersecting identities, including:

- Race and ethnicity
- Gender identity and sexual orientation
- Socio-economic background
- Migration status
- Disability, health conditions, and support needs

This awareness informs:

- The choice of examples and scenarios
- How participation and disengagement are interpreted
- How feedback and encouragement are offered

Facilitators avoid universalising experiences and explicitly acknowledge that some learners face **layered barriers**, including masking and dual masking, when speaking up.

Regulation of Group Dynamics

- Group interactions are actively facilitated to prevent dominance, invalidation, or pressure.
- Facilitators intervene early if narratives minimise lived experience or reproduce ableist assumptions.
- Emotional labour is not expected, rewarded, or extracted from learners.

Facilitator Positionality

- Whenever possible, Unit 1 is delivered by autistic facilitators with lived advocacy experience.
- Mixed facilitation teams are acceptable when non-autistic facilitators act as allies and brokers to neurotypical systems, rather than as authorities on autistic experience.

Evaluation

Evaluation in Unit 1 is formative, reflective, and learner-centred. In line with WP2 findings, it explicitly avoids performance-based, comparative, or standardised

assessment, recognising that many autistic learners experience evaluation as stressful or exposing.

Purpose of Evaluation

Evaluation aims to:

- Support self-awareness and confidence
- Help learners recognise their own needs, boundaries, and advocacy capacities
- Improve facilitation and accessibility
- Encourage sustainable and self-directed engagement with advocacy

Learner Reflection

- Learners are invited to reflect on their learning through structured prompts embedded in sessions and asynchronous activities.
- Reflections may remain private, be shared selectively, or not be shared at all.
- There is no requirement to demonstrate learning publicly.

Applied Practice

- Tools developed in Unit 1 (e.g. scripts, worksheets) are evaluated based on personal usefulness, not on quality of delivery.
- Choosing not to practise orally or not to engage in scenario work is recognised as a valid learning outcome.

Facilitator Reflection

Facilitators reflect on:

- Accessibility barriers encountered during the unit.
- Adaptations used in response to learner needs.
- Group dynamics and participation patterns.

These reflections are used to adjust future sessions and improve the learning environment.

Indicators of Impact

Indicators of meaningful learning in Unit 1 include:

- Increased sense of entitlement to name needs and boundaries.
- Greater clarity about personal strengths and challenges.
- Learners leaving with at least one advocacy strategy or tool that feels usable in real-life contexts.

UNIT 2 - ADVOCACY IN EDUCATION AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING

Overview

This unit equips learners to become advocates within educational systems by addressing access barriers, building self-confidence, and promoting inclusive learning practices through collaboration with educators.

Relevance

Educational environments often lack neurodiversity-informed structures. Autistic youth need specific skills to recognise their rights, identify supportive strategies, and confidently express their needs in co-creating supportive learning environments.

Contact hours: 4h30m

Total workload: 8 hours

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy
Describe one's own challenges and opportunities within educational settings.	Identify accommodations that support own's learning based on personal needs. Apply strategies for advocating for inclusive education, accommodations, and requesting support.	Take responsibility for initiating processes to request accommodations and educational support.

UNIT 2 - ADVOCACY IN EDUCATION AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING

Stage 1 – Orientation & Preparation *Asynchronous*				1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Introduction & Preparation to next session	Asynchronous Self-directed study	Self-directed study Mini-lecture introducing advocacy in educational settings	Powerpoint Presentation PDF Glossary Email with: Learning outcomes, session's structure and calendar and unit materials	30 minutes
	Asynchronous Personal Reflection	Participants reflect on School Access & Map Support Map	Individual worksheet with journaling prompt	30 minutes
	Asynchronous Self-directed study	Participants prepare for the paired discussion	Worksheet with Paired discussion prompt	30 minutes

UNIT 2 - ADVOCACY IN EDUCATION AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING

Stage 2 – Exploring Key Concepts *First Synchronous Session*					1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Peer Discussion	Participants compare experiences and discuss strategies to overcome barriers	Breakout rooms Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	30 minutes
	Group Storytelling	Story Circle Voluntary discussion	Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	30 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "What did I learn today?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

UNIT 2 - ADVOCACY IN EDUCATION AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING

Stage 3 – Individual Practice & Reflection *Asynchronous*				1h
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Preparation for next session	Individual Hands-on Task	Develop a support/accommodation plan based on personal needs	Editable PDF Mapping worksheet	60 minutes

UNIT 2 - ADVOCACY IN EDUCATION AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING

Stage 4 – Collaborative Learning *Second Synchronous Session*					1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Group Discussion	Review scenarios of inclusive vs non-inclusive classroom environments	Breakout rooms Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	60 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "One thing I can try this semester to improve my learning experience?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

UNIT 2 - ADVOCACY IN EDUCATION AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING

Stage 5 – Integration & Extension *Asynchronous*				1h
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Preparation for next session	Demonstration Method	Watch/read/listening to examples of how to advocate for own needs	Examples (Multi-media format)	15 minutes
	Individual Hands-on Task	Participants build personal advocacy scripts for talking with teachers about support needs	Editable PDF worksheet	45 minutes

UNIT 2 - ADVOCACY IN EDUCATION AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING

Stage 6 – Applied Practice & Feedback *Third Synchronous Session*					**1h30m**
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Group Scenario Work	Paired or group practice of advocacy scripts (spoken or written)	Scenario Cards	Printed Scenario Cards	60 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "What's one tip or phrase I might use in real life?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

Recommended accessibility adaptations

Accessibility adaptations in Unit 2 reflect the fact that **educational settings are often highly regulated, hierarchical, and compliance-driven**, which increases the risk and emotional cost of advocacy for autistic learners. WP2 findings show that learners frequently encounter **sensory overload, rigid rules, hidden curricula, and dismissive attitudes** in education, making accessibility a prerequisite for participation rather than a secondary concern.

Structure, Predictability, and Cognitive Load

- Session agendas, learning goals, discussion prompts, and scenarios are shared in advance to support preparation and reduce anxiety.
- Clear explanations are provided about why each activity exists and how it connects to real educational advocacy.
- Learners are not expected to multitask (e.g. listening while writing); activities are sequenced to support focus and processing.

