

A Guide to Accessible Lectures, Tutorials, and Lab Sessions

To ensure lecture, tutorials and other sessions are accessible, please follow these best practice steps developed with accessibility consultants All Able.

This document includes guidance for live (synchronous) sessions, both remote and in person, and how to make them as accessible as possible for all.

Online sessions

The following guidance is for live online sessions and is focused on Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

Before the session or event

- If you don't already know the needs of your participants, find out if they have any special requirements in advance of the session.
- Share the slides and session materials in advance and make sure they are accessible.

Managing the session or event

- Make the rules clear about who can speak and when, how to ask questions, how to request permission to speak, etc.
- If possible, have an assistant to oversee the chat and manage parallel conversations.
- Don't put pressure on participants to show themselves on camera as not everyone is comfortable doing so.

Presenting

- Blur your background to minimise distraction.
- If you are using Teams or Zoom, which allow multiple video feeds to be shown at once, it may be preferable to only have the video of the current presenter on to minimise distraction.
- Look at your camera to create 'eye contact' with your students and provide a more personal connection.
- Speak clearly and ask the group to confirm your audio is working well.
- Give your participants time to open any documents or take in what you have shared.
- Embrace the pause. Take a moment after the end of your comments and allow for students to engage before continuing.

Use of captions

Captions are particularly helpful for participants with a hearing impairment or D/deaf participants but also help those who do not have English as a first language and are generally of benefit to all.

Zoom and Microsoft Teams meetings offer automatic live captioning. In Teams, this needs to be turned on by and for individual participants, so advise participants of this at the start of the session. In Zoom it is controlled by the host or co-host, but individual participants can choose to show or hide them once they are activated. It is good practice to enable closed captions and show participants how to hide them if necessary.

How to turn on captions as the meeting host:

Zoom

Sign in to Zoom, click Settings, scroll down to In Meeting (Advanced), and enable the Close captioning setting. Tick the box beside Allow live transcription service to transcribe meeting automatically and Allow viewing of full transcript in the in-meeting side panel.

- [Closed captioning and live transcription in Zoom.](#)

Teams

To use live captions in a meeting, go to your meeting controls and select More options; click Turn on live captions.

- [Using closed captions in a Teams meeting.](#)

PowerPoint

To have subtitles for a Slide Show presentation, from the top menu select Slide Show > Always Use Subtitles to turn this feature on for all presentations.

- [Real-time, automatic captions or subtitles in PowerPoint.](#)

Other captioning options

Participants who require captioning may wish to use an app on their smartphone or tablet to provide speech to text functionality. Below are some suggested apps that can be used.

- [Otter.ai](#) helps you capture, find, and share important information from meetings, lectures, interviews, and everyday conversation, and helps you generate text with audio on to your phone or web browser. Users can search, play, edit and share conversations via this app.
- [Web Captioner](#) is a free online service that provides speech to text transcription. The text appears in seconds on your phone or web browser.
- [Dictation.io](#) is a free website that allows speech to text dictation. To use this service you will need Google Chrome, your computer will need to be connected to the internet and you will need the computer microphone to be turned on.

- Captions and transcripts for use in content. This guide provides useful information on when to use captions and transcripts, and how to write captions and transcripts.

Further information

- AbilityNet has published guidance on how to host an accessible online meeting.

In-person sessions and events

Before an in-person event

If your event has attendees that are new to your venue it is important to highlight facilities that usual visitors may well be aware of. Try to find out any specific requirements before the event so that any accommodations can be made. A checklist to ensure accessible events will be developed by the Faraday Institution in 2023.

Lecture theatres, classrooms, etc

Use a microphone

If the room has a microphone, use it. Microphones are provided to ensure that everyone can clearly hear what is being said.

If microphones are stored in a docking station, please return them to the docking station after use, this will ensure that they stay charged and available for other users.

Repeat questions

If you are asked a question from the audience, repeat the question. This is important if the lecture is being recorded as it will ensure that both the question and the answer are clear on the recording. Also, it provides other members of the audience with an opportunity to hear the question clearly.

Say what you are doing/writing/drawing

If you are making use of a visualiser or adding additional annotations to presented materials, talk through what you are doing. This is important if the lecture is being recorded as it will provide additional information for those who may have a visual impairment.

Laboratories

For practical work in a laboratory, you should be mindful of any additional requirements within the group. You should always provide written instructions, displayed on a board or on a handout, as this will help all students to stay on task, and will be useful to any students who have hearing impairments. You should also always describe what is being done during an experiment. This not only helps visually impaired students but will also help all students to better understand what is happening.

You might also want to consider whether

- to allow students to work with a partner or in small groups.

- extra time is needed for setting up or taking down equipment for some students.
- any additional safety procedures are needed for students with mobility or sensory disabilities, such as using plastic instead of glass.

Further information

- The University of Edinburgh has produced some good practical guidance creating accessible lectures/tutorials. In addition, there are also key guidelines to making face-to-face sessions accessible.
- Make things accessible. A repository for guidance material and useful resources for organisations looking to improve their digital accessibility.
 - Running accessible events. Whether you are putting on a large conference or a small meeting, virtual or in person, you should consider the needs of the people who may attend with seen or hidden disabilities. When putting on events think about how you make them accessible to all from start to finish.