Inclusive and accessible learning environments

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Introduction

The origins of the concept of an inclusive learning environment can be traced back to the identification by Malcolm Knowles (1970) of the 'learning climate' (Knowles, 1970, p46.) Knowles saw the creation of an optimum environment for learning as a key factor in adult learning and at this stage his focus was on the 'physical environment [which] should be one in which adults feel at ease' (Knowles, 1970, p46) and the importance of activities and resources related to the teaching itself. These might include arrangements and events prior to and during the first learning session, e.g. announcements and flyers, assessment prior to teaching of learners' needs, and the structure, content and behaviour of the educator during the opening learning event (Imel, 1995.)

This formative concept of what constitutes an inclusive learning environment was later expanded by Tisdell (1995, in Imel, 1995.) Tisdell believed that inclusive learning environments must work on three levels. She argued that they should:

- 'Reflect the diversity of those present in the learning activity itself in the curriculum and pedagogical/andragogical style.
- Attend to the wider and immediate institutional contexts in which the participants work and live.

- In some way reflect the changing needs of an increasingly diverse society.' (Tisdell, 1995 in Imel, 1995.)

A crucial cornerstone in supporting diverse learners through providing an inclusive environment is the provision of appropriate curriculum content that acknowledges that all groups have ethnicity and culture that will shape the contextualisation of their learning. (Shore et al, 1993 in Imel, 1995.)

Other theories regarding successful inclusive learning environments include the need to confront issues of sexism and racism (Hayes and Colin 1994 in Imel, 1995), interlocking systems of power and oppression (Tisdell, 1993b in Imel, 1995), and social justice (Shore et al., 1993 in Imel, 1995.).

Changing influences in pedagogy have resulted in a 'new pedagogy' as defined by Taylor and Marienau (1995 in Imel, 1995) that is arguably more suited to inclusive learning environments as it recognises the validity of students' experiences, the contextual nature of knowledge, and the concept that learning can be a transformative process.

It is important to recognise that true inclusion caters for the needs of each individual and therefore there can be no singular correct model for an inclusive learning environment. The environment should, therefore, be constructed in a manner that allows 'students to apply their learning to their own experiences and interests.' (Hockings et al. 2009a in Aswin et al. 2015, p. 317.)

Despite the fact that there is no prescriptive method for creating an inclusive environment, Imel (1995) offers some guidelines based on the various approaches discussed earlier:

- 'Acknowledge that all individuals bring multiple perspectives to any learning situation as a result of their gender, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality and/or physical abilities.

- Recognise that since identification with social groups is multiple and complex, [a learner's] claimed identity will be in response to many contextual factors that position the individual politically.

- Reflect the experiences of learners, both as individuals and as members of particular social groups and value these experiences through their use as the basis of learning and assessment. (Shore et all, 1993, p.3)

- Pay attention to the power relations inherent in knowledge production.

- Be aware that participants are positioned differently in relationship to each other and to the knowledge being acquired.

- Acknowledge the power disparity between the teacher/facilitator and the students (Tisdell 1995, p.90)'
  (Imel, 1995.)

Modern learning environments may also be online rather than face-to-face and recommendations regarding inclusiveness include clear guidelines for website navigation, accessibility of document types and the consideration regarding the implications of the sense of isolation which this mode of study may provoke in some students (Ashwin, P. et al., 2015, p.321.)

Strategic, legislative perspective

Legislation prohibits discrimination in education against students because they are disabled and requires that educational settings practice inclusive education. Leeds Beckett University (LBU) has a legal duty to comply with the legislation in this area. The details associated with this legal duty are complicated and this section aims to provide guidance and resources to help staff to understand the context of the strategic and legislative perspective.

Broad considerations

Human Rights are an important underpinning driver of legislation and policy to tackle barriers that create discrimination within society. The UK has ratified the United Nations Rights of the Child in 1991 (submitting Fifth Periodic Report in 2014) and the United Nations Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009 (the latter explicitly protects the right to inclusive education in mainstream schools). More information about the UN convention on disability rights in the UK can be found from the Office for Disability Issues.

The legislative framework for child protection was established in the UK with the Children Act 1989. This act established that the welfare of every child is paramount and any court looking into the protection of a child must ensure that planning is in the best interest of the child and takes into consideration every factor of a welfare checklist.