Communication and Participation

- All learning activities allow multiple modes of participation: spoken, written, visual, symbolic, AAC, or silent reflection.
- Oral participation is never required, particularly given that many educational barriers relate directly to communication-based expectations.
- Learners may prepare responses in writing and share them only if they choose.

Group Interaction and Power Dynamics

- Group and paired discussions are carefully structured, recognising that educational experiences often involve past trauma, invalidation, or punishment.
- Small groups are prioritised, with clear time boundaries and explicit permission to step back or take an observer role.
- Scenario work is framed as practice, not performance, and participation is always voluntary.

Sensory and Emotional Safety

- Online sessions maintain camera-optional participation.
- Breaks are encouraged and normalised, particularly after emotionally charged discussions about exclusion or discrimination in education.

Energy, Risk and Sustainability

- Learners are explicitly reminded that advocacy in education carries unequal risks, depending on institutional power, age, dependency, and assessment structures.
- Choosing not to disclose, not to confront, or not to advocate in a particular situation is recognised as a legitimate self-protective strategy.

Guidelines for training facilitators

Facilitators in Unit 2 must navigate a sensitive balance: supporting learners to advocate for inclusive education while **not reproducing the same power dynamics and pressures that make education inaccessible in the first place**. WP2 findings highlight that many autistic learners have been previously dismissed, punished, or ignored when asking for support in education.

Neuroaffirmative and Rights-Based Facilitation

- Facilitators consistently frame accommodations and inclusive education as legal and human rights, not personal preferences or favours.
- Autistic learning styles, processing times, and communication preferences are treated as valid and legitimate.
- Deficit-based narratives about “coping”, “resilience”, or “trying harder” are actively challenged.

Power Awareness in Educational Contexts

- Facilitators acknowledge that schools, universities, and training institutions hold significant power over learners’ futures.
- Learners are never pressured to practise advocacy strategies that could realistically place them at risk (e.g. academic penalty, retaliation, loss of support).
- Silence, strategic compliance, or delayed advocacy are validated as context-aware choices.

Intersectionality in Education

Facilitators actively consider how educational advocacy is shaped by intersecting identities, including, race and ethnicity, gender, socio-economic background, migration status and language, and co-occurring disabilities, chronic illness, or mental health conditions.

These factors inform how facilitators:

- Frame examples and scenarios
- Interpret hesitation or resistance to advocacy
- Respond to disclosures of discrimination or exclusion

Regulation of Group Dynamics

- Facilitators actively manage discussions to prevent comparison, competition, or invalidation of experiences.
- Emotional labour is never expected; sharing personal educational trauma is not treated as a learning requirement.
- Facilitators intervene if narratives normalise exclusion ("that's just how school is") or individualise systemic barriers.

Facilitator Positionality

- Facilitators act as allies and translators of institutional systems, not as authorities on autistic experience.

Evaluation

Evaluation in Unit 2 recognises that many autistic learners have experienced **assessment, grading, and feedback as sources of anxiety, exclusion, or harm**. In line with WP2 findings, evaluation is therefore **non-performative, reflective, and learner-controlled.**

Purpose of Evaluation

Evaluation aims to:

- Support learners in recognising their educational rights and needs.
- Strengthen confidence in navigating educational systems.

- Encourage realistic, sustainable advocacy strategies.

- Improve facilitation and accessibility within the programme.

Learner Reflection

- Learners engage in structured reflection through prompts embedded in synchronous and asynchronous activities.
- Reflections may remain private or be shared selectively.
- There is no expectation to disclose diagnoses, personal histories, or institutional conflicts.

Applied Practice

- Advocacy tools developed in Unit 2 (e.g. support maps, scripts) are evaluated based on personal relevance and usability, not on how assertive, fluent, or confident they appear.
- Choosing not to practise advocacy scripts orally is recognised as a valid and informed decision.

Facilitator Reflection

Facilitators reflect on:

- Accessibility barriers encountered during educational advocacy discussions.
- How power dynamics influenced participation.
- Which adaptations were required to maintain safety and inclusion.

Indicators of Impact

Meaningful outcomes for Unit 2 include:

- Learners reporting increased clarity about their rights in education.
- Greater confidence in identifying accommodations that support learning.
- Learners leaving with at least one advocacy strategy that feels safe, realistic, and context-appropriate.

UNIT 3: ADVOCACY FOR ACCESSIBLE HEALTH SERVICES

Overview

This unit focuses on health-related advocacy, empowering participants to request accessible and sensory-friendly healthcare, communicate effectively with providers, and understand how to navigate health systems.

Relevance

Autistic individuals often face healthcare inequities due to communication barriers and lack of system understanding. This module helps them gain the confidence and knowledge to overcome these challenges.

Contact hours: 4h30m

Total workload: 8 hours

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy
Describe one's own accessibility rights as an autistic patient navigating healthcare systems.	Identify personal barriers to healthcare access. Develop a script or communication cards to present to healthcare professionals, explaining individual needs and accommodation requests.	Demonstrate autonomy in identifying healthcare scenarios where these tools can be applied.

UNIT 3: ADVOCACY FOR ACCESSIBLE HEALTH SERVICES

Stage 1 – Orientation & Preparation *Asynchronous*				1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Introduction & Preparation for next session	Asynchronous Self-directed study	Self-directed study Mini-lecture introducing accessibility rights and common healthcare barriers	Powerpoint Presentation PDF Glossary Email with: Learning outcomes, session's structure and calendar and unit materials	30 minutes
	Asynchronous Personal Reflection	Participants reflect on personal or observed healthcare challenges	Individual worksheet with journaling prompt	30 minutes
	Asynchronous Self-directed study	Participants prepare for the paired discussion	Worksheet with Paired discussion prompt	30 minutes

UNIT 3: ADVOCACY FOR ACCESSIBLE HEALTH SERVICES

Stage 2 – Exploring Key Concepts *First Synchronous Session*					1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Peer Discussion	Participants discuss personal or observed healthcare challenges	Breakout rooms Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	30 minutes
	Group Storytelling	Story Circle Voluntary discussion	Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	30 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "What is one thing I want to advocate for in healthcare"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

