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Inclusive Academic Events Advice Guide: Improving Accessibility of Conferences, Moots, Lectures and other Public Events

Introduction

The Faculty of Law's inaugural Oxford Disability Law and Policy Conference took place on **Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th February 2018 at the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, Mansfield College, Mansfield Rd, Oxford OX1 3TF**. This international conference focused on legal issues affecting persons with a disability and featured leading academics in discrimination and equality law, along with high-profile public figures who champion disability rights. This event marked the launch of the newly established Oxford Disability Law and Policy Project ('The Project').

This document is one of the outputs of the event, drawing on learning from this Conference and four years of organising the Herbert Smith Freehills Oxford Disability Mooting Championship and the 42 Bedford Row Disability Law Essay Prize. It is designed to be a source of advice and useful resources for people organising events at the Faculty and around the University. The checklists in each section of this document are designed to enable a baseline of accessibility for any event. Making events inclusive should be anticipatory, in line with the Equality Act 2010, and not reactive; there should not be an expectation that someone contacts an event organiser in order to ensure it is accessible.

In January 2017 the joint Department for Education and the Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group ('DSSLG') published guidance for higher education providers, which emphasised the need for Universities to expand inclusive research, pedagogy and curricula in relation to disability, in ways which are 'meaningful, relevant and accessible to all' (2017). This was followed in November 2017 by a report on *Models of support for students with disabilities*¹ to HEFCE by the Institute for Employment Studies (Williams *et al*). It presents findings from the first phase of a two-part study which reviews the levels of support for disabled students across the higher education (HE) and the progress made by providers towards an inclusive social model of support. Readers may find this useful in considering more inclusive pedagogical approaches for students with disabilities at the University of Oxford.

The *Inclusive Events Advice Guide* is structured to follow the process of organising an event. It covers the following themes:

General Preparation

- A) Thinking About Inclusive Language When Organising Events**
- B) Organising Representative Panels**

¹Available online:

[http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE.2014/Content/Pubs/Independentresearch/2017/Models.of.support.for.students.with.disabilities/2017_modelsofsupport_\(updated\).pdf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE.2014/Content/Pubs/Independentresearch/2017/Models.of.support.for.students.with.disabilities/2017_modelsofsupport_(updated).pdf)

C) Useful Faculty of Law and University Contacts

Planning Your Event

- 1. Visit the facilities you are using well before you hold the event**
- 2. Think about provision for any guest speakers with access needs**
 - i) Travel**
 - ii) Accommodation**
 - iii) Stage and platform arrangements for your speakers**
- 3. Think about the accessibility of dining facilities**
- 4. Promotion and Communication of Your Event**
- 5. What do you need to consider in preparing for the day of the event?**
- 6. Collecting feedback on what worked**

Please also consult the Oxford University Disabled Staff Advisory Group's Guidance, *Opening Doors*, which specifically focuses on making events accessible to neurodivergent people and those with mental health conditions. I am grateful for input from Daniel Holloway, Charlotte Kelly, Farhana Hamid-Butt, Rebecca Rose, Rachel Clement, Dr Roxana Willis, Caroline Moughton, Dr Elizabeth Froot, Dr Luke Rostill and Toel Koyithara in the development of this document.

Dr Marie Tidball (Coordinator, The Oxford Disability Law and Policy Project), Spring 2018

General Preparation

A) Thinking About Inclusive Language When Organising Events

Although, thankfully, a lot of exclusionary language has fallen out of general usage, people do still use definite (*the*) and indefinite (*a/an*) articles in conjunction with the word 'disabled'. It is not acceptable amongst groups of people who identify as having a disability or who might describe themselves as a disabled person to be categorised as 'a disabled' or 'the disabled'. It is important to work with all the presenters at your event and ensure that all communications about the event use inclusive and respectful language when talking about disability. Of course, the use of language in relation to disability is an area of rich academic discussion², but the University of Colorado have some useful [Conference Guidelines](#) about using person-first language or identity-first language. Person-first language recognises that '[d]isability is a natural part of the human experience, it is simply another aspect of being human, and most people do not like to be labelled'. Person-first language 'places the emphasis on the person instead of on the disability when discussing most intellectual and developmental disabilities and allows the presenter to avoid generic labelling'. The example, they give, is 'instead of saying "Down syndrome person," if using person-first language you would say, "person with Down syndrome"' (University of Colorado, Inclusive Conference Presentation Guidelines³).

