



A guide to planning inclusive events,
training and seminars at Manchester
Metropolitan University.

Introduction

Manchester Metropolitan University is proud of its diverse community of staff, students and visitors. We are committed to creating a positive environment where everybody is treated with dignity and respect.

The University aims to build a culture where:

- Fairness and inclusion are a fundamental part of everything that we do.
- Diversity is valued and celebrated.
- Good relations between diverse members of the University's community are promoted.
- People's diverse abilities and backgrounds are recognised and are treated with respect.
- Students from diverse backgrounds have an equal opportunity to benefit from higher education.
- Students and staff from diverse backgrounds have an equal opportunity to reach their potential.
- Benefits are maximised to the local communities that we serve.

To ensure that everyone can reach their full potential, and individuals are not subject to less favourable treatment, this guide provides information for organisers to take into consideration during the planning of any event, to ensure that all events are inclusive for all participants.

Planning your event

Avoid conflicting events with major religious or secular holidays/festivals by checking with the Equality & Diversity calendar. A copy of the MMU diversity calendar is available and through the equality and diversity webpages.

Timings

Start and finish times of events will have a bearing on the ability of participants to participate. Consider start and finish times, particularly during term time, where parents may require to take or collect children to or from school/childcare. School term times across the region can be accessed through myschoolholidays.com¹

Also, consider that individuals, for reasons relating to their faith, may be required to undertake particular obligations at certain times on certain days. These times can either be avoided, or facilities can be made available for religious observance. Copies of the University Equality & Diversity Calendar are available from the Equality & Diversity Team²

Booking forms

The booking form is essential – get this right and you will be well aware of the needs of all of your delegates (and speakers), which may help avoid a whole host of potential problems on the day. It will also enable you to glean the necessary information to ensure you are fully aware of the needs of each and every one of your delegates. When people are comfortable and have their individual needs met, they will be fully able to interact and engage and a successful event can only follow. Booking forms should include the opportunity for any disabled delegates to inform you of any reasonable adjustments they require.

The University is required to comply with the request for any reasonable adjustments.

Where catering is provided as part of the event, the booking form should enquire whether the delegate has any particular dietary requirements, and these should be met, wherever possible.

Where registration is online, check the accessibility of the registration site, are the forms easy to read and fill in? Are the graphics suitable? Are multiple contact options available to attendees?

All booking materials should be available, on request, in alternative formats such as large text, off-white backgrounds or 'read out loud' Adobe pdf forms³.

If it is a multi-day event, provide information on local accessible services including cafes with accessible entrances/toilets, disability friendly rooms in hotels⁴ or LGBT friendly space⁵.

¹ http://myschoolholidays.com/atoz.php?region=North_West

² Contact the Equality and Diversity Team by: Email: equalities@mmu.ac.uk; Telephone: 0161 247 6494

³ Instructions for using read aloud Adobe forms: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WN9qajjmlbY>

⁴ Websites, such as Blue Badge Style can help search for accessible venues:

<http://www.bluebadgestyle.com/venues/>

⁵ <http://manchester.gaycities.com/hotels/>

Speakers

Ensure your speakers have a very clear understanding of what your event is about and what is expected of them. Request they fill out a booking form so their access and dietary needs can also be obtained. Some presenters may find standing too difficult, so may need a low-level lectern or desk. Ask your speakers to keep to the time allowed.

Location

Choose your event location carefully as it can greatly maximise opportunity for people to attend. Bear in mind that public transport is not accessible to many people, either due to geographical issues or physical access.

The Venue

In terms of disability access, the venue of your event or training is likely to be one of the most important considerations. Information on visitor car parking is available on the University website: <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/staff/travel/car-parking/visitor-parking-information.pdf>

It may be useful to provide delegates and visitors with information regarding the accessibility of our buildings. Accessible floor plans, and 3D images of building entrances can be found here: <http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/travel/building-access-maps/>

Check if the signage is good and whether it is bright and well lit. In particular, ensure that any temporary signage is clear and legible.