The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (a national charity that aims to eliminate discrimination and support equality in education) provides excellent guidance about how it is unlawful for any education

provider to discriminate against pupils on the grounds of protected characteristics (race, disability, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, employment of staff, access to benefits or services).

The Equality Act (2010)

The Equality Act (2010) contains legislation which outlines the responsibilities of public bodies to include disabled people and provide suitable services. The legislation cannot guarantee the quality of this support and implementation but they give guidance and expectations of what should be offered. Under the legislation all schools in England, Scotland and Wales (regardless of how they are funded) must ensure that none of their practices or policies would lead to any particular pupil receiving either direct or indirect discrimination.

This falls broadly under 4 areas which have been summarised well by The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education. *Direct discrimination* is when a pupil is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. *Indirect discrimination* occurs when attempting to treat all pupils equally leads to pupils with protected characteristics being at a disadvantage. *Discrimination arising from disability* sees a pupil being treated unfairly due to something related to their disability (this differs from direct discrimination as in it is not the disability itself but a related feature). *Failure to make reasonable adjustments* is when the setting does not make the reasonable adjustments required to accommodate disabled students.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments covers 3 areas: admissions, provision of education and access to benefits, service or facilities. Reasonable adjustments themselves can fall under making changes to policies and procedures, physical features, assessments, extra support and aids. Existing premises may not be required to change but long-term building plans must address access. Educational settings are expected to be pro-active and anticipatory and not wait until a particular pupil or group of pupils requires consideration to meet their legal duty.

Special Education Needs (SEN) legislation

The UK has made good progress in recognising educational inclusion of disabled children and young people with laws and policies. The Education Act (1996) made some important changes to the law regarding children with special educational needs.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) made further provision against discrimination on the grounds of disability and strengthened the rights of children with special educational needs (SEN) to attend mainstream schools, requiring that the same sort of reasonable adjustments should be made within education settings as stipulated in the Disability Discrimination Act (1995).

Children and Families Act (2014)

The Children and Families Act (2014) is a new act that sees the traditional Statement of Special Education Needs replaced by a combined Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC plan). Many disability

focused organisations have got resources to help people navigate the new legislation (Whizz Kids, KIDS and IPSEA)

SEN code of practice (2014) provides help and guidance for Part 3 of the Children and Families Act (2014)

Supporting Pupils with medical conditions at school (2014) The Children and Families Act (2014) requires schools to support children with medical conditions, both physical and mental health.

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

The EHRC provides guidance for Higher Education Providers on how to meet the requirements of equality law.

Meeting the expectations of legislation for inclusive Higher Education

The Disability Rights UK provide Education Factsheets and Guides to support students to understand legislation

EHRC Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Report - Is Britain Fairer (2015), provides information in Chapter 4 about progress within Education and learning

Research within Higher Education

Legislation to create inclusive learning and teaching in higher education aims to engage students in accessible ways and create enrichment through diversity, so designing the curricula and assessment within an inclusive pedagogical framework is the key. Christine Hockings (2010) synthesis of the literature discusses how embracing diversity may not be straightforward and equality and fairness are key values that underpin the philosophical position.

Leeds Beckett University

Leeds Beckett University (LBU) provides a range of support and resources available in leaflet form, on line and in person:

· Student accommodation advice – range of room types including en suite bathroom options
· International students – LBU International Office, Language Advice Service
· Student's Union advice, support, drop in centre
· Student Survival Guide – section for International Students
· LBU International Office

LBU Admissions Policy:

The University's Strategic Plan commits us to providing a supportive, inclusive and welcoming environment, and to put students at the centre of our activities through policies promoting fair admissions. The way in which we provide information about our courses; the criteria by which we assess applications and offer places, and the support, advice and guidance we offer applicants and their parents, sponsors and supporters should reflect this.

The University continually reviews its admissions practices so as not to discriminate (directly or indirectly) against applicants on the grounds of: gender, marital status or civil partner status, gender reassignment, age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, disability, responsibility for dependants or religion or beliefs.

The **International Student Barometer** (ISB) survey is independently administered by the International Graduate Insight Group. This is an independent survey of 69 institutions worldwide, of which 51 are in the UK. The response rate for the International Student Barometer (Summer Wave 2015) was the best ever for Leeds Beckett, with over 500 international students taking part. Leeds Beckett's participation rate was higher than both the UK and global average response rate to the barometer.

Results from the latest International Student Barometer (Summer Wave 2015) reveal that Leeds Beckett ranked first in the world for its Virtual Learning Environment, whilst its Online Library ranked first in the UK and second in the world. Results from the survey also showed that Leeds Beckett's technology ranked first in the UK and second in the world. Internet Access ranked second in the UK and third in the world, whilst its Learning Spaces ranked third in the UK and fourth in the world.

The **Access & Widening Participation** team work with colleagues across all four faculties, and central service areas, to deliver the outreach and community engagement elements of the University's widening participation strategy. They are responsible for organising and delivering a wide range of higher education outreach projects, designed to increase the number of students studying at our University from our key target groups.

Examples of their work includes: delivering the University compact schemes; residential summer schools; aspiration raising events and activities; subject specific lectures and workshops; and representing the University at school, college and community events.

The **Gender Equality Forum** welcomes all staff and students who have an interest in promoting gender equality at Leeds Beckett. Most recently they have worked with outside agencies to raise awareness of violence against women in the Leeds area and over the coming year will be looking at trans issues and men's health.

The **Carers Network Forum** provides support, advice and guidance on caring issues. In the UK there are 6.5 million people caring unpaid and Employers for Carers estimate that 1 in 7 of the UK workforce will be caring for someone who is ill, frail or has a disability. Carers help with personal things like getting someone dressed, turning them in their sleep, helping them to the toilet, helping them move about or administering their medication. Carers also help with things like shopping, laundry, cleaning, cooking, filling in forms or managing money. The carer's network welcomes all staff and students who have caring responsibilities. Meeting 4 times a year this network provides an opportunity to meet others with similar personal circumstances, share information with other network members and to discuss any concerns or issues they may be facing.

The **Faith and Belief Forum** was formed in 2007 as a network that welcomes all staff and students within the University. Religion and belief is a protected characteristic that refers to religion, faith and belief.

The University's **Race, Equality and Diversity** Forum was created in 2010 with a remit to meet at least 4 times in the year to discuss, promote and air concerns students or staff may have affecting Race and Equality at the university.

Under the Equality Act 2010, 'Race' refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. LBU aims to promote and raise awareness of issues affecting all staff and provide mechanisms and guidance for enhancing their contribution to Leeds Beckett. Black and Minority Ethnic group (BME) staff and students are under-represented in the University and this is a significant focus of the work of the Group.

Leeds Beckett University has a **Dignity and Respect Forum** which is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive environment in which a diverse population of students and staff can learn and thrive, free from discrimination and harassment. Staff and students should expect to be treated with dignity and respect and the University is a place where people are protected from treatment which demeans them, or is unfair or intimidating.

If staff or students feel that they are not being treated fairly then the Dignity & Respect Network is the first line of support. Issues can be discussed discreetly with an independent, trained volunteer who can talk through the options and help identify the next course of action.

Equality Impact Assessment

An impact assessment is a means of equality proofing policies, processes and practices to ensure they don't unwittingly favour, or discriminate against groups as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

As a public sector organisation LBU is expected to demonstrate best practice and is committed to looking beyond compliance to continued improvement. Ideally an impact assessment should be completed in the

development stage of new policies and processes to ensure that any equality feedback can be included in good time.

When changing procedure, processes or policies it is also a good idea to complete an impact assessment.

Students with Dyslexia

Leeds Beckett University utilises the definition of disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010: a disability is a physical or mental impairment that has lasted or is likely to last for more than 12 months which has an adverse, substantial impact on ability to perform activities of daily life. (https://www.offa.org.uk/agreements/Leeds%20Beckett%201617.pdf)

 "Dyslexic learners who have access to robust support and inclusive practice models will foster a positive identity, enabling them to become active and independent professionals." (Leveroy 2013)

Richardson (2015) undertook research into the academic outcomes of students with dyslexia on a variety of distance learning degrees, comparing to those students who did not have it. He found that students with dyslexia were equally likely to complete the module, but less likely to get as good a grade or to pass.

Leveroy (2013) grounds working with the student with dyslexia as needing to be viewed within the Social Model of Disability. This argues that whilst the student with dyslexia has an impairment, that it is society, in this case the university's procedures, which disables the student. Griffin and Pollack (2009) argue that this results in the student having to make all the adaptations, where the social model of disability

supports that the university should make the adaptations to ensure that the student has access to inclusive education.

Holgate (2015) argues that whilst alternative assessments meet the students' needs to be able to achieve better grades within university; that this can result in students who are less able to produce well-written, analytical reports, leaving the student less profession ready. He argues that students should be supported to develop *competent literacy* skills whilst taking into account their need to learn in a more accessible way, and argues that the lecturer's ability to utilise "simple acts of dialogue, empathy and trust" engages and develops the student effectively.

Whilst "reasonable adjustments" are made by Leeds Beckett University, for any student who opts to be assessed and is assessed as needing a Reasonable Adjustment Plan, this often focuses on meeting the student's individual need, for example, assignment extensions, enhanced examination conditions, or a scribe for lectures. Further to this Leeds Beckett University Skills for Learning (http://skillsforlearning.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/) provides an excellent breadth of workshops, podcasts, tutorials and information about generic issues that will support a student with dyslexia. However, this relies upon the student understanding their learning needs and accessing the support. Students can access recordings of lectures, using the lecture capture pilot Panopto. However, the model continues to feel like the concerns raised within the social model of disability: that the student is the one who has to adjust, for example using the disability student support worker model. Whilst this is making improvements in

achievement as the success for students with a learning disability within Leeds Beckett University rose from 58.1- 62.5% over three academic years (2011-14) (Leeds Beckett University (2015) *Access Agreement 2016/17*

https://www.offa.org.uk/agreements/Leeds%20Beckett%201617.pdf), it still falls short of the self-set benchmark of 70.5%.

What these support services fail to address are the generic need for teaching to be aimed at all lecturers to ensure that they teach in an inclusive manner. It is, of course, supported and encouraged. Indeed, it is underpinned by the Leeds Beckett Learning and Teaching Strategy 2011-15

(https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/partners/files/Learning_and_Teaching_Strategy.pdf) but it is down to the individual lecturer to ensure that their teaching is subjectively biased to meeting the needs of all students, those with a learning disability and without. What is called for is a review of the pedagogical practice across the university to enhance the students' experience of inclusive teaching. Leeds Beckett University are currently undertaking the Deep Dive project, which is reviewing how students can be supported, which is excellent.

Pino and Mortari (2014) reviewed students with dyslexia's experience of teaching approached and concluded that teaching that was creative and innovative engaged them most. They found that students with dyslexia found teaching utilising ICT to engage them, but also acknowledged that it engaged students without dyslexia, making it beneficial for all students. They found that productive teaching included discussion sessions, practical experiences and problem-solving exercises, all which

engaged the students in developing their analytical and problem solving skills.

Students with dyslexia report finding it difficult to:	Students with dyslexia benefit from:
Take notes	Support with assignment organisation
Organise their written work	Support with how to express ideas in writing
Analyse and express ideas with their written work	Note taking
	Additional time for assignments and exams

(Mortimore and Crozier 2006)

It is therefore important that when designing a course or module that the lecturer takes account of the needs of students with a learning disability's needs, making the teaching style and assessment styled varied and flexible. It can be seen that creative, flexible teaching styles engage students most productively. A variety of teaching methods that are not based on taking notes and listening to a flat lecture, but instead look at enhancing the problem solving and creative thinking of the student should be engaged by every member of the teaching staff in Leeds Beckett University.

Resources within Leeds Beckett University

Disability Advice

http://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/studenthub/disability-services/

Skills for Learning: http://skillsforlearning.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/

Case Study

Helen is a BA1 student, to whom you are tutor, and she is on one of your modules. In semester one she struggled to complete tasks in preparation for tutorials, and was often late and flustered. You spent time with her talking about her accessing Learning Support through the library to enhance her organisation skills, and directed her to Disability Support to be assessed for any specific needs. The diagnostic assessment came back with clear indicators that Helen "presents a profile indicative of someone who has specific learning difficulties based on cognitive weaknesses with her working memory." The discussion focuses around her inability to understand information given to her within a lecture, and how this impacts upon her.

You are now teaching the module that she is attending in semester two. As a group:

What can you do to ensure that Helen is able to access the optimum learning within your lecture?

Academic Tutor Support (Helen's assessment recommendations)

All academic and personal tutors should be made aware of Helen's specific learning difficulties.

Tutors should be as clear, selective and directive as possible in their suggestions for reading.

Tutors should not require Helen to read aloud in group situations without the opportunity to prepare adequately.

All tutors need to be sensitive to Helen's specific difficulties and make allowances when assessing and marking for the way in which difficulties with the following may affect her work:
o the preparation and organisation of presentations
o the structure and organisation of written work including grammar, punctuation and sentence structure
o spelling
o time management and prioritisation

Helen should be encouraged to attend appropriate support groups and courses provided by the university.

Wherever possible and feasible students should be given access to appropriate learning resources and materials prior to lectures. For example, notes could be posted on the university's internal systems.

Students with Physical Disabilities

The following has been drawn from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) guide to promoting a positive and inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities.

The principles are transferable across health professions and may be used as a guide for all educators. Included are examples of inclusive learning which may prove useful.

http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/physiotherapy-welcoming-supporting-disabled-students - Supporting students with disabilities document.

1. Accessibility

Accessibility is an essential factor for inclusion to be effective. If information and/or teaching practice of any kind is inaccessible, barriers are erected that will exclude a range of students. In essence, good teaching practice for disabled students is generally good practice for all students. The DRC (2007) states:

"Developing teaching methodology so that it responds to the whole range of disabled students has the additional effect of making it more accessible to the whole student body" (p129).

What can be done?
- Ensure that all information generated in an academic department (or a clinical setting) is available electronically. This will not only provide equality of access for all learners, but will eliminate the panic and tension that is inevitable in ad hoc provision.

- With the technology and software that is currently available, (e.g. Dolphin EasyConverter) electronic media can now be produced more easily in a full range of formats –

A teaching Example – Specific teaching practice can also be made more inclusive:

> *A student who has chronic fatigue syndrome found it difficult to concentrate for long periods of time in lectures. As a result of this issue lecturing staff gradually modified their practice to include short breaks and a range of different approaches and activities in teaching sessions. They reported an overall improvement in all students' engagement and the for the module was significantly more positive student feedback*

Work in partnership

In order to improve the accessibility of the teaching it may be helpful to work in partnership with a range of disability support services and to develop working relationships with local disability organisations including the university disability advice service and local branches of Mind, RNIB, RNID and dyslexia associations. This enables staff to find out about appropriate access equipment, and accessible information and environments.

2. **Accessible Information**

Programme information should be available in potentially accessible formats. The most adaptable is electronic format as this is easily converted into other media (e.g. large print, MP3 and Braille) and can be conveniently disseminated via methods such as virtual learning environments (VLEs), email, audio file or memory stick.

> *"Some people prefer* large text*, while others can only read* smaller text*. Most people need a* <mark>highly contrasting colour scheme,</mark> *while others can only read* yellow text *on a black background. To cater for everyone, websites should be flexible in design, enabling the individual to adjust the text and colour settings to suit their needs.".*

Websites and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs)

- Dissemination of electronic material does assume that websites and VLEs are accessible. However, this is not always the case. It is important for academic staff to be aware of this issue as they may well be producing excellent accessible information but subsequently loading it onto an inaccessible system.

- Accessible websites have, for example:

- Uncluttered and simple page structures

- Clear and logical navigation

- Text alternatives to describe images

- Appropriate use of colours

- Good contrast between content and background

- Readable and resizable fonts and layout.

** WHAT DOES YOUR 'MYBECKETT' PAGE LOOK LIKE ? **

As noted on RNIB's website:

> *Material provided in .pdf form is still essentially inaccessible, especially to those students who need to manipulate text (e.g. by using enlargement or speech technology). For this reason, the use of this format should be avoided, or the information provided via an alternative method.*

(RNIB http://www.rnib.org.uk/wedo/research/hints.htm)

Challenges and positives in managing reasonable adjustments in higher education

The question of what is a reasonable adjustment is an objective one. Inclusive teaching covers diverse aspects of creating a learning environment that can meet the individual needs of all students. Fair access to education can only be met when these needs are addressed. One of the challenges in managing reasonable adjustments is ensuring that all the diverse ranges of needs are met. This is comprehensively detailed in the Equality Act Guidance which focusses on impairment, whether long or short-term or fluctuating (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85038/disability-definition.pdf). The Act defines disability but also provides for exclusions such as addiction to alcohol or drugs, though the Act makes clear that reasonable adjustment has to be considered even if it arises from a condition that is excluded by the Act itself. Equality and Diversity at Leeds Beckett University encompasses Disability, Students who care for a vulnerable person, Faith and Beliefs, Gender Equality, Race Equality.

Providing and managing reasonable adjustments for students who are disabled presents challenges in terms of resources available, how much the adjustment costs and the practicality of the changes. (http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/external/managing-reasonable-adjustments-in-higher-education.pdf). Leeds Beckett University provides a wide range of anticipatory adjustments such as wheelchair access (although not all floors in the Portland and Calverley buildings are covered by this). Provision of supporting apparatus in laboratories. Adjustments are also made for students with specific neurological issues such as dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder etc. where individual adjustments to the learning environment and examinations are made to take account of the students needs. Faith and Belief adjustments are managed by the provision of facilities for prayer. The allowance of flexibility for those who have special requirements (e.g. fasting) can pose challenges when those periods coincide with high risk activities (e.g. laboratory work) or assessments. Guidance for Faith and Belief is provided in the document (https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/files/external/University_Guidance_on_Religion_and_Belief.pdf) Gender Equality is an important issue for fair access to education for students and encompasses fair and equal access and treatment regardless of gender, gender orientation and transgendered people. Leeds Beckett University have been awarded a Stonewall Top 100 employer certificate which provides a commitment to fair and equal treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. Leeds Beckett University are in the process of applying for Athena SWAN accreditation to recognise the commitment to advancing

women's careers in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine.

In a multicultural environment, Equality and Diversity in issues of race is vitally important for race and equal access to education, free from any discrimination or intimidation. There are many issues here such as background, culture and English not being the primary language. Reasonable adjustments are made in terms of speaking English and non-discriminatory practices and language. A major challenge within this is the appearance of "radicalisation" which has to be managed within this context this was discussed at the "Race, Racism and Racialisation in HE and Beyond" lecture in 2012.

In many cases, managing reasonable adjustments in Equality and Diversity poses challenges in the diverse nature of students needs, which are constantly evolving. This involves being aware of who has needs of reasonable adjustments and how best to make them, and the cost and practicality of providing such adjustments.

The benefits of managing reasonable adjustments are considerable for any university. This includes significantly enhancing the reputation of the university especially when charter marks by Stonewall, Athena SWAN, Race equality charter marks demonstrate equal access to the University. Managing reasonable adjustments also benefits student retention. In many cases questions about individual needs are quite frequently asked by prospective students. There is considerable benefit to the students themselves who feel that Leeds Beckett University values their achievements in an inclusive environments.

General principles regarding information in teaching and learning

- Students are provided with teaching materials in advance (e.g. PowerPoint slides, hand outs, session outlines)

- Students are used as a resource

- Students' access requirements for teaching materials are discussed individually

- There is regular monitoring of student information requirements.

Good practice points in provision of written material

(Word files, paper-based and PowerPoint)

Do:

- Produce all information digitally

- Keep layout simple and clear

- Use minimal formatting

- Justify documents to the left

- Keep text to a minimum

- Use a clear font (e.g. Arial, minimum size: 12 point)

- Offer larger font sizes

- Use line spacing of minimum 1.5

- Use good contrast in documents (and make available with different background/foreground colours)

- Use matt paper

- Use headings, bullet points and pointers to aid navigation around documents

- Use clear, good quality diagrams in documents

- Modify/simplify diagrams and use limited labelling

- Avoid use of colour as an indicator
- Use a dark background with light text (yellow or white) in PowerPoint slides to reduce glare

Don't:

- Use capitalisation (this is generally less accessible as it is more difficult to identify words when all letters have similar shapes; this is a particular barrier for people with dyslexia and/or visual impairment)
- Use italics (generally fainter and less accessible due to forward slope)
- Underline (cuts through parts of letters that go below lines such as 'y' and 'g' so making them difficult to read)
- Use shadow effect for text (words are not clear because contrast is reduced)
- Use full justification (gives irregular spacing between words and between letters within words which makes recognition of words and visual scanning more difficult)
- Superimpose text over pictures/images (makes text difficult to read because of 'information overload' and reduction in contrast)
- Enlarge A4 documents to A3 size (visual scanning becomes difficult because of the increased line length; A3 paper is more difficult to handle and file)
- Use complex animation effects (makes text difficult to read and is distracting/irritating)

- Use too many slides (poor teaching practice – trying to fit too much into defined time period)
- Use some of the standard templates in PowerPoint that have poor contrast.

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