Top 10 Inclusive Teaching Tips

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The best way to ensure that you are fulfilling your statutory duties in respect of the Equality Act 2010 and that you are prepared to support the learning needs of students with disabilities, is to take a proactive and anticipatory approach to designing and implementing inclusive learning and teaching environments, activities, resources and assessments, which are accessible to the broadest range of learners possible.

This document outlines a range of practical steps for staff to take to enhance the inclusivity of their teaching, in order to support students with a range of disabilities.

1. Give students (and their support workers) time to prepare by

providing presentation slides (PowerPoint, Google slides, Keynote etc.), handouts, videos/AV materials and other resources in advance of class sessions (i.e. upload to the KLE and send email reminders). This will allow students plenty of time to access, print and read materials. Provide reading lists as far in advance as possible, clearly highlighting and emphasizing key chapters and articles as well as core from secondary readings, enabling students to prioritise. Provide [online reading lists](#) which are embedded in the KLE and get important [book chapters and journals digitized](#). Some students who experience issues accessing the KLE may require teaching materials to be emailed directly to them.

2. Design accessible teaching resources and file formats:

Formatting of resources:

- **Use a plain, evenly spaced Sans Serif font** such as Arial, *Comic Sans*, Verdana or Tahoma in size 12+ for printed resources and 24+ for presentation slides (PowerPoint, Google, Keynote etc.). Some students with visual impairments may require larger sized text. Be aware that printing more than one page per A4 sheet causes text to shrink.

- **Use a simple/constant colour scheme** for presentation slides with sufficient contrast between text and background colours, i.e. dark text on a light background. Students with dyslexia benefit from dark text on an off-white (cream/soft pastel) background for printed materials. If you apply this printing rule for all documents/all students you will avoid singling dyslexic students out.

- **Use headings on all presentation slides** for ease of navigation. Use **bold**, rather than underlined or *italicized* headings and avoid BLOCK CAPITALS.

- Use **left-aligned**, instead of centred or justified text.

- **Space things out** avoiding the use of long, dense paragraphs and cramming material on to pages or slides. Use sub-headings, bullet points, numbering, 1.5-line spacing, limit slides to small numbers of key points and highlight key words/phrases in bold.

Accessible file formats:

- Students at Keele use a variety of different text-to-speech and screen reader software to access and read teaching resources. **Microsoft Word documents are generally the most compatible**; however, it is wise to provide teaching resources in a variety of formats, e.g. Word and derived PDF files/derived PDF versions of slides, as well as original slide formats. Google Docs are also very accessible and can be emailed to students directly as well as embedded in to the KLE.

- **Create presentation slides from blank templates** (using 'text boxes' and 'title boxes') so that all material on slides is recognised by screen reader software.

- The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) website has a [style guide](#) with instructions on designing resources for use with screen reader software or alternatively use Microsoft's guide for designing [accessible PowerPoints slides](#).

- There is an easy-to-use function within Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and Excel to check how accessible documents are ([instructions here](#)). For Office 365 use the 'Check Accessibility' button on the 'Review' tab or for older Microsoft versions click File-Info-Check for Issues-Check Accessibility.

- Some students (e.g. those with sensory disabilities) may require **teaching resources to be converted into accessible formats** (e.g. braille, transcription of texts which are not digitally accessible, subtitles for videos). Speak to DDS to find out more about conversion of teaching materials and the notice period required.

- **Support students to revisit and revise lecture content** by using lecture capture technology or allowing audio recording of lectures. If students have a reasonable adjustment in place to allow audio recording of lectures, this must be permitted.

3. Provide clarity and structure:

- **Recap key themes** of the previous teaching session at the start of class; **provide a clear overview** for each session and what will be covered; **explicitly outline Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs);** and, revisit ILOs at the end of each session.

- Use an audible and clear presentation style; provide examples and clarify language when introducing new topics; and, pause and summarize regularly.

- A document provided in advance of classes with key arguments, concepts and new/difficult vocabulary is ideal, as is a glossary of concepts for each module.

- As appropriate, provide assessment questions, details and deadlines **as far in advance as possible** using specific instructions and concise/simple language. Always use **clearly defined assessment criteria** which link to the module ILOs and notify changes to assessments or deadlines in plenty of time.

- **Communicate changes** to familiar teaching buildings/classrooms, course arrangements, class activities, etc., with as much advance notice as possible to avoid distress for students with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and to allow those with mobility or sensory disabilities plenty of time to adjust/adapt to changes.