UNIT 3: ADVOCACY FOR ACCESSIBLE HEALTH SERVICES

Stage 3 – Individual Practice & Reflection *Asynchronous*				1h
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Preparation for next session	Individual Hands-on Task	List and prioritise individual sensory, social, and communication barriers	Editable PDF Mapping worksheet	60 minutes

UNIT 3: ADVOCACY FOR ACCESSIBLE HEALTH SERVICES

Stage 4 – Collaborative Learning *Second Synchronous Session*					1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Group Discussion	Share common barriers and coping strategies	Breakout rooms Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	60 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "What feels helpful already?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

UNIT 3: ADVOCACY FOR ACCESSIBLE HEALTH SERVICES

Stage 5 – Integration & Extension *Asynchronous*				1h
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Preparation for next session	Demonstration Method	Watch/read/listening to examples of how to advocate for own needs	Examples (Multi-media format)	15 minutes
	Individual Hands-on Task	Participants build personal advocacy scripts for talking with healthcare professional about support needs	Editable PDF worksheet	45 minutes

UNIT 3: ADVOCACY FOR ACCESSIBLE HEALTH SERVICES

Stage 6 – Applied Practice & Feedback *Third Synchronous Session*					**1h30m**
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Group Scenario Work	Paired or group practice of advocacy scripts (spoken or written)	Scenario Cards	Printed Scenario Cards	60 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "Where and when do I want to use my advocacy tool next?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

Recommended accessibility adaptations

Accessibility adaptations in Unit 3 must recognise that **healthcare settings are often experienced as unsafe, coercive, and disempowering** by autistic people. WP2 findings show that advocacy in healthcare carries **high emotional, sensory, and relational risk**, particularly due to power imbalances between patients and professionals.

As a result, accessibility in this Unit prioritises **safety, autonomy, predictability, and consent** over speed, exposure, or assertiveness.

Structure and Psychological Safety

- Clear session agendas, learning intentions, and activity formats are shared in advance.
- Learners are informed beforehand when sensitive topics (e.g. medical trauma, discrimination, diagnostic overshadowing) may arise.
- Participation is always optional; learners may step back, observe, or engage asynchronously without explanation.

Communication and Processing

- All activities allow multiple communication modes: spoken, written, visual, symbolic, AAC, or silence.
- Extra processing time is built into discussions, scenario work, and reflections.
- Learners are explicitly encouraged to ask for pauses, clarification, or written summaries, modelling healthcare advocacy in practice.

Sensory Regulation

- Online delivery includes camera-optional participation, captions, and low-stimulation visuals.
- Learners are encouraged to use sensory regulation tools (headphones, sunglasses, movement, stimming) without judgement.
- Breaks are normalised, especially after emotionally intense discussions about healthcare barriers.

Social Interaction and Disclosure

- Peer and group activities are carefully structured to prevent pressure to disclose personal or traumatic experiences.
- Scenario practice is framed as skills rehearsal, not personal storytelling.

- Learners may practise scripts hypothetically, in writing, or by adapting examples, rather than using real-life situations.

Risk, Energy, and Sustainability

- Advocacy in healthcare is framed as context-dependent and strategic, not morally required.
- Choosing not to disclose a diagnosis, not to challenge a professional, or to rely on allies is recognised as a valid and protective choice.
- Learners are reminded that healthcare access should not depend on emotional labour or self-sacrifice.

Guidelines for training facilitators

Facilitators in Unit 3 must be particularly attentive to **power, vulnerability, and trauma**, as healthcare systems often hold life-altering authority over autistic people. WP2 findings highlight that many learners have experienced **dismissal, coercion, infantilisation, or harm** within healthcare contexts.

Neuroaffirmative and Rights-Based Facilitation

- Facilitators frame healthcare access as a fundamental human right, grounded in legal and ethical frameworks (e.g. UN CRPD).
- Autistic communication styles, regulation strategies, and decision-making processes are treated as legitimate and valid.
- Advocacy is framed as asserting rights and autonomy, not as "requesting favours" or "being cooperative".

Power Awareness in Healthcare

- Facilitators explicitly acknowledge the power imbalance between patients and healthcare professionals.
- Learners are never encouraged to confront professionals in ways that could realistically compromise their safety, care, or access.
- Silence, delay, delegation to allies, or use of formal complaint mechanisms are all validated as advocacy strategies.

Intersectionality in Health Services

Facilitators avoid universalising healthcare experiences and explicitly name that risk, credibility, and safety are unevenly distributed.

Regulation of Group Dynamics

- Facilitators monitor discussions to prevent normalisation of harmful practices (e.g. "that's just how doctors are").

- Emotional disclosure is never rewarded or treated as evidence of learning.
- Facilitators intervene when narratives shift blame onto individuals rather than systems.

Evaluation

Evaluation in Unit 3 is **formative, reflective, and non-performative**, recognising that many autistic learners have experienced healthcare assessment as coercive or invalidating. In line with WP2 findings, evaluation prioritises **meaning, safety, and personal relevance** over demonstration or confidence.

Purpose of Evaluation

- Support learners in recognising their healthcare rights.
- Increase clarity about personal barriers and support needs.
- Strengthen autonomy in choosing advocacy strategies.
- Improve facilitation and accessibility across the programme.

Learner Reflection

- Learners reflect through structured prompts embedded in journalling, mapping, and script-building activities.
- Reflections may remain private or be shared selectively.
- There is no requirement to disclose diagnoses, medical histories, or traumatic experiences.

Applied Practice

- Advocacy tools developed in Unit 3 (e.g. scripts, communication cards, barrier maps) are evaluated based on personal usefulness and readiness, not delivery style or assertiveness.
- Practising scripts orally is optional; written, symbolic, or hypothetical practice is equally valid.

Facilitator Reflection

- Accessibility and safety of healthcare-related discussions.
- Emotional load and pacing of sessions.
- Adaptations required to support learners effectively.

