



ARCHER Training Accessibility

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- Why are we doing this?
- What is the recommended best practice?
- Examples from our own experience
- Getting the information we need
- How we can improve
- Conclusions

Why are we doing this?

- Because we have to!
 - Equality Act 2010
- Enable participation
- Removing barriers

- <http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service/staff/supporting-students>

The screenshot shows the website for the Student Disability Service at the University of Edinburgh. At the top left is the university's crest and name. To the right is a search bar and a link to 'Schools & departments'. Below this is a large banner image of Edinburgh with the text 'STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICE' overlaid in white on a red background. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > Student Disability Service > Information for staff > Supporting students'. The page title is 'Supporting students'. Below the title is a paragraph: 'Information on how to help disabled students, including the University leaflet on helping distressed students.' There are two main content boxes: 'Support for disabled students' with the text 'The Student Disability Service doesn't just exist to support students, but also to work with University staff to provide' and 'Coordinators of Adjustments' with the text 'This guidance is for Co-ordinators of Adjustments (CoAs) in Schools. It consists of a two part manual.' A left-hand navigation menu includes links for 'Support for disabled students', 'Coordinators of Adjustments', 'Accessible assessments', 'Accessible placements', and 'Accessible technology'. A 'Contact us' button is located in the top right of the main content area.

- Physical disability
 - wheelchair accessible rooming
- Specific Learning Difficulties
 - Dyslexia
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders
- Visual Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
- Assistive Technologies

- ARCHER course delegate requested wheelchair access to a training venue outside of University of Edinburgh
- Initially advised by the venue that it was NOT accessible
- Further research revealed a well documented, fully accessible access route

- ARCHER course delegate contacted the venue not us, that due to a badly broken leg, they required wheelchair access to the venue.
- Whilst accessible accommodation had been requested when booking the venue, the training room was swapped at the last minute and was actually upstairs with no lift.
- Catering and toilet facilities were on a different floor to the training room

- Delivering as a guest speaker at a conference, the mic was not being used by any of the presenters.
- It was a small room, so had not been thought necessary.
- Afterwards a hearing-impaired attendee complained that they could not follow the talks – would have been able to if mic had been used as it was linked to an induction loop.

- Visually impaired delegate requested practical session handouts be printed in 24 point text.
- Materials had been prepared in LaTeX
- LaTeX style file ran to so many pages, and was so complex, no one was able to make the required changes in time.
- (Though we did manage an alternative solution, in time)

- Ensure ALL venues to be used for training are fully wheelchair accessible
 - Even if no one requests wheelchair access at the time of booking
- Ensure ALL venues have induction loop facilities or else take our portable kit
 - And ensure ALL presenters ALWAYS use the mic
 - Your local university will usually be able to provide this.

- Ensure all materials are in a format that can be easily resized
 - Use simple Latex or powerpoint documents that are easy to resize
- Working with external hosts is often difficult: other universities have the same legal obligation to us, but will put their students first as that is their responsibility. They are not responsible for ensuring accessibility on our behalf.

- Make it clear that you are willing to provide any accommodations we can to make attending our courses as accessible as possible.
- Use HackPad or similar to share information with and between delegates during a course and afterwards.
- Use SkypeChat or similar to allow discrete communication between a delegate and the tutor during a course.

- Open conversation between attendees and tutor before the start of a course, bringing down the barrier to discussing their accessibility requirements.

Teaching students who are deaf or hard of hearing

- 1 in 5 people have some form of hearing impairment
- Many people lip read, some extremely adeptly
- Communication may be through the use of sign language, gestures, writing, language interpreters.
- Always speak directly to the student not the interpreter
- During discussions ensure one person speaks at a time
- Do not lose visual contact – avoid giving out information while handing out papers

Teaching students who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Provide seats near the front
- Use captioned videos whenever possible
- If a classroom must be darkened ensure student's interpreter is clearly visible
- When reading from text provide a copy in advance to participants
- When working with the chalkboard or overhead system, pause briefly to allow student to look at screen then interpreter/you

- Often varying physical limitations, may use crutches, braces, wheelchair
- May use a dictaphone to record lectures
- A wheelchair is part of a student's 'personal space' – do not lean, touch it or push unless asked. When talking to a student in a wheelchair one-to-one always be seated so they do not have to peer upwards at you
- Understand they may be late!
- Be prepared to make special seating arrangements
- Not all impairments are constant or unchanging, exacerbations/relapses or hospitalisation may occur.

Teaching students with psychological disabilities

- Depression, bipolar disorder, severe anxiety... and many more. Every case is different.
- Not well understood or accepted in our society.
- Many will fear the reaction of others and will not disclose information to you
- Do not press students to explain their disabilities if they do not wish to.
- Students may miss class, be late, leave the room in the middle of a class – they are responsible for catching up, but appreciate that they may ask for help to fill in the gaps
- Be respectful: don't jump to conclusions about why someone appears lazy, grumpy, or misses classes

- Considerable variation from no vision to being able to read standard print if magnified
- May need preferential seating
- Well before the start of the lecture (at least three days) provide slides/notes
- Use large font on slides
- Avoid making statements that can not be followed by someone without sight (e.g. 'This diagram sums up what I am saying').

- Ensure there is plenty of time for breaks
- Late start/early finish is often beneficial
- Start communication with participants before a course starts
- If possible provide catering so attendees don't need to leave the venue (also improves networking opportunities)

- Participants are under no obligation to tell you their requirements
- You are only expected to help if you have been told
 - Try and minimise the difficulty in asking for help, making you aware of their requirements
 - Disassociate being accepted for a course etc. with providing sensitive information
 - E.g. send out separate questionnaire after acceptance on course asking for adjustments needed

- Don't assume anything about someone's behaviour
- Being late, having a bad day may not be their fault – they may have very good reasons they don't want to share with you
- Understand that many of them may just 'make do' because they don't want to be seen making a fuss – we need to work to reassure them that we want to help (and act that way ourselves when we need help!)

- What else could we / should we do?
- How can we do things better?
- What would ARCHER users like us to change/do better?

- Vital to know what accessibility needs the delegates have
 - Not one-size-fits-all
 - e.g. Some dyslexics benefit from a background colour being applied to PowerPoint slides
 - But each individual will require their own colour

- Also vital to ask for things such as dietary requirements
 - Not a protected characteristic but excludes participants if food provided for everyone except them
 - Participants can end up missing activities to go in search of suitable catering.
 - Local small outlets may not cater for special allergies (dairy, gluten etc.)

- Everyone must be aware of the
 - requirements of the UK Equality Act
 - What facilities are available already
 - How to get help and further advice
- We should aim to share and document best practice



Questions?