4. Create an accessible environment in the classroom to support students with visual and hearing impairments, mobility difficulties, autism and dyspraxia:

- Consideration may need to be given to timetabling and the proximity of teaching locations; how easy it is to enter, navigate and exit rooms; potential hazards or obstructions; students' preferred seating arrangements; and, if students require any extra space for their wheelchair/equipment, support workers and/or guide dogs.

- Students may have individual **Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)** Familiarize yourself with PEEPs for students you teach.

- Try to **minimise background noise** to reduce sensory stress, e.g. by closing doors and turning off noisy background equipment.

- Ensure **sufficient lighting at all times**. Turning lights down to view on-screen presentations, standing with your back to the light or in front of windows (which will place your face in shadow), and/or facing the board/screen rather than facing students directly, will disadvantage students with visual and hearing impairments by limiting their ability to see and/or lip-read.

5. Be aware of stresses that can be caused by group working and class activities and plan your teaching accordingly:

- Students with dyspraxia, ADD/ADHD or ASC may require **support for working in groups** to create a shared understanding of how group discussions and projects should be carried out in a way that respects all members. This may involve supporting the establishment of ground rules, monitoring group dynamics, or intervening when communication fails or any member is excluded. Students with ASC may find it difficult to appreciate that others have different approaches to producing work to themselves and may need support to understand/deal with this.

- Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADD/ADHD) will benefit from **plenty of time to read new materials in class** before any discussion of them to allow assimilation of information and formulation of responses to questions.

- Students with certain mental health difficulties may utilise **confidence building or coping strategies** whereby they find it easier to enter or leave buildings or classrooms after or before everybody else and may feel more or less comfortable in certain classrooms, with certain seating/table arrangements or seating locations in rooms. A student who experiences anxiety in large lecture theatres may wish to sit near an exit so they can leave and return easily if needed without drawing attention.

- Undertaking group work and contributing to class discussions can be very problematic for students with social anxiety disorders. The element of unexpectedness regarding if and when they may need to contribute can compound anxiety and stress. **Being clear about expectations regarding class contribution**, as well as group work ground rules, may help students to manage anxieties and give them time to prepare their contributions in class.

- Try to utilise small group approaches and activities which give all students the **chance to contribute if they feel comfortable**, but do not necessitate verbal contributions from all members or put any student on the spot. Asking students to work in pairs or small groups and seeking feedback from the pair/small group can mitigate the need to put any individual student on the spot.

6. Mix up your teaching approaches and use multi-sensory teaching to cater to different learner needs and preferences:

- When using presentation slides (PowerPoint, Google slides, Keynote, etc.) and other teaching resources, present information in a variety of formats, e.g. using videos, graphs, pictures, photos, flow charts and diagrams, rather than just text.

- Allow experiential learning and physical interaction with learning materials.

- Use a variety of group activities and approaches in small group teaching; break up lectures into segments with short discussion/breather breaks; build interactivity in to lectures using activities, handouts or interactive/voting software; and, always build in plenty of opportunity for discussion, questions and feedback in teaching sessions.

7. Be proactive and find out if you have any students with disabilities registered on the modules that you teach on and if so, what teaching and assessment accommodations (known as 'reasonable adjustments') are required to fully enable these students in their studies. This information is found on eVision under the 'Module Leader' tab and more detailed information about students' needs is sent by [Disability and Dyslexia Support (DDS) services](#) to Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs) in each school/department.

Where you are the module leader, locate this information on eVision, talk to your DLO and **communicate adjustments sensitively and in a need-to-know manner** to others teaching on your module. If teaching on a module that you do not lead, get in touch with the module leader and/or the DLO to find out about the additional needs of any disabled students. Familiarise yourself with disability-related procedures within your school/department, contact DDS for additional support and advice about implementing adjustments if needed.

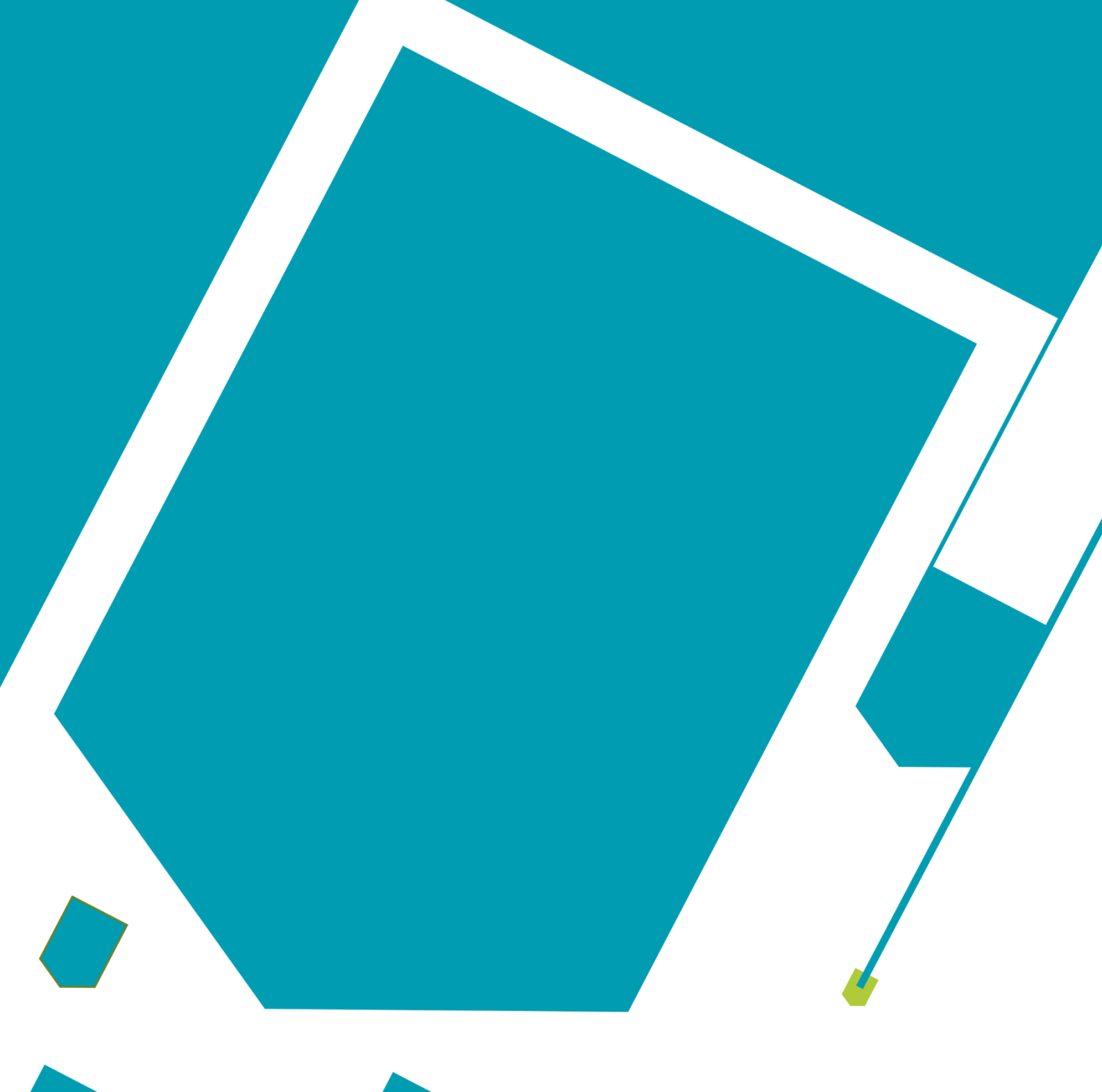## 8. Encourage students to disclose disabilities to DDS as

appropriate and in a sensitive manner, to enable needs to be assessed and support put in place early on during students' studies. Any student who discloses a disability should be referred to DDS as soon as possible; if students are reluctant you could help them by drafting an email or making a phone call to DDS with their consent. You may wish to make contact at the start of term, inviting any students with concerns about their learning needs to come and talk to you in confidence. This will reassure students that you are open to their needs, supportive and willing to make adjustments where necessary.

9. Signpost students (e.g. during inductions, personal tutor meetings, via handbooks

and leaflets) to key support services available across the university including: DDS; the Student Services Centre; Advice and Support at Keele (ASK) in the Student's Union; Keele Medical Centre; and, Counselling and Mental Health Support.

10. Don't make any assumptions about students in advance. Remember that

students with disabilities will have incredibly varied needs and will utilise different support strategies, assistive technologies and equipment. Some students will have specialist support workers in classes with them, e.g. British Sign Language interpreters, mobility assistants, note takers, etc. Be prepared to meet with students before teaching commences to get to know their individual needs.

Please visit the **Disability Support and Inclusive Teaching and Assessment** webpage to access more detailed resources and guidance about supporting students with a range of different disabilities: www.keele.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching

This resource was produced in 2018, updated January 2022
Disability and Dyslexia Support