

Accessible programme design

A checklist for activity
leads



What is accessible programme design?

Accessibility is literally **the ability to access**. And accessible programme design? It's about how we design activities to ensure everyone can get involved, and everyone is included regardless of their characteristics, background or previous experience.

Why is it important?

People's privileges afford them access to certain opportunities, whilst others may face barriers to accessing those same opportunities. Accessibility is especially important for disabled people. Achieving equity means giving everyone the unique support they need to take part.

Accessibility

The quality of being easy to access.

Privilege

A set of unearned benefits given to people who fit into a specific social group.

Equity

Achieving fairness by providing resources according to need



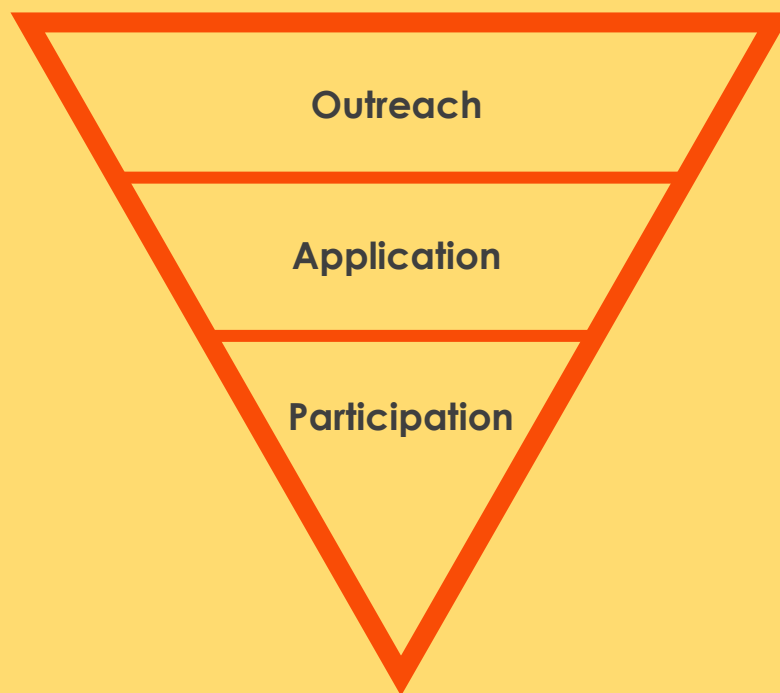
This checklist is aimed at:

- Student leaders
- Elected representatives
- Students' Union teams
- University colleagues delivering events and activities

What does accessibility look like for student activities?

It's important to reflect on barriers at all three stages of the golden triangle, and come up with actions to support individuals to overcome these barriers.

The golden triangle highlights the three key stages of all student activities which need to be considered within accessible programme design.



In the outreach stage a wide group of individuals will hear about your activity - be that through posters, stalls, social media posts, word of mouth, or another avenue. At the application stage a smaller group of individuals will let you know they are interested in your activity - this may be through submitting a formal application, attending an information session or having a conversation. At the participation stage a smaller group of individuals again will get involved in your activity.



Reflect: What barriers may students face at each stage of the golden triangle? How might you overcome those barriers?

Barrier	Action to overcome
Outreach	
Application	
Participation	

So, what can I do?

Based on 16 years of delivering student social action, Student Hubs created a checklist for accessible programme design which we used to audit and improve our activities regularly. Use this checklist to audit your activity regularly, and take actions to ensure you are creating an accessible and inclusive environment. Remember this checklist isn't exhaustive and over time you could - and should - add more items.

Outreach

1. Design an inclusive activity

- Cover expenses where possible, to overcome financial barriers
- Implement a safe space policy (appendix A)
- Create clear role descriptions including responsibilities, support and expectations so that everyone is on the same page
- Create a clear application and induction process, with reasonable deadlines so that participants know what to expect, have adequate time to make an application and can plan out their time
- Audit venue accessibility (appendix B)

2. Design an inclusive activity

- Share all of the information set in the design of your activity
- Explicitly state 'all welcome to apply' so everyone feels included
- Give a named contact and clear process for requesting reasonable adjustments so that people feel comfortable sharing their needs (appendix C)
- Encourage people to sign up with a friend to reduce nerves they may have about joining an activity alone
- Share what support is available throughout the process and a clear method for accessing it (i.e. who to contact, and how to contact them)

Reasonable adjustments are changes made to an activity to remove barriers and improve experience. They are based on an individual's unique needs to create an equitable and inclusive environment.

3. Practice accessible communications

- Use minimal copy on the graphic, as that won't be accessible for individuals with a visual impairment, including those using a screenreader
- Check the contrast of graphics to ensure they are accessible for those with a visual impairment, or learning disability such as dyslexia using a tool like [WebAIM](#)
- Capitalise hashtags so that they can be read by screenreaders (e.g. #EquityDiversityInclusion)
- Use captions for all videos so that they are accessible for those with hearing loss
- Use image descriptions for all photos and graphics so that they can be interpreted by screenreaders
- Include content warnings and signpost support services for sensitive topics
- Promote in a wide range of places (appendix D)
- Hyperlink descriptive text so that your communications are easy to navigate for all (*ie check out [the Google search engine](#)*)

Application

1. Maintain good practice

- Stick to your planned process and deadlines so that people don't miss out on the chance to apply
- Follow up on reasonable adjustments requests proactively, this is a legal requirement under the [Equality Act 2010](#)
- Provide written information, as well as verbal, so that everyone can access the same information and can review it after sessions and meetings

2. Interviews, training and workshops

- Offer sessions at different times in the day so that there are options for those with caring responsibilities and other competing priorities
- Facilitate sessions in accessible venues. Check your audit in Appendix B
- Add frequent breaks to sessions so that people don't get overwhelmed and can take a bathroom or snack break
- Provide accessible version of documents including large print or plain text versions for those with visual impairments

2. Interviews, training and workshops (continued)

- Let students know what engagement can be expected at sessions in advance so that they can prepare, ask questions and don't feel overwhelmed in the moment
- Use accessible slides (e.g. not too much text, large sans serif font, single colour pastel background)

Participation

1. Events

- Offer suitable catering for all diets, including people with allergies, intolerances and religious requirements
- Offer additional spaces for carers and prayer
- Ensure speakers are relevant (e.g. women speaking at an International Women's Day panel)
- Collect regular feedback in different formats including written and spoken so that you don't just hear back from those who had a great experience
- Have clear processes for reporting concerns including a named contact and method of contact, as well as information about what will be done following a concern
- Facilitate a wide range of activities (e.g. drinking and non drinking, expensive and not expensive)

2. Use inclusive language

- Avoid jargon, idioms and acronyms so that your message is accessible to everyone
- Avoid phrases that denote victimhood such as "they suffer with X"
- Don't underplay real mental health issues by using phrases such as "I'm so OCD"
- Use positive adjectives to avoid ableist language, use a thesaurus to find alternatives for phrases you commonly use
- If you don't know - ask. You can research things online, and discuss people's personal preferences and support needs

Appendices

Appendix A: safe space policy

We aim to create a respectful, understanding and kind space whereby individuals are able to feel free to express themselves without fear of judgement, harassment, or discrimination. This safe space policy is designed to protect individuals and groups to enable their full participation in our activities and community.

We have high expectations of how we behave towards each other in our activities. This includes both in person and online spaces. We will not wait for issues of harm to happen but will proactively challenge oppression and hierarchy in everything we do. Racism, homophobia, biphobia, sexism, transphobia, ableism or prejudice based on age, ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, gender presentation, language ability, immigration status or religious affiliation is unacceptable and will be challenged.

Safe space guidelines:

1. Be aware of language and its possible connotations. Many common expressions use discriminatory language and should be avoided (*ie that's insane*). Avoid complex language and try to speak without colloquialisms/slang.
2. Be aware of your privileges, including less obvious or invisible hierarchies. Think about how your words, opinions and feelings are influenced and who they might exclude or harm.
3. Do not make assumptions about anyone's gender, pronouns, sexual preference, abilities, ethnic identity, survivor status, or life experiences. Do not be derogatory to anyone about these things. Each meeting and/or introduction should start with names and pronouns.
4. Respect each other's physical and emotional boundaries, always get explicit verbal consent before touching someone or crossing boundaries.
5. Harassment, bullying, and aggression will not be tolerated. If such behaviour is seen and/or reported it will be named and potentially asked to leave a space. We will never intentionally invite guests who have actively portrayed or incited violence.

6. If discussions become personal we trust that others in the space will keep what is said inside the room and behave with kindness and consideration when responding.

Upholding this policy is a collective responsibility and people should be confident in challenging any behaviour which contravenes this policy. However, we also expect people to take responsibility for their own behaviour and adhere to these guidelines.

If you wish to report an incident of someone breaking this policy, please refer to our Anti-bullying and Harassment policy or speak to a member of staff.

You can read more about our approach in our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

The team

Appendix B: venue accessibility audit

<p>Is the venue wheelchair accessible (this must include a ramp, automatic doors, corridors wide enough to fit a wheelchair - please note which are and are not on site).</p>	
<p>Do wheelchair users enter via the same entrance as other visitors or is there an alternative entrance?</p>	
<p>Are there steps leading to the entrance - if so, how many and is there a handrail?</p>	
<p>If there are multiple floors that individuals will use, is there a lift and how is this operated?</p>	

<p>Are there disabled toilets on the same level as activities? If so, are they open access or would the individual require a key/code.</p>	
<p>Are there gender neutral toilets separate from disabled toilets?</p>	
<p>Is there a quiet room? (A room where an individual can go if they experience sensory overload or need space).</p>	
<p>Is there a <u>hearing loop</u> in the room where activity will take place?</p>	
<p>Is there accessible seating? You may wish to note the type of seating available (ie chairs with backs and arms, chairs with backs but no arms, stools without a back, etc)</p>	
<p>Is there room to easily manoeuvre a wheelchair or other mobility aids such as crutches?</p>	
<p>Is there general parking?</p>	
<p>Is there disabled parking? If so, would individuals need a separate pass to their blue badge?</p>	
<p>Are guide dogs allowed in the venue for this activity? If so, is there space for guide dogs to drink, exercise and relieve themselves?</p>	
<p>Is there someone available to guide individuals to locations if they have to move during the activity?</p>	

Appendix C: reasonable adjustments

This example copy is based on messaging shared by Student Hubs when promoting our activities and encouraging people to apply.

We've tried to make our activity more accessible by choosing wheelchair accessible venues, providing written information ahead of time, and including at least a five minute break every hour. If there's anything else we can do for you in order for you to participate fully in our activity, let Mo know at mo@email.com. Examples include:

- Using an expensed taxi service to aid mobility conditions
- Making sure there is seating with no arms
- Arranging a BSL interpreter

Your response will be treated confidentially and will not impact your ability to take part in our activity.

Appendix D: promoting your activity

This list includes examples of places to promote your activity. Apply your knowledge of your activity, institution and student community to create a bespoke promotional list to use.

Social media:

- Our social media channels
- SU social media channels
- Uni social media channels
- Residential Halls social media groups
- SU network social media groups
- Other societies' social media channels/ groups

University:

- Academic school newsletters
- Careers portal
- University department newsletters
- Faculty Employability Advisors

In person:

- Welcome fair
- Volunteering fair
- Halls roadshow
- Drop ins
- Lecture shout outs

On campus:

- Digital screens
- Posters

Student's Union:

- SU volunteering portal
- SU newsletter

Other:

- Word of mouth
- Course group chats
- Our mailing list

Thank you. Further reading

- [Social model of disability](#) - Scope
- [UK Disability Statistics: Prevalence and life experience](#) - House of Commons Library
- [Universal Design for Learning](#) - CAST
- [Accessibility Statement Generator](#) - Cambridge SU Disabled Student's Campaign
- [Unconscious bias](#) - AdvanceHE
- [Making Social Events and Activities Accessible](#) - Thomas Pocklington Trust
- [5 things to consider when improving inclusivity at Freshers Week](#) - IntoUniversity
- [Rules for creating an inclusive university](#) - Claudia Cahalane (AbilityNet)
- [Top tips and practical resources for autistic young people](#) - Ambitious about Autism



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