Indicators of Impact

- Learners reporting increased confidence in naming healthcare needs.
- Greater awareness of rights and available advocacy routes.
- Learners identifying at least one advocacy tool or strategy they feel able to use in future healthcare interactions.
- Reduced internalisation of blame for inaccessible healthcare experiences.

UNIT 4: ADVOCACY FOR EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE INCLUSION

Overview

This unit prepares participants to advocate effectively in professional settings, understand their rights in the workplace, and promote inclusion through informed dialogue and collaboration with employers.

Relevance

Workplace inclusion for autistic people is a growing but uneven practice. Equipping autistic youth with tools for advocating for fair treatment is crucial to increasing employment equity.

Contact hours: 4h30m

Total workload: 8 hours

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy
Describe one's own legal rights and accessibility barriers in the workplace.	Create a personal workplace advocacy plan, including accommodation requests.	Show initiative in applying the developed plan and identifying areas where support is needed.

UNIT 4: ADVOCACY FOR EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE INCLUSION

Stage 1 – Orientation & Preparation *Asynchronous*				1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Introduction & Preparation for next session	Asynchronous Self-directed study	Self-directed study Mini-lecture introducing basic rights and common barriers faced by autistic workers	Powerpoint Presentation PDF Glossary Email with: Learning outcomes, session's structure and calendar and unit materials	30 minutes
	Asynchronous Personal Reflection	Participants reflect on personal or observed workplace barriers	Individual worksheet with journaling prompt	30 minutes
	Asynchronous Self-directed study	Participants prepare for the paired discussion	Worksheet with Paired discussion prompt	30 minutes

UNIT 4: ADVOCACY FOR EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE INCLUSION

Stage 2 – Exploring Key Concepts *First Synchronous Session*					1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Peer Discussion	Participants discuss "What helps or hinders inclusion at work?"	Breakout rooms Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	30 minutes
	Group Storytelling	Story Circle Voluntary discussion	Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	30 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "One thing I've learned or want to ask for at work in the future"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

UNIT 4: ADVOCACY FOR EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE INCLUSION

Stage 3 – Individual Practice & Reflection *Asynchronous*				1h
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Preparation for next session	Individual Hands-on Task	Participants create a personal workplace advocacy plan	Editable PDF Mapping worksheet	60 minutes

UNIT 4: ADVOCACY FOR EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE INCLUSION

Stage 4 – Collaborative Learning *Second Synchronous Session*					1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Group Discussion	Share common barriers and coping strategies	Breakout rooms Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	60 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "What feels helpful already?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

UNIT 4: ADVOCACY FOR EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE INCLUSION

Stage 5 – Integration & Extension *Asynchronous*				1h
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Preparation for next session	Demonstration Method	Watch/read/listening to examples of how to advocate for own needs	Examples (Multi-media format)	15 minutes
	Individual Hands-on Task	Participants build personal advocacy scripts for advocating for themselves at the workplace	Editable PDF worksheet	45 minutes

UNIT 4: ADVOCACY FOR EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE INCLUSION

Stage 6 – Applied Practice & Feedback *Third Synchronous Session*					**1h30m**
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Group Scenario Work	Paired or group practice of advocacy scripts (spoken or written)	Scenario Cards	Printed Scenario Cards	60 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "Where do I feel most prepared to speak up?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

Recommended accessibility adaptations

In Unit 4, accessibility adaptations respond to the fact that **employment contexts are high-stakes, highly regulated, and closely tied to economic security**. WP2 findings show that many autistic learners approach workplace advocacy with **fear of retaliation, job loss, or reputational harm**, which must be taken seriously in the learning design.

Accessibility in this Unit therefore prioritises **control, preparation, and realism**, rather than experimentation or exposure.

Structure and Predictability

- Session's agenda, objectives, and activities are shared in advance to allow learners to prepare emotionally and cognitively.
- Activities are clearly framed as practice spaces, distinct from real workplace situations.
- Learners may engage selectively with activities depending on their current employment status or readiness.

Communication and Participation

- All activities support multimodal participation (spoken, written, visual, symbolic, AAC, or silent reflection).
- Oral participation is never required, recognising that workplace exclusion is often linked to communication norms.
- Learners may prepare scripts, plans, or reflections privately and choose whether or not to share.

Group Work and Disclosure

- Peer discussions and scenario work are carefully structured to avoid pressure to disclose sensitive employment experiences.
- Learners may work with hypothetical or anonymised scenarios rather than real workplaces.
- Observer and reflective roles are explicitly valued.

Emotional and Energy Regulation

- Breaks are built in and normalised, particularly after discussions of discrimination, job insecurity, or unfair treatment.

- Learners are reminded that advocacy planning can be emotionally demanding and that pacing is part of sustainability.

Risk Awareness

- Advocacy is consistently framed as context-dependent.
- Choosing not to disclose a diagnosis, not to request adjustments immediately, or to prioritise job security is recognised as a legitimate and strategic decision.

Guidelines for training facilitators

Facilitators in Unit 4 must recognise that employment advocacy takes place within **unequal power relationships**, where employers control income, contracts, references, and career progression. WP2 findings highlight that many autistic people have learned to survive work through masking, silence, or over-compliance, often at significant personal cost.

Rights-Based and Reality-Aware Facilitation

- Facilitators frame workplace inclusion and accommodations as legal rights, not personal requests.
- At the same time, facilitators avoid presenting advocacy as risk-free or universally safe.
- Learners are supported to assess when, how, and with whom to advocate.

Avoiding Idealised Narratives

- Facilitators do not promote “good employee” or “ideal advocate” models.
- Advocacy is not equated with confidence, assertiveness, or verbal fluency.
- Caution, delay, and selective disclosure are treated as informed strategies, not failures.

Intersectionality as Context, Not Checklist

- Facilitators remain attentive to how credibility, risk, and consequences of advocacy differ across learners.
- Rather than listing identities, facilitators:
    - Avoid universal solutions
    - Validate different thresholds for safety
    - Encourage learners to situate advocacy decisions within their own social and economic realities

Regulation of Group Dynamics

- Facilitators actively prevent comparison between learners' employment situations or "success stories".
- Emotional labour and personal storytelling are never required or rewarded.
- Facilitators intervene if discussions normalise exploitation, unpaid labour, or discriminatory practices.

Facilitator Positionality

- Facilitators act as allies and translators of systems (HR, policy, law), not arbiters of what is "reasonable".

Evaluation

Evaluation in Unit 4 reflects the fact that many autistic learners have experienced **workplace evaluation, probation, and performance review as stressful, opaque, or punitive**. In line with WP2 findings, evaluation is **non-performative, learner-controlled, and focused on practical usefulness.**

Purpose of Evaluation

- Support learners in understanding their employment rights and options.
- Increase clarity about workplace barriers and accommodations.
- Strengthen confidence in planning advocacy, not necessarily executing it immediately.
- Improve facilitation and accessibility of the programme.

Learner Reflection

- Learners reflect through structured prompts embedded in journaling, mapping, and planning activities.
- Reflections may remain private or be shared selectively.
- There is no requirement to disclose current employers, job roles, or past conflicts.

Applied Practice

- Outputs such as the Workplace Advocacy Plan or advocacy scripts are evaluated based on:
  - Personal relevance.
  - Clarity for the learner.

    - Perceived usability in real contexts.
- Choosing not to practise scripts orally, or not to finalise a plan, is recognised as a valid outcome.

Facilitator Reflection

- Whether activities supported realistic and safe advocacy planning.
- Where learners expressed hesitation, and what this indicates about risk rather than motivation.
- Adaptations needed to support diverse employment situations.

Indicators of Impact

- Learners reporting greater clarity about their rights at work.
- Increased ability to identify barriers and appropriate accommodations.
- Learners leaving with at least one advocacy strategy or plan that feels context-appropriate and sustainable.
- Reduced internalisation of blame for exclusion or unemployment.

Overview

This unit introduces learners to policy advocacy and introduces them to legal rights as autistic individuals. Participants will learn strategies to engage with decision-makers and contribute to social change.

Relevance

Autistic youth are often excluded from policy processes. This unit helps them understand their potential to influence systems, laws, and social attitudes.

Contact hours: 4h30m

Total workload: 8 hours

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy
Summarise key values of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.	Identify autistic self-advocacy organisations in your region. Analyse their activities and identify where you can cooperate with them.	Take responsibility for engaging with them or in creating your own policy change advocacy plan.

UNIT 5: ADVOCACY FOR POLICY CHANGE AND LEGAL RIGHTS

Stage 1 – Orientation & Preparation *Asynchronous*				1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Introduction & Preparation for next session	Asynchronous Self-directed study	Self-directed study Mini-lecture introducing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)s	Powerpoint Presentation PDF Glossary Email with: Learning outcomes, session's structure and calendar and unit materials	30 minutes
	Asynchronous Personal Reflection	Participants reflect on how CRPD principles apply in everyday life	Individual worksheet with journaling prompt	30 minutes
	Asynchronous Self-directed study	Participants prepare for the paired discussion	Worksheet with Paired discussion prompt	30 minutes

UNIT 5: ADVOCACY FOR POLICY CHANGE AND LEGAL RIGHTS

Stage 2 – Exploring Key Concepts *First Synchronous Session*					1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Peer Discussion	Peer discussion: "What rights are important to me and why?"	Breakout rooms Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	30 minutes
	Group Storytelling	Story Circle Voluntary discussion	Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	30 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "One right I want to protect or talk about more is..."	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

UNIT 5: ADVOCACY FOR POLICY CHANGE AND LEGAL RIGHTS

Stage 3 – Individual Practice & Reflection *Asynchronous*				1h
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Preparation for next session	Individual Hands-on Task	Research 1–2 self-advocacy organisations and their activities Prepare a short group summary or poster of one organisation's mission, work, and how to get involved	Editable PDF Mapping worksheet	60 minutes

UNIT 5: ADVOCACY FOR POLICY CHANGE AND LEGAL RIGHTS

Stage 4 – Collaborative Learning *Second Synchronous Session*					1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Group Presentation	Share your summary/poster with the group	Breakout rooms Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	60 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "What am I afraid about in taking this step?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

UNIT 5: ADVOCACY FOR POLICY CHANGE AND LEGAL RIGHTS

Stage 5 – Integration & Extension *Asynchronous*				1h
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Preparation for next session	Demonstration Method	Watch/read/listening to examples of how to advocate for own needs	Examples (Multi-media format)	15 minutes
	Individual or Group Hands-on Task	Participants create a personal or group mini-advocacy plan	Editable PDF worksheet / Canva / Art Supplies	45 minutes

UNIT 5: ADVOCACY FOR POLICY CHANGE AND LEGAL RIGHTS

Stage 6 – Applied Practice & Feedback *Third Synchronous Session*					**1h30m**
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Peer Learning	Peer feedback using simple strengths-based prompts to improve advocacy plans	Sentence Templates	Printed sentence templates	60 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "How meaningful is to me to take action?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

Recommended accessibility adaptations

In Unit 5, accessibility adaptations reflect the fact that **policy and legal advocacy is abstract, slow, and often disconnected from immediate outcomes**, which can increase cognitive load, frustration, and disengagement. This Unit therefore prioritises **clarity, pacing, and grounded connection to real-life impact**, rather than volume of information or legal detail.

Structure and Cognitive Accessibility

- Clear framing is provided for complex concepts (e.g. CRPD, policy processes, institutions), emphasising relevance over technical mastery.
- Learners are not expected to memorise legal articles; summaries and signposting to resources are prioritised.
- Activities are broken into small, manageable steps, especially when working on advocacy plans.

Communication and Participation

- All activities support multimodal participation (spoken, written, visual, symbolic, AAC, or silent reflection).
- Learners may work individually or collaboratively, depending on preference and energy.
- Sharing advocacy ideas, plans, or scripts is always optional.

Emotional Safety and Distance

- Learners are encouraged to work with issues that feel meaningful but not overwhelming.
- Hypothetical, collective, or anonymised advocacy scenarios are explicitly welcomed.
- There is no pressure to centre personal or traumatic experiences in policy discussions.

Safety, Privacy, and Boundaries

- Accessibility adaptations explicitly include online safety, privacy, and anonymity, particularly when discussing public advocacy.

- Learners are supported to consider pseudonyms, advocacy-only email addresses, and indirect participation routes.
- Choosing not to engage publicly or visibly is recognised as a valid advocacy decision.

Guidelines for training facilitators

Facilitators in Unit 5 support learners in shifting from individual advocacy to **collective, systemic, and rights-based thinking**, while avoiding pressure to become "activists" in narrow or idealised ways. The facilitator role is to **demystify systems without romanticising them.**

Rights-Based but Non-Technical Facilitation

- Facilitators present the CRPD and legal frameworks as tools for leverage, not as academic content to master.
- Learners are reassured that effective policy advocacy does not require legal expertise.
- Facilitators focus on *how* rights are used in practice, not only what they say.

Respect for Different Forms of Engagement

- Facilitators avoid equating advocacy with public speaking, campaigning, or confrontation.
- Behind-the-scenes roles (research, writing, organising, peer support) are validated as equally meaningful.
- Learners are supported to identify forms of participation that fit their capacity, safety, and values.

Intersectionality as Risk Awareness

- Rather than listing identities, facilitators remain attentive to how risk, visibility, and credibility vary across learners.
- Advocacy decisions are always contextualised within personal safety, economic stability, housing, and wellbeing.
- Facilitators avoid encouraging "one-size-fits-all" advocacy pathways.

Regulation of Group Dynamics

- Group discussions are facilitated to prevent moral pressure ("we must all act") or comparison of commitment levels.
- Emotional labour and disclosure are never treated as evidence of engagement.
- Facilitators intervene if advocacy is framed as obligation rather than choice.

Facilitator Positionality

- Facilitators are transparent about their own advocacy positioning and limits.
- Autistic-led and disabled-led advocacy perspectives are prioritised when discussing organisations and movements.

Evaluation

Evaluation in Unit 5 focuses on **refinement, reflection, and readiness**, rather than completion or performance. It recognises that policy advocacy is iterative and often long-term, and that meaningful engagement may continue well beyond the programme.

Purpose of Evaluation

- Support learners in clarifying how (and if) they want to engage in policy or legal advocacy.
- Strengthen advocacy tools through reflection and feedback.
- Encourage safe, sustainable, and realistic forms of participation.
- Improve facilitation and accessibility.

Revising Tools and Plans

- Learners are invited to revise advocacy tools, scripts, or plans based on:
  - Personal reflection;
  - Peer feedback;
  - Facilitator input.
- Revision is optional and learner-directed; incomplete plans are valid outcomes.

Peer and Facilitator Feedback

- Feedback is offered using simple, strengths-based prompts, such as:
  - "One thing that feels clear or strong is..."
  - "One question I'm left with is..."
  - "One way this could feel safer or more accessible is..."
- Learners choose whether to receive peer feedback, facilitator feedback, both, or neither.

Reflection on Safety, Privacy, and Access

Evaluation explicitly includes reflection on:

- Accessibility of chosen advocacy methods.
- Online safety, privacy, and data protection.
- Emotional and energy costs of engagement.
- Whether advocacy plans align with personal boundaries and wellbeing.

Facilitator Reflection

Facilitators reflect on:

- Whether learners felt pressured or empowered
- How accessible and realistic advocacy planning felt
- What adaptations supported or hindered participation

Indicators of Impact

- Learners reporting greater understanding of rights-based advocacy.
- Increased confidence in identifying *where* and *how* to engage.
- Learners leaving with:
  - a revised tool, script, or plan or,
  - a clearer decision *not* to engage at this stage
- Stronger awareness that advocacy can be collective, indirect, and paced.

UNIT 6: DIGITAL ADVOCACY AND ONLINE AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Overview

This unit explores how digital platforms can be used for autistic advocacy. Learners will gain insights on practical tools for developing campaigns, engaging audiences, and using online tools responsibly and creatively.

Relevance

Digital advocacy offers autistic youth accessible ways to share their voice, build networks, and raise awareness. It is a vital tool for visibility and social impact.

Contact hours: 4h30m

Total workload: 8 hours

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy
Demonstrate basic knowledge about the potential of digital media and online accessibility.	Design a strategy for implementing a basic online campaign on a topic you care about.	Take responsibility for engaging with peers and allies to broaden the reach and efficiency of advocacy messages.

ACTIVATE

Co-funded by the European Union

UNIT 6: DIGITAL ADVOCACY AND ONLINE AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Stage 1 – Orientation & Preparation *Asynchronous*				1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Introduction & Preparation for next session	Asynchronous Self-directed study	Self-directed study Mini-lecture introducing digital advocacy. Examples from social media, blogs, video campaigns	Powerpoint Presentation PDF Glossary Email with: Learning outcomes, session's structure and calendar and unit materials	30 minutes
	Asynchronous Personal Reflection	Participants reflect on which platforms they use and why	Individual worksheet with journaling prompt	30 minutes
	Asynchronous Self-directed study	Participants research an example of a digital campaign they like to bring to the next session	Worksheet "Presentation Prompts"	30 minutes

Stage 2 – Exploring Key Concepts *First Synchronous Session*					1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Group Presentation	Participants share the digital campaigns with the group	Breakout rooms Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	30 minutes
	Group Discussion	Brainstorm campaign topics learners care about	Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	30 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "Do I want to collaborate with a peer in creating a campaign?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

UNIT 6: DIGITAL ADVOCACY AND ONLINE AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Stage 3 – Individual Practice & Reflection *Asynchronous*				1h
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Preparation for next session	Individual Hands-on Task	Research 1–2 digital campaigns from self-advocacy organisations. Prepare a short group summary or poster of one organisation's digital campaign.	Editable PDF worksheet "Examples of impactful digital campaigns"	60 minutes

UNIT 6: DIGITAL ADVOCACY AND ONLINE AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Stage 4 – Collaborative Learning *Second Synchronous Session*					1h30m
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Group Presentation	Share impactful digital campaigns and ask: "What makes these stand out?"	Breakout rooms Guided prompts	Printed discussion prompts	60 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "What am I afraid about in taking this step?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

UNIT 6: DIGITAL ADVOCACY AND ONLINE AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Stage 5 – Integration & Extension *Asynchronous*				1h
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources**	**Duration**
Preparation for next session	Individual or Group Hands-on Task	Define campaign goals, audience, and channels to a new campaign or an extension of an ongoing campaign	Editable PDF worksheet “Mapping a Digital Campaign”	15 minutes
	Individual or Group Hands-on Task	Participants create campaign materials (post, script, video, visual, etc)	Canva, Slides, Google Docs, AI Generator, text-to-speech tools, etc	45 minutes

Stage 6 – Applied Practice & Feedback *Third Synchronous Session*					**1h30m**
Stages	**Methods**	**Activities**	**Resources for online delivery**	**Resources for in-person delivery**	**Duration**
Opening	Group Check-in	Reflection: "How do I feel?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	10 minutes
Main Activity	Individual or Group Hands-on Task	Participants present, post, or record a preview of their campaigns	Sentence Templates	Printed sentence templates	60 minutes
Closing	Group Reflection	Reflection: "How do I feel?" "How can we cross-promote ideas and continue this work?"	Poll Tool	White board and sticky notes	20 minutes

ACTIVATE

Recommended accessibility adaptations

Accessibility adaptations in Unit 6 recognise that digital spaces can be **both enabling and harmful** for autistic advocates. This Unit therefore focuses on **intentional design, choice of engagement, and accessibility-by-design**, rather than assuming that online participation is automatically inclusive.

Digital Accessibility by Design

- Learners are encouraged to create campaigns using plain language, captions, alt text, image descriptions, and multimodal formats from the outset.
- Accessibility is framed as a core advocacy value, not a technical afterthought.
- Campaigns may use text, visuals, audio, symbols, or mixed formats, depending on access needs and strengths.

Flexible Participation and Contribution

- Learners may contribute at different levels: full campaign, small creative elements (e.g. slogan, image, hashtag), or reflective input.
- Collaboration is optional; individual and group pathways are equally valid.
- Sharing campaign drafts or previews is always optional.

Cognitive Load and Pacing

- Campaign design is broken into clear steps (goals, audience, channels, safety, impact) to reduce overload.
- Learners are not expected to be active on multiple platforms or to maintain constant online presence.
- Rest, pauses, and asynchronous engagement are explicitly encouraged.

Safety, Privacy, and Emotional Regulation

- Accessibility adaptations explicitly include privacy protection, such as anonymised participation, separate campaign accounts, or indirect engagement.
- Learners are supported to recognise signs of online overload, harassment, or burnout and to step back without guilt.

- No learner is expected to engage publicly if this compromises wellbeing or safety.

Guidelines for training facilitators

In Unit 6, facilitators support learners to engage with digital advocacy as a **strategic, collective, and ethical practice**, rather than as constant visibility or personal exposure.

Facilitating Digital Advocacy Realistically

- Facilitators avoid presenting online advocacy as quick, easy, or risk-free.
- Emphasis is placed on strategy, boundaries, and sustainability, not virality or reach.
- Learners are supported to choose platforms and formats that align with their access needs and values.

Accessibility, Safety, and Ethics

- Facilitators consistently foreground accessibility, privacy, consent, and representation in campaign discussions.
- The use of AI and digital tools is framed as supportive, not substitutive of lived experience or judgement.
- Facilitators encourage critical reflection on algorithms, platform bias, and misinformation.

Intersectionality as Design Awareness

- Rather than listing identities, facilitators guide learners to ask:
  - Whose voices are centred or excluded?
  - Who might be at greater risk online?
  - How can campaigns avoid tokenism and misrepresentation?
- Intersectionality is treated as a design and accountability question, not a checklist.

Regulation of Group Dynamics

- Feedback sessions are carefully facilitated to remain strengths-based, respectful, and non-competitive.
- Learners are never pressured to defend their campaign choices or personal boundaries.
- Facilitators intervene if discussions prioritise visibility over safety or accessibility.

ACTIVATE

Facilitator Positionality

- Facilitators are transparent about their own use of digital advocacy tools and limits.
- Autistic-led digital movements and organisations are prioritised as reference points.

Evaluation

Evaluation in Unit 6 focuses on **iteration, feedback, and informed choice**, recognising that digital advocacy is an ongoing process rather than a finished product.

Purpose of Evaluation

- Support learners in refining advocacy tools and strategies.
- Encourage reflection on accessibility, safety, and impact.
- Strengthen confidence in ethical and sustainable digital engagement.
- Improve facilitation and learning design.

Revising Campaign Tools

- Learners are invited to revise posts, scripts, visuals, or plans based on:
    - Personal reflection
    - Peer feedback
    - Facilitator input
- Revision is optional and learner-directed; partial or exploratory outputs are valid.

Peer and Facilitator Feedback

- Feedback is offered using simple, strengths-based prompts, such as:
    - “One thing that works well here is...”
    - “One way this could feel more accessible or safer is...”
    - “One question this raises for me is...”
- Learners choose whether to receive peer feedback, facilitator feedback, or none.

ACTIVATE

Reflection on Accessibility, Safety, and Privacy

Evaluation explicitly includes reflection on:

- Accessibility of chosen platforms and formats.
- Online safety, privacy, and data protection.
- Emotional and energy costs of digital advocacy.
- Alignment between advocacy goals and personal boundaries.

Indicators of Impact

Meaningful outcomes for Unit 6 include:

- Learners reporting increased confidence in creating accessible digital content.
- Greater awareness of online risks and protective strategies.
- Learners leaving with:
    - a revised digital advocacy tool or campaign plan, or
    - a clear, informed decision about how (or whether) to engage online.
- Stronger understanding that digital advocacy can be collective, paced, and behind-the-scenes.

9. Future Recommendations

The ACTIVATE Curriculum was developed through an autistic-led, research-informed, and rights-based process, grounded in the findings of WP2 and implemented through WP3. The current structure reflects the project's scope, timeframe, and available resources, while prioritising safety, accessibility, and meaningful participation.

During the research phase, additional thematic needs and areas for deeper exploration were identified. While these could not be integrated into the present Academy, they provide valuable guidance for **future revisions of the Curriculum**, which remains the ultimate and evolving outcome of the ACTIVATE project.

Note: *the additional modules suggested in the research phase will be taken into consideration for a future revision of the Curriculum, which is the ultimate outcome of the ACTIVATE project, as the current implementation did not allow for the inclusion of further modules within the Academy.*

Expansion of Thematic Areas

WP2 findings highlighted several areas where autistic youth expressed a need for **deeper, more specialised advocacy training**, beyond the scope of the current Units. Future revisions of the Curriculum may consider the development of additional modules, such as:

- Advocacy related to **housing and independent living**, including navigating landlord relations, social housing systems, and housing rights.
- **Family, caregiving, and safeguarding contexts**, particularly where power imbalances affect autonomy and decision-making.
- **Financial autonomy and economic rights**, including benefits systems, financial abuse prevention, and supported decision-making.
- **Mental health systems and crisis support**, with a focus on rights, consent, and non-coercive approaches.
- **Community-based and local advocacy**, including municipal decision-making and grassroots organising.

Expanding into these areas would allow the Curriculum to respond more fully to real-life advocacy contexts that are often complex, high-risk, or insufficiently regulated.

Continued Focus on Safety, Risk, and Sustainability

WP2 findings consistently highlighted that advocacy carries **unequal risks**, particularly for autistic people facing additional structural vulnerabilities. Future revisions should continue to:

- Deepen content on **risk assessment, harm reduction, and safe alternatives to direct advocacy**.
- Address long-term sustainability, including burnout prevention and boundaries.
- Adapt content to emerging risks, particularly in digital and policy advocacy contexts.

Ongoing Adaptation to Digital and Technological Change

Given the rapid evolution of digital platforms, Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, and online governance, future versions of the Curriculum should:

- Regularly update content related to digital advocacy and online safety.
- Expand ethical guidance on AI use, data protection, and surveillance.
- Reflect changing legal and policy frameworks affecting online participation and safety.

Continuous Research–Practice Feedback Loop

Finally, future revisions of the ACTIVATE Curriculum should continue to be informed by:

- Ongoing consultation with autistic youth.
- Feedback from facilitators and participants.
- Collaboration with autistic-led organisations and advocacy networks.

This ensures that the Curriculum remains **responsive, accountable, and grounded in lived experience**, rather than static or prescriptive.

Closing Note

The ACTIVATE Curriculum offers a structured, neuroaffirmative, and rights-based approach to advocacy learning, developed through autistic-led research and grounded in real-life experiences. Across its Units, the Curriculum prioritises accessibility, safety, autonomy, and collective power, recognising advocacy as a contextual and strategic practice rather than a fixed set of skills.

While the current Academy reflects the project's available scope and resources, ACTIVATE is intentionally conceived as a **living framework**. Its future development will continue to be shaped by autistic voices, evolving social and political contexts, and ongoing reflection on what meaningful, safe, and sustainable advocacy requires.

ACTIVATE does not aim to produce a single model of "the advocate".
Instead, it supports autistic people in recognising their rights, understanding systems, and choosing how, when, and whether to engage, individually or collectively, in ways that respect their boundaries, values, and lived realities.

Nothing about us, without us.

ACTIVATE

10. References

- ACTIVATE Project Consortium. (2024). *WP2 – Research findings: Barriers, needs and enablers for autistic youth advocacy*. Erasmus+ KA220-YOU Project No. 2023-2-KA2-KA220-YOU-5EC53AC6.
- European Commission. (2016). *Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 October 2016 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies*. Official Journal of the European Union. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2016/2102/oj
- European Commission. (2019). *Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services (European Accessibility Act)*. Official Journal of the European Union. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/882/oj
- European Commission. (2021). *EU disability rights strategy 2021–2030*. Publications Office of the European Union. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0101
- European Parliament and Council of the European Union. (2022). *Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 on a Single Market for Digital Services (Digital Services Act)*. Official Journal of the European Union. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj
- United Nations. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. United Nations General Assembly. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2014). *General comment No. 1 (2014): Article 12 – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/812024
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2018). *General comment No. 7 on Article 4(3) and Article 33(3): Participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organisations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.* https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3899396
- World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). (2023). *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2*. https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/

ACTIVATE

ANNEX I - ACTIVATE Learner Profile

This profile is voluntary and private. You may share it with your facilitator to help create a learning environment that works better for you. You can skip any questions that feel irrelevant or too personal. You are free to update your answers at any time.

Basic Information

Preferred name:

Pronouns (optional):

Contact email (if comfortable sharing):

How I Learn Best

How do you prefer to receive information?

(tick all that apply)

☐ Listening to someone explain

☐ Watching a video

☐ Reading a short text or list

☐ Seeing a diagram or picture

☐ Trying something out and figuring it out

☐ Other: _____

How do you like to express yourself?

(tick all that apply)

☐ Talking out loud

☐ Writing

☐ Drawing or creating visuals

☐ Using symbols or emoji

☐ I sometimes prefer to listen only

☐ Other: _____

ACTIVATE

What helps you stay focused or engaged during a group session?

(e.g. breaks, fidget items, camera off, body doubling)

Sensory & Emotional Support

Are there any things in a session that might make you uncomfortable or overwhelmed?

(e.g. fast pace, noise, cameras, emotional prompts, being called on)

Are there things we can offer that help you feel safer or more comfortable?

(e.g. slow pacing, visual supports, off-camera participation, quiet space)

If you start to feel overwhelmed or distressed during a session, what should the facilitator do (or not do)?

☐ Let me turn camera/mic off quietly (this is already allowed)

☐ Send me a private message

☐ Offer a break

☐ Let me step away without explanation (this is already allowed)

☐ Other: _____

Communication & Participation

How do you prefer to participate in group activities?

☐ Speaking in group

☐ Speaking in small group

☐ Writing in chat



☐ Listening/observing only

☐ It depends – I'll decide each time

What helps you feel included in discussions?

(e.g. concrete prompts, extra time, being asked in private first)

Is there anything else you'd like us to know to support your participation?

This information is only shared with the facilitation team and will not be shared with other participants. You can ask to revise or remove it at any time.

- END -