Ensure the meeting room and its layout will not be too cluttered for the numbers of people you are expecting, there should be enough space for people to move about easily, room to accommodate assistance dogs and turning spaces for wheelchair users. Consider what layout you could use which would be more user-friendly – cabaret, theatre, or meeting room style.

If you know some of your delegates will be wheelchair users, ensure some chairs are removed and there is space allocated at tables, so not all wheelchair users have to sit at the same table. Your disabled delegates should be able to mingle and sit where they want just as any delegate should.

Bear in mind fire regulations provide guidance for specific numbers of people for safety purposes, but they will not necessarily allow for a 'comfortable' number of people.

Where the use of 'break out' rooms will be used, ensure that the route from room to room is uncluttered and accessible.

Accessible toilets should be available, and clearly signposted.

Emergency exits from the venue should also be considered, particularly in relation to disabled participants.

The booking form will give an indication of where participants may require other reasonable adjustments, such as digital copies of presentations in advance, written materials in different formats, specialist equipment (such as an induction loop), the support of an assistant or the provision of a Sign Language Interpreter.

Catering

Where the event is catered, provision should be provided for those with particular dietary requirements. The booking form/registration should tell you in advance if this is the case. Information can be provided by the Conference and Events Team⁶

Presentation materials

One of the greatest barriers to participation in events and training, is the production of materials prior, for and following events. The following section gives guidance on the production of materials, particularly in written/printed format, and some guidance on the use of presentation slides.

Producing accessible written, printed and online materials

Why is accessibility important?

Academic staff, teachers, trainers and event organisers produce a wide range of written materials for students, including course handbooks and lecture notes. Careful consideration needs to be taken to ensure written documents are accessible to the full audience – both to ensure an inclusive environment and to meet the requirements of disability legislation.

By anticipating the accessibility needs of the staff and students, the University will be contributing to the institution's responsibility in positively promoting disability equality, as required by the Public Sector Equality Duty. Additionally, by providing information in alternative formats the institution will be actively committing to its responsibilities, under the Equality Act (2010) to provide reasonable adjustments.

Wherever a participant requests materials in an alternative format, these must be provided as a reasonable adjustment

There are some particular groups who may find it particularly difficult to access various kinds of written or printed materials. For example:

- People who are partially-sighted may have difficulty accessing information that is poorly designed or produced in a small typeface. People may also find it difficult to access electronic files, which are incompatible with assistive software (such as Zoom Text – a piece of software that enables users to enlarge the information presented on a computer screen.)
- People who are blind will often require information in an alternative format (e.g. Braille, audio or electronic formats) or in an electronic format which is compatible with assistive hardware or software (e.g. a screen reader, such as Jaws, which reads out the information presented on a computer screen).

⁶ <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/venues/hospitality/>

- People with specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia) or autistic spectrum disorders (such as Asperger's syndrome) may find complex written documents difficult to access.
- People whose first language is not English may find written documents difficult to understand. This may include, for example, some international students or staff, people who are reading your document in other countries or some D/deaf people whose first language is British Sign Language (BSL), and not English.

Measures taken to improve accessibility for people with specific needs usually benefit the wider population. This underpins the 'social model' approach to accessibility, which encourages adaptation of mainstream activities and environments to be as encompassing as possible to as many people as possible, enabling disabled and non-disabled people to have similar experiences.

Best practice in accessibility is changing all the time, especially in relation to technology. While learners should always be consulted on how best to meet their needs, it is wrong to assume that they are aware of all the possibilities available to them.