Conversely, some 'disability self-advocates prefer identity-first language'. Identity-first language which 'emphasises that the disability plays a role in who the person is, and reinforces disability as a positive cultural identifier'. Such language is 'generally preferred by self-advocates in the autistic,

² See, for example, S. Baglieri and A. Shapiro, (2012), *Disability Studies and the Inclusive Classroom Critical Practices for Creating Least Restrictive Attitudes*, available online: file:///C:/Users/Marie/Downloads/9781136870255_preview.pdf

³ Available online: https://www.colemaninstitute.org/inclusive-conference-presentation-guidelines/#Inclusive_Conference_Presentation_Guidelines

deaf, and blind communities' though these preferences are not universal (University of Colorado, Inclusive Conference Presentation Guidelines).

Another important consideration on language is to avoid misgendering, especially on honorifics for name badges and speaker biographies, or forcing a binary choice on a booking form. In neurodivergent communities there can be a preference for gender non-conformity, making gender language an intersectional issue. Avoid using such language in addressing the audience too; there are many great inclusive greetings that do not begin with 'ladies and gentleman'.

B) Organising Representative Panels, Speakers and Inclusive Event Committees

It is important to continue to find ways to ensure people with disabilities are included across University panel and speaker events. There are some fantastic research groups on disability at various Russell Group Universities. A selection of taught courses and option papers on disability related issues, with information on the academics who teach them, can be found in Appendix 1.

For names of other public figures with disabilities, the Shaw Trust's Power 100 LIST 2017, Britain's most influential persons with a disability or impairment can be found here:

<https://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/Media-policy/News/December-2016/The-launch-of-the-Power-100-LIST-2017>

For those who might not be familiar with disability specific online news publications, the Disability News Service may be of interest: <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/>

Charities working in the area of disability rights and self-advocacy include:

Disability Rights UK: <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/>

Scope: <https://www.scope.org.uk/>

Mental Health Foundation: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

Black Mental Health UK: <http://www.blackmentalhealth.org.uk/>

My Life, My Choice: <https://www.mylifemychoice.org.uk/>

If you are looking to recruit undergraduate or graduates with disabilities in organising your event or to promote more generally, there is an active Oxford Disabled Students Community. The 2018/19 team are Julia Alsop, President (julia.alsop@worc.ox.ac.uk), Sophie Thomas, Vice President (sophie.thomas@seh.ox.ac.uk) and Miranda Reilly, Events (Miranda.reilly@hertford.ox.ac.uk). The new Head of the Disability Advisory Service, Kathy Noren-Curtis (katherine.noren-curtis@admin.ox.ac.uk) will also email their contacts on request.

C) Useful Faculty of Law and University Contacts

Many areas of the St Cross Building and other spaces used by the Faculty of Law for events need more work to ensure they are inclusive spaces. A piece of work is currently underway to liaise with the University's Estates team to identify barriers to access and develop a project plan to update and improve facilities. If you identify access issues when organising an event at the St Cross Building, please contact:

Oto Velicka, Deputy Senior Facilities Manager

St Cross Building, St Cross Road, Oxford, OX1 3UL

Email: oto.velicka@admin.ox.ac.uk

Tel: 01865 271 486

Charlotte Vinnicombe, Head of Administration and Finance

Faculty of Law, St Cross Building, St Cross Road, Oxford, OX1 3UL

Email: charlotte.vinnicombe@law.ox.ac.uk

Tel: 01865 271560

Ben Smith, Accessibility Advisor, Conservation & Buildings Team

Estates Services, University of Oxford

The Malthouse, Tidmarsh Lane, Oxford, OX1 1NQ

Email: benjamin.smith@admin.ox.ac.uk

Tel: 01865 270 730; Mobile: 07843 512 355

www.admin.ox.ac.uk/estates

Click [here](#) to find us on the University's interactive map

Click [here](#) for the Access Guide

If you think that a student attending your seminar or lecture needs more disability-related support, it is best to meet with them separately to discuss this confidentially. However, if you want to enquire more generally about what is available for students with disabilities, contact the University's Disability Advisory Service:

The Faculty of Law's Disability Contacts are:

Paul Burns, Disability Lead, Academic Administrator

Faculty of Law, St. Cross Building, St. Cross Road, Oxford OX1 3UL

Email: paul.burns@law.ox.ac.uk

Tel: 01865 271495

Michelle Robb, Executive Assistant to the Dean & Events Co-ordinator

Faculty of Law, St. Cross Building, St. Cross Road, Oxford, OX1 3UL

Email: michelle.robb@law.ox.ac.uk

Tel: 01865 (2)81050

The Disability Coordinators for other Departments can be found [here](#).

If you have had any difficulties in accessing disability related support for a student of the University of Oxford who may be attending your event, please contact:

Katherine Noren-Curtis, Head of the Disability Advisory Service at University of Oxford

Email: katherine.noren-curtis@admin.ox.ac.uk

General Enquiries, Disability Advisory Service

3 Worcester Street, Oxford, OX1 2BX

Email: disability@admin.ox.ac.uk

Tel: 01865 280459

Fax: 01865 289850

Opening hours: 09:00-17:00, Monday to Friday

If you have had any difficulties in accessing disability related support for a staff member of the University of Oxford, who may be attending your event, please contact:

Caroline Moughton, Staff Disability Advisor

Email: caroline.moughton@admin.ox.ac.uk

Tel: 01865 (2)80687

Planning Your Event

1. Visit the facilities you are using well before you hold the event

Checklist

- Can the auditorium or facility be accessed by wheelchairs, including power-assisted wheelchairs?
- Does it have a hearing loop or can a portable loop be arranged for the space?
- Are any lifts needed for access currently working? Where are they?
- Who has keys or access codes to the accessible routes and lifts if these are not normally used by the public, especially out of hours? Is there space for wheelchair users at the front of the auditorium?
- Can wheelchair users and those with mobility impairments access the stage area?
- Can seats be removed to accommodate more than one wheelchair user?
- Are there accessible toilets nearby?
- What is the emergency exit route for wheelchair users and those with mobility impairments? Do you know where the fire safety assembly point for wheelchair users is?
- Is the signage to the auditorium or event facilities clear?
- Will more than one area of the college need to be made accessible through the use of a ramp at any one time? Does the college have a sufficient number of ramps to make this possible?
- Are any spaces used for networking accessible?
- Does the AV sound system work and is there a variety of microphones available?
- Is there a map or floorplan of the facilities available?
- Is the area where food or drink will be served accessible?
- Is there a quiet calm space where guests with sensory processing disabilities can take a break from the event?
- Have you thought about the timing of sessions and included sufficient breaks for people to rest?

Do not assume the event space is going to be as accessible as you might expect. In organising the Disability Law Conference, Moot and Essay Prize, we have found it invaluable to audit the space months in advance with Organising Committee members who have different disabilities.

The Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre and White & Case Room are only accessible for audience members who are manual wheelchair users as the existing platform lift will not take the weight of an electric wheelchair. The Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre is not accessible for any wheelchair user

wishing to give a lecture or talk from the front of the auditorium. The mezzanine floor outside White & Case is, therefore, not accessible and inappropriate for networking for this reason too. The English Faculty Lecture Theatre is accessible for all wheelchair users to be audience members (seating at the back) but is *not* accessible if they are to give a lecture from the front of the auditorium.

Not all the lecture theatres or teaching rooms have fixed hearing loop systems installed. You will need to check and possibly arrange a portable loop to be put in place, in the room, in advance of the event. This can be arranged via Oto Velicka (oto.velicka@admin.ox.ac.uk), Deputy Senior Facilities Manager, St Cross Building.

We can all take for granted the way we navigate a building to access an auditorium or event facility. Do not take for granted that external visitors will find this so easy, especially if they have a sight or sensory impairment. Make sure you ask for signage to your event to be put in place at main entranceways and through routes. Some colleges only have one or two portable ramps. For large events where multiple areas may need to be made accessible at the same time, it is worth checking in advance whether the college/department has a sufficient number of portable ramps, or whether additional ramps need to be acquired. In our time organising the Herbert Smith Freehills Disability Moot we have been asked whether our budget will cover the purchasing of additional ramps. It is the host venue's responsibility to make sure that they have enough ramps to make the site accessible.

If you are moving venue during the event, make sure all event organisers know where the lifts are, what the accessible route is, and, if applicable, who has the keys or access codes to use them. If possible, let people who will need to use a lift or an accessible route know in advance if they will need to follow a particular person to get to the next venue and introduce them to that person. You should also bear in mind that accessible routes are often circuitous and make sure to wait for everyone to arrive before starting the next part of the event.

Many people with disabilities can find morning starts difficult. This can be because of the impact of medication on sleep and rest or because it takes them a longer amount of time to dress and undertake other tasks of daily living. For our Disability Law and Policy Conference, we had to be quite flexible with our schedule so that speakers who find mornings exhausting could speak in the afternoon. Conversely, others may prefer to speak during the morning whilst they have more energy. Be prepared to adapt your programme so you don't miss out on great speakers and talk to them about their needs. Also ensure there are sufficient breaks build into your programme so that people can take toilet breaks and rest between sessions.

2. Think about provision for any guest speakers with access needs

Checklist

- **What additional travel costs might they incur, e.g. for a personal assistant or carer?**
- **Is there accessible parking available near the venue? Can this be reserved?**
- **What accommodation needs do they have?**
- **What is the best time for them to make their presentation?**
- **Is the stage area or front of the auditorium accessible?**
- **Is there space for their guide dog or personal assistant to join them on the platform?**

- **Do they need a special mic – lapel or on a mic stand for example - and do they need other specialist equipment to be used to give their presentation?**
- **Are they going to need to have table space on the platform for a laptop or to place their notes?**
- **Can they deliver a PowerPoint from a seated position rather than lectern?**
- **For speakers who suffer from fatigue or are otherwise unable to travel, would it be possible for them to give a lecture or present a paper via video conferencing e.g. Skype?**
- **Is the rest of the event accessible for them?**
- **Are speakers happy for their presentations to be recorded?**

i) Travel

Do not just assume the person will be travelling alone. Speakers with disabilities may be accompanied by a personal assistant or carer(s). Include information about covering expenses for these support workers in your invitation to them. This may include return train fares plus taxis in Oxford to the venue and any overnight accommodation. We always state in our correspondence that we will cover standard return fares unless advance bookings make first class cheaper. If you know someone has access needs, it is okay to ask if they use a Disabled Travel Card so that you can budget accordingly.

Not all public transport is sufficiently accessible for all guests. You may have to budget for long distance taxi journeys, especially if an international speaker with mobility needs has to travel from the airport to your event.

Do not assume that they can just use any Blue Badge for their parking requirements. Check parking facilities at the venue and pre-book spaces where you can.

There are a number of accessible Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicles available for hire in Oxford. The City Council maintains a list of wheelchair accessible vehicles at:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4285/list_of_wheelchair_accessible_vehicles

Private Hire Operators 001 (01865 240000) and Royal Cars (01865 777333) are licensed by this Authority but only have few licensed wheelchair accessible vehicles available on their fleet.

Wheelchair accessible Private Hire Vehicles are classed as 'large vehicles' (which can vary in tariff for multiple passengers) but they should not charge a higher tariff when the vehicle is booked for a wheelchair user. Some Private Hire Operators quote a fare at the time of booking to secure the vehicle, so ensure it is charged at the appropriate tariff when making the booking.

All one-hundred-and-seven Hackney Carriage Vehicles licensed by Oxford City Council are wheelchair accessible and can be booked via A1 Taxis company on 01865 248000.

However, if for any reason a customer has been overcharged, quoted a higher tariff, or refused the service by either a Private Hire or Hackney Carriage driver, they should report the matter in writing to Taxi Licensing licensing@oxford.gov.uk as soon as reasonable with as much detail as possible (date, time, vehicle plate number, registration, drivers badge number etc.) and the Licensing Officer will conduct a full investigation to the matter.

ii) Accommodation

Accessible accommodation does not just mean ground floor access and no stairs! We once booked a room for a high profile wheelchair user at a College that told us they had an accessible room. The College thought that ground floor access and no stairs was what was expected; the room had no accessible bathroom and had narrow doorways. Here's what to ask to make sure it fits your guest's needs:

- **Does it have an en suite accessible wet room and toilet?**
- **Are the doors wide enough for a guest in an electric or self-propelled wheelchair?**
- **Does the College or Hotel charge for additional carer's rooms?**
- **Does the guest need a double bed or are they okay with a twin?**
- **Does the guest need a hoist?**
- **Does the guest need an adjoining carer's room or a spare bed for a carer in with them?**

Make sure you find out early what your guest's accessibility needs are and whether they will need accommodation for a personal assistant or carer. Most commercial hotels will not charge for a second, adjoining carer's room. Those Colleges or Hotels which do not have adjoining rooms but do have suitable rooms for a personal assistant or carer nearby may be prepared to waive their fee for this room. It is always worth asking.

Finding adequately accessible accommodation within the University Estate can be challenging, book well in advance. The University Club has one twin room and one double room which are equipped for disabled guests and there is a double room with an interconnecting door to a single room, ideal for carers or to use as a family room. These rooms can be booked [here](#). St John's and Merton Colleges have accessible overnight en suite guest accommodation. However, this is often only bookable outside of term time. Wadham College also has an accessible room which can be available during the vacation. To find out what other accessible College rooms are available, visit: UniversityRooms.com

If you cannot find any accessible rooms in the University estate, the following hotels have reasonably priced accessible rooms and good transport links to the City Centre:

Travelodge Oxford Abingdon Road x3 accessible rooms (no adjoining carer's rooms)

Address: Abingdon Road, Oxford OX1 4XG

Tel: 0871 559 1877

Holiday Inn Oxford (available adjoining carer's room)

Address: Peartree Roundabout, Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 8JD3.

Tel: 0871 942 9086

Jury's Inn Oxford

Address: Godstow Rd, Oxford OX2 8AL

Tel: 01865 489988

YHA

Address: 2A Botley Rd, Oxford OX2 0AB
Tel: 0345 371 9131

iii) Stage and platform arrangements for your speakers

Checklist

- **Can they access the stage or front of the auditorium?**
- **Does there need to be enough space for a guide dog?**
- **Does the speaker's PA need to sit with them during their talk?**
- **Does a BSL signer need to be available to sign to the speaker during the discussion and Q and A?**
- **Does there need to be a quiet room available for them to sit and prepare before their talk?**
- **Can they give their talk using PowerPoint from a seated position rather than at a lectern?**
- **Is the traditional lecture / presentation of a conference paper the best way for the speaker to communicate their ideas? Alternative formats might include on stage question and answer sessions, with the questioner someone with whom the speaker is familiar. Consider that some speakers may be happy to give a presentation, but would prefer not to take questions.**

Do not assume that a ramp to the stage you are using already exists or that the existing ramp is of sufficient strength and width for an electric wheelchair. When organizing the Herbert Smith Freehills Oxford Disability Mooting Championship, we have discovered poor stage access for wheelchair users and, in some cases, had to get the College to make a ramp to order especially. We have also fought misconceptions about ramps damaging protected tiles on stage areas! If you come up against unreasonable barriers in organising your event, or need a sensible solution, contact: Ben Smith, Accessibility Advisor, Conservation & Buildings Team, Estates Services, on 01865 270 730 M: 07843 512 355 or email benjamin.smith@admin.ox.ac.uk

We have been determined to give a voice to as many high-profile speakers with disabilities as possible at our events. This means carefully planning seating arrangements and access routes for speakers in the auditorium in question. Where a platform may normally accommodate four speakers when using standard chairs, things may become very tight with more than one wheelchair user and space for a guide dog! Make sure you know how best to set up your panel and give clear instructions to any events staff about set-up. Also find out if their personal assistant will need to be on the stage with them and where they will need to be located.

At the conference, in order to facilitate people with autism and SpLD sharing their experiences, we experimented with using a more conversational style, where the speaker talks in conversation with another speaker with whom they are familiar. This was successful, and allowed for a broader range of speakers with autism and SpLD than would have been possible if we had stuck to a traditional lecture.

Some people with disabilities may need to use a lapel mic or mic stand on a desk in front of them, rather than holding it in their hand or standing in front of a lectern. Make sure you have adequate arrangements in place. It's all very well and good to set up a speaker area like a breakfast TV show but this may not be accessible for a speaker with a disability. Find out whether they need a desk or

certain type of chair (office rather than armchair) to be arranged and make this set-up standard for all speakers. If they need to give a presentation in a seated position, make sure a remote-control presentation clicker is available. Ensure water is close to hand and that there is space for their laptop in case they need to use it for particular access needs.

If someone with a sight or hearing impairment is chairing a panel discussion at your event, make sure that they have speaker biographies and the programme emailed to them well in advance of the event. This will enable them to load on any read aloud software they use or ensure any interpreter they use has had chance to familiarise themselves with any difficult names or vocabulary. During the Q and A, ensure they have another panelist or event volunteer sitting near them to describe who is putting their hand up in the audience so they can pick the questioners. Note, people with sight impairments may not know they are being pointed at to ask their question to panelists; use gender neutral, non-judgmental descriptors or, ideally, their name if possible.

When taking questions from audience members, ensure that roving microphones are used, in order to make the audience discussion fully accessible for those with hearing impairments. Note that members of the audience might start to ask their question loudly, to save the person carrying the roving mic a journey to the other side of the room. It is worth explaining at the start of the Q and A, that the roving mic will be used in order to make the discussion fully accessible and that audience members are kindly requested to wait for the roving mic before speaking.

3. Think about the accessibility of dining facilities

Checklist

- **Do you have standard height tables and chairs available for people to sit at during buffet style meals and refreshment breaks?**
- **Are there disposable cups available to use as well as any standard china for tea and coffee? Are straws available? Have you thought about the practicalities of your menu? Eating soup, for example, can be quite challenging for people tremor, and arranging for food to be pre-cut for people with upper-limb impairments may be helpful.**
- **Have you got additional volunteers or catering staff available to help guests with disabilities?**
- **Is the dining facility, College Hall or restaurant accessible to wheelchair users?**
- **Is the College Hall's high table accessible to wheelchair users?**
- **Has seating been removed so that a wheelchair user can easily access a dining table?**
- **The bench seating found in many college halls is problematic for people with a variety of mobility impairments and musculo-skeletal disabilities. Such people may or may not use wheelchairs on a regular basis. Consider whether normal dining chairs with backs will need to be reserved. This may well involve moving benches and rearrangement of the seating for a long table, so college staff need to know well in advance.**
- **Have you reserved a space near to the guest with a disability for their personal assistant or carer?**
- **Do they need to have other guests placed on a particular side of them because of hearing or sight impairments?**
- **Have you considered the effect of low light on guests with sight impairments? Many older colleges have dim lighting at dinner.**
- **Do they need to be in a quieter part of the dining facility?**

- **Have you checked special dietary requirements?**
- **Have you checked that no one feels socially obliged to attend a dining event? People with eating disorders or social anxiety may wish to avoid attending formal dining events. If someone indicates that they do not wish to attend a dining event, then asking why may cause the guest embarrassment or further anxiety.**
- **If a speaker can't eat in a socially shared space, have you thought of an alternative venue or considered a reimbursement for something of equivalent value?**
- **Is the bar or restaurant being used for networking accessible?**

In the four years we have been organising the Herbert Smith Freehills Oxford Disability Mooting Championship, two Colleges had to adapt their Hall to make it wheelchair accessible so that we could host our gala dinner there. Not all College Halls currently have lift access or ramps to high table. To find out information about dining facilities across the University estate, visit the University Access Guide: <https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/access/>

Some information on dining facilities is not listed but each College and building facility has a named Disability Contact whose details can be found on this site. The Access Guide has always had a focus on the departments and buildings of the University, rather than the Colleges, and continues to do so. There are a few colleges that have full access information on the Guide – Kellogg, Merton and Pembroke. The Estates Service's Accessibility Advisor, Ben Smith, will be adding Somerville in the near future. Contact Ben Smith (benjamin.smith@admin.ox.ac.uk) if you need any further information or assistance. The Conference of Colleges Disability Sub-Group has an ongoing project to encourage Colleges to do a basic self-audit of accessibility. The aim is for this to be turned into online content. All students and staff can play a role in ensuring their College takes part. Contact your College's Disability Officer to do so, this can usually be found on the University Access Guide webpage or via your Senior Tutor.

Many people with disabilities find stand up buffets and drinks receptions difficult. Make sure that, wherever you are hosting any informal networking parts of your event, you ensure there are standard height tables and seats available for guests to rest their food and drink. People with disabilities will go without eating or drinking at such events as they are too embarrassed about balancing plates and cups. Tiny handled conference china cups are a nightmare for many people. Make sure caterers supply paper cups or larger handled china mugs just in case.

Some people's hearing or sight impairment may affect one particular side of their body. It may be impossible for your guest to concentrate if you have placed them with a VIP on the side where their impairment is most pronounced. Check if they have a preference in seating arrangements.

A speaker or guest may not be able to eat socially for all sorts of reasons related to their disability, e.g. from a hearing or sensory impairment or an eating disorder. You should consider a quiet space where they can eat nearby or consider offering a reimbursement for something of equivalent value if this is not possible. This is also an issue when it comes to pricing events which you are charging attendees to attend that have include refreshments in the ticket cost. If someone cannot eat socially then having a single inclusive price means the event will inevitably cost the person more because they will have to pay for the food they cannot eat as well as the food they purchase to eat during the period of the event

If the organising committee plan to host invited speakers at a local bar or restaurant, consider appropriately accessible venues in advance, including the availability of appropriate options for those with dietary requirements, or for those who do not drink alcohol. Note that many cafes, restaurants, pubs and bars in Oxford are not accessible. Some have accessible entrances but not accessible toilets. Advance booking may be necessary. The new Westgate Centre has many accessible venues and the following are some examples of other City Centre venues with accessible entrances *and* accessible toilets:

Quod, 92-94 High St, Oxford OX1 4BJ
Tel: 01865 202505

Turl Street Kitchen, 16-17 Turl St, Oxford OX1 3DH
Tel: 01865 264171

Branca, 111 Walton St, Oxford OX2 6AJ
Tel: 01865 556111

All Bar One, 124 High St, Oxford OX1 4DF
Tel: 01865 791696

Angels, 55 Little Clarendon St, Oxford OX1 2HS
Tel: 01865 554224

4. Promotion and Communication of Your Event

Checklist

- **Do your event materials name an individual contact for access needs?**
- **Does your ticket booking platform have an accessibility needs button or question for attendees?**
- **Have you made your event materials inclusive?**
- **Have you asked your speakers to make their presentations inclusive?**
- **Have you shared your event on disability specific mail lists?**

Enabling staff or students with disabilities to volunteer for any event organising committee will not only improve the content of the event but help to highlight ways to make your event more inclusive for speakers and audience alike. When recruiting a team for larger events, make sure any meeting rooms you book are accessible and well sign-posted!

When organising your event, you should ensure that you have a clear process for attendees or guests to disclose any access needs and a named point of contact who will provide assistance on access issues. Eventbrite and Facebook, along with other event organizing platforms, have the facility to set up messaging and Eventbrite can be used to produce an Excel spreadsheet on access needs.

It is also helpful not issue all tickets on a first come first served basis but to reserve some accessible tickets, stating on your event page that accessible tickets will be available until a

specified date. For those with executive dysfunction⁴ who may take a long time to be able to process the form, or for those with complex needs who may need to make quite detailed logistical queries before knowing if they will be able to attend, using such wording with a clear timeline will be extremely useful. Inaccessibility of tickets is one of the tiny early steps that can lead down the line to an absence of representation as either an audience participant or guest speaker.

Whatever platform you use to communicate with speakers and attendees, the named Accessibility Contact should collate this information and work with the rest of the event organisers to put in place reasonable adjustments on the day. If you work in Conference or Events Management for a College or Department, you may want to look into working with the [assist-Mi App](#). This is a revolutionary app that offers comprehensive assistance to disabled users on the go, empowering them to greater independence when accessing everyday goods and services.

It is important that PowerPoint presentations and any audience materials are accessible for those with sight impairments, sensory impairments and learning disabilities. If you use pictures and diagrams on PowerPoint slides, it is really important to audio-describe these images; any videos should have subtitles.

Accessibility: Handouts – excerpt from the University of Colorado’s Inclusive Conference Guidelines

Individuals who are blind or have reduced vision may not be able to read standard sized print on your handouts. Be sure to bring appropriate numbers of your handouts in one or more of the following formats to ensure full participation in your session. Anyone presenting who does not have appropriately accessible handout formats available will be asked not to reference the materials in their presentation.

- **Large Print**

- Large print should be printed on single-sided 8.5” by 11” paper and stapled at the top left corner
- Use letter orientation, unless a visual element requires landscape orientation, to achieve maximum visibility
- Left justify all paragraphs and do not use columns
- Keep a one-inch margin on all sides
- Use 18-point font for all text, including body text, footers, page numbers, references, disclaimers, and labels on charts and graphs. Larger fonts may be used for headings. Individual users may request fonts larger than 18-point as an accommodation
- Use a bold serif font (such as Times New Roman) for body text and a bold simple sans-serif font (such as Arial) for headings and other information that is set apart from body text. Do not use any compressed fonts. Make lines heavy/thick in charts and graphs
- Use a minimum of 1.5 line spacing; use double spacing when possible
- Do not use small caps, italics, or all caps for text. Use initial caps and lower case for

⁴ As above, see also the Oxford University Disabled Staff Advisory Group’s Guidance, *Opening Doors*, which specifically focuses on making events accessible to neurodivergent people and those with mental health conditions.

titles and text

- Use underlining for emphasis instead of italics
- Delete decorative graphics that do not contribute to the meaning of the information being presented

It is also helpful to make sure you have copies of audience materials printed on yellow or lilac paper in order to help readers on the autism spectrum and people who have SpLDs. It is important to think about the needs of your audience. When we organise the Herbert Smith Freehills Oxford Disability Mooting Championship, we invite attendees from the Faculty's Pathways2Law Programme and College Widening Participation schemes for the Grand Final of the event. We also extend invitations to disabled people's organisations, including charities led by people with learning disabilities. We always write an Accessible Read document for the lay audience which gives background access on what a moot is, what the moot problem is about and what they audience will see during proceedings.

Therefore, when organising an event, it is important to think about what reasonable adjustments could be made to the format and communication of information materials. Standard Easy Read, accessible for people with learning disabilities and difficulties with literacy, is documentation which should include *Change Pictures* (2012) by the charity CHANGE People⁵, with the relevant image placed next to each block of text, to explain the content of that text. The text should be formulated to meet the *Flesch Readability Test* criteria for readability and Mencap's accessible language principles (Mencap, 2009; DOH, 2010g). The *Flesch Readability Test* is useful in preparing Accessible Read documentation. This does not include pictorial text support but advises that plain English and easily understandable sentences should be limited to 15 words. Each word in such sentences should be no more than two syllables. This is pitched for readers aged 13 to 15-years old.

5. What do you need to consider in preparing for the day of the event?

Checklist

- **Have you booked a BSL interpreter?**
- **Have you reserved enough accessible seating?**
- **Have you produced Easy Read or Accessible Read audience materials?**
- **Have you printed some large font or coloured paper copies of audience materials?**
- **Do all event organisers and volunteers know about adjustments made so that any questions can be readily answered?**

Students at the University of Oxford come from all over the world; some may use British or American Sign Language or Sign Language of their native language. For large events, it is good practice to book a BSL Interpreter. BSL interpreters are also able to use lip reading for deaf people who do not use BSL. For smaller events, this may also be necessary if a student makes a specific request. The Disability Advisory Service will not pay for BSL for events which are not part of the

⁵ CHANGE is a learning disability rights charity and accessible information expert. They consult on projects, offer training and accept Easy Read commissions. To find their Easy Read Change Pictures resources or access their services, visit: <http://www.changepeople.org/>

student's core curriculum. This means it will be necessary to budget for interpreters. For goods and services between £1000 and £25,000, the University requires two quotes for the service in question.

Total Communications, the [Accessible Events agency](#), are on the University's finance system. All their interpreters are on the NRCPD Register which confirms they are all RSLI's and qualified to interpret. Contact Joanne Davis: joanne@totalcommteam.com or call: 0118 327 1013

Prestige Network is another agency that could be used and provide free quotes too: sales@prestigenetwork.com or call; [01635 866 888](tel:01635866888)

DeafDirect: <http://www.deafdirect.org.uk>

It may be difficult to book interpreters at short notice so try to plan well in advance. Remember that interpreters need breaks too, so more than one interpreter may be needed for your event.

If you are still concerned about any contractual status issues or the procurement process, contact Jackie Hall (jackie.hall@law.ox.ac.uk) or Anne Maxwell (anne.maxfield@law.ox.ac.uk) at the Faculty of Law.

When we organise the Herbert Smith Freehills Oxford Disability Mooting Championship and the 42 Bedford Row Disability Law Essay Prize, we also arrange for a graduate volunteer to type a transcript of proceedings on their computