Checklist: Inclusivity and Accessibility in Teaching & Learning

Inclusive teaching and learning respects diversity, removes barriers and enables participation by recognising and anticipating that students approach their learning in different ways using a variety of learning preferences and styles. Accessible teaching means ensuring everyone can effectively access and engage with your teaching and materials, including through the use of accessibility software by students, minimising the need for individual reasonable adjustments. Accessible teaching can also help improve overall quality and usability.

The following checklist is provided as a guide to help your practice as an educator to be inclusive and accessible. This guide has been prepared to stand alone; some further information is listed at the end.

Having regard to the points below is particularly important in the light of the University’s Strategic Plan Aberdeen 2040 and obligations under the Equality Act to eliminate discrimination, to anticipate the needs of disabled people and to make reasonable adjustment in relation to disability. Legislation regarding the accessibility of public sector websites also exists.

Most of the points below reflect legal obligations regarding the accessibility of public sector websites. For the others, points relating to inclusivity, anticipating needs and reducing the potential for future reasonable adjustment are marked;* and points which will support wider delivery of inclusion are marked.**

Designing a Course

- **Apply the Universal Design for Learning approach that gives everyone equal opportunities to learn.**
- **Employ different methods of engaging students with the course content (deliver and show information in different ways).**
- **Provide opportunities for assessment and learning outcomes and competence standards to be met in a variety of ways (such as written work, recordings, oral work, video or teamwork).**
- **Spread out assessment deadlines and replace, where possible, timed exams with alternatives, such as open-book exams with 48 hours allocated for completion, as an inclusive measure.**

Developing a Course

- **In the language you use, your choices of topic and selection of readings take as inclusive an approach as possible, particularly in respect of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage
and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. For example, if your reading list reflects a predominance of scholars from one section of society (such as established white heterosexual women), could there be some high-quality replacements by a more diverse range of scholars which may also introduce different perspectives? And in a course on intellectual property law, for example, one might consider a seminar on emerging topics such as copyright and disability, or copyright and community creation, and consider whether more established topics could be consolidated or replaced. Please note that this guidance should be read in the context of the valid need in a University setting to explore controversial or emerging topics.

- **The use of stereotypes should always be avoided. Be mindful of using social and cultural references (such as references to Irn-Bru or TimTams) as these can exclude students – contextualise these references for the benefit of all students.**
- Use a font size of at least 12pt. Sans serif fonts (Arial, Calibri, Verdana etc.) are easier to read than serif fonts.
- Have a good colour contrast between text and background e.g. avoid yellow text on a white background. Avoid using colour combinations such as green/red and blue/purple.
- Avoid using colour alone to communicate information, e.g. if link text is blue, it should also be underlined so users can distinguish links from surrounding text.
- Use proper heading styles, e.g. Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3, etc
- Use a logical heading structure, e.g. Heading 1 as your main heading, Heading 2 for subheadings, Heading 3 for sub-subheadings, etc
- Use blank space in your documents to emphasis points and/or to avoid cluttering slides and avoid large chunks of text.
- Think how your content would look on a mobile screen.
- If you use images, provide a text description which details the content of the image that conveys the full meaning of each. Any image that adds no value to the actual content can be marked as decorative. Further advice on describing images.
- Use tables for tabular data only.
- In tables have column headings and set the heading row to repeat.
- In tables, avoid merged cells and rotated text.
- In lists use built-in list functionality (e.g. regarding numbers).
- Embed links and ensure that all link text describes the target, e.g. don’t use “click here”.
In PowerPoint, use slide layouts where possible and check the reading order of slides. Further advice on accessible PowerPoint slides.

Use e-books, e-journals and professionally scanned materials held within the library collection. Work closely with the library to request these and follow library guidance regarding timing. Avoid using text materials that have not been professionally scanned; these may not be accessible when using text to speech software or screen readers.

PDFs should be tagged, e.g. that the heading styles are retained in the PDF.

Add text captions to video (automatically generated captions as a minimum) particularly for video published (made available) after 23 September 2020. Further guidance on Accessibility of Video, the approach taken by the University and support available.

Provide a text equivalent (transcript) for audio recordings published (made available) after 23 September 2020.

*When handwriting and making simple drawings, consider using Microsoft Whiteboard and a graphics tablet instead of a Visualiser and adding “alt text” to enable all users to engage with the content.

As a final check, use the accessibility checking software in your VLE (for example Ally).

**Delivering a Course**

*Provide access to prioritised reading lists in advance.

*Make copies of learning material (e.g. lecture outlines) available online 48 hours in advance of the teaching session or release of a recording.

*If you are speaking in a room on campus, use a microphone to ensure that everyone can hear you effectively.

*If you are teaching on campus, be mindful of the accessibility of the buildings and rooms and contact your School Disability Co-ordinator if you think this may pose a challenge.

*Provide access to any recordings of live lectures, prior to the next teaching session (or as soon as possible if sessions follow immediately).

**Provide opportunity and guidance for students to approach tasks and demonstrate their knowledge in different ways (e.g. orally, group work, answering direct questions, prepare written summaries) and take time to explain what you are seeking (e.g. what is meant by “be critical”).
**Regularly pause to reflect critically on the learning environment. For example, is it conducive to disclosure and discussion of differing views? Is diversity well-represented as the norm?**

**Don’t move around the room too much when you are speaking to a group as a whole. This can be challenging for students with hearing and vision impairments.**

**Be aware that some students may interpret what you say very literally, some may struggle if a series of questions are posed at once, some may struggle to contribute to live discussions particularly when being asked to simultaneously do something else and some may not cope well with unanticipated change in structure or sudden noise.**

**Further Support**

- Toolkit resource: Accessibility for Authors/Creators
- University of Aberdeen’s website Accessibility Statement
- University of Aberdeen’s Inclusivity and Accessibility webpage including details of training
- University of Aberdeen’s Guidance on Alternative Assessment with accompanying FAQs
- University of Aberdeen’s Supporting Learning for Students from Diverse Ethnic, Cultural and Educational Backgrounds