The format and layout of your document

Use a simple and uncluttered layout for all documents

Only use clear "sans serif" fonts. "Sans serif" means that the font does not have the tiny lines at the end of each character:



Arial is a particularly good choice of sans-serif font in relation to accessibility. Avoid using serif fonts, such as **Times New Roman** or **Courier**

In relation to font size, it is best to avoid using a font smaller than 12pt at all times. If you are producing something that needs to be viewed from a distance (e.g. a poster), then you should use a much larger font. It is also worth noting that when the text is reversed (e.g. white text on a black background), the text may need to be made bold or large in order to ensure that it is clear and easy to read.

If someone requests correspondence or a document in "large print" format, the font size used should be a minimum of 16pt, although it is important to ask the person concerned what size they would like the text.

Use plain English and avoid the use of jargon and unexplained abbreviations wherever possible. Visit www.plainenglish.co.uk for further information about how to use plain English. Providing a glossary within a document is often a useful way of making a document more accessible when using jargon is unavoidable.

Avoid using block capitals wherever possible (particularly for whole sentences). Lower case letters provide the reader with more visual clues as to the letters used in each word, and they, therefore, make the text easier to read.

different shapes give clues

CAPITALS DON'T GIVE CLUES

Use *italics* sparingly: for example, whilst italics may be used to highlight *words* or *short phrases*, try to avoid using them to highlight whole sentences or blocks of text, as they make the text more difficult to read.

Be careful when using italics. Use them sparingly because...	<i>...italicising the text will make most fonts difficult to read.</i>
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Do not use background fill

Switch off “hyphenation” setting in word processing software so that **long-er** words are not split over two lines of text.

Align text to the left margin wherever possible. In left aligned text it is easier to find the start and finish of each line. Justified paragraphs often result in stretched or cramped lines of text. Aligning text to the right results in particular problems for people with visual impairments. Centred text should not be used for blocks of text, however, it may sometimes be used for large titles or main headings.

Left aligned text	THE RNIB recommends aligning text to the left hand margin, as in this paragraph. In left aligned text, it is easy to find the start and finish of each line and even spaces exist between the words. Also, if someone is ‘zooming in’ on an electronic version of your document on their computer screen and scrolling down the page, they may miss or be more likely to miss headings which are right aligned or centred.
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Justified text	Justified text can be readable if the space between the words is consistent. However, this is difficult to achieve with standard word processing or desk top publishing software. It is therefore best avoided as it can result in stretched or cramped lines of text. Sometimes, partially sighted people can mistake large gaps between words for the end of a line.
Right aligned text	Aligning text to the right hand margin, which produces a ragged left margin is problematic for people with visual impairments. Each new line starts in a different place and is therefore difficult to find.
Centred text	Centred text, where each line starts and ends in a different place, is even more difficult to follow and should not be used for blocks of text. Centred text can sometimes be used for very large headlines, although left aligning headings are generally much more accessible.

Consider carefully how you might use images, photos and illustrations in publications. In many cases, using images can help people to understand and retain information. They can also be useful in making the design of your poster/publication/sign etc more appealing. However, people accessing your document electronically may not be able to access the images. Therefore, try to avoid conveying meaning in images, which is not also repeated in your text.

In addition, when using illustrations, you must ensure that you avoid using designs that involve printed word over images (e.g. a photo or a graphic) as this will generally make the text harder to read.

Always use high contrast colour schemes (e.g. white text on black background, or dark blue text on cream background). Using different shades of the same colour for text and background can make text difficult to read. Also, some background colours (e.g. bright red or yellow) can make text in any colour difficult to read.

Poor Contrast.	High Contrast.
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When placing reversed text on a dark background, you may need to increase the weight of the type you use. This is because white text on a dark background appears smaller.	<p>Making the text bold makes it easier to read.</p> <p>Changing to another font and increasing the font size will enable even more people to read your text .</p>
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Difficult to read.

Easier to read.

White text on a black/dark background can be more difficult to read than...

...black/dark text on a white background. By using a white background, you reduce the amount of glare from the page.

Paper should be off white, white or yellow. Avoid using glossy paper, or paper with a patterned surface or mottled flecks whenever possible, as these can make text more difficult to read. Heavy paper stops text showing through.

Forms are a specific type of document that is very important to make accessible. Since paper forms require hand writing they are by nature totally inaccessible to blind and many partially sighted people. Forms that can be filled in electronically are thus preferred but not all formats are as accessible as others.

Spreadsheets

In general, spreadsheets are relatively accessible for blind and partially sighted people. The main issue is the lack of overview when you listen to the audio description of spreadsheet or use a large magnification. Therefore, we give some recommendations below:

- Keep the page simple and do not overuse blank columns or rows. If necessary provide information about where what can be found e.g. the data for the year 2010 start in cell j15.
- When using more than one sheet make sure to announce this to the reader and give each sheet a meaningful name.
- Graphs are not accessible to blind people. Colour coding should not be the only way to indicate your point.
- Avoid contracted cells wherever possible.
- Provide a meaningful title or header at the top of each row and column.
- When cells are protected, bear in mind that blind people cannot navigate to these cells and will have difficulties to check the information in those cells.
- When you want to provide information about a cell you can do this in Excel either by adding a tooltip or a comment to the cell. The former is added via the data validation option and will appear as soon as the cell is selected. Screen readers however will not read this tooltip nor announce that there is one. That is why we recommend adding a comment instead. Sighted people will see a red triangle in the upper right corner of the cell; hovering the mouse over it will show the comment. Screen reader users will hear that there is a comment as soon as they select the cell.

Presentations

When you give a talk to an audience of blind and partially sighted people there are some issues to take into account:

- Slides are a visual support of your presentation. Make sure to refer to all items on the screen. Avoid phrases like "and for you John I will describe this picture". Instead, just describe it.
- When pointing at something on the screen, name it. Don't say "this blue line shows the evolution of our monthly sales" or "the full report is available on this website". Instead, describe the trend shown by the graph and mention the full web address.
- If you distribute printed hand-outs, pass around the digital copy on a pen drive. Blind and partially sighted people with a laptop can copy the file and follow your presentation easier. Alternately, e-mail it around prior to the event since blind and partially sighted people need more time to familiarise themselves with slides or might want to make a large print copy.
- If you do provide a digital copy of your slides, make sure they are as accessible as possible.

Colour blindness

The difficulties colour blind students experience in Art subjects are easy for a colour 'normal' teacher to understand. Where a colour blind student has been diagnosed, institutions will generally make some allowances for these students in art subjects.

However, there are many more crucial areas where lack of colour vision is a serious disadvantage.

As only about 20% of children have ever had their colour vision tested there will be a significant number of colour blind staff and students in every University who will not even be aware that they are colour blind.

Many sessions are given on interactive whiteboards without any thought to the colours chosen to make the presentation. Often colour blind participants miss important parts of the lessons because they cannot clearly see the pointer or because of poor choice of colours chosen to highlight graphs, charts and diagrams.

The images below demonstrates how a coloured bar chart would appear to an individual with normal vision and an individual with deuteranopia (colour blindness).



For this reason, consideration should be paid to using data labels, rather than just relying on colours.

Accessible online resources

Manchester Metropolitan University is committed to ensuring that its web pages are accessible to all its users, regardless of how they access web content. Manchester Met aims to be standards compliant and follow the general principles and guidelines as set out by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

Access Keys

Most browsers support jumping to specific links by typing keys as defined on the website. For Windows users, you can press ALT + an Access Key; on Macintosh, you can press Control + an Access Key.

Access keys for Manchester Met websites are defined as:

- Access Key 1 – Homepage
- Access Key 2 – News
- Access Key 4 – Focus on Search box
- Access Key 9 – Feedback Form
- Access Key 0 – Accessibility Help

When using assistive technology such as a screen reader to navigate the University's web pages any issues arising can be reported by email:

webteam@mmu.ac.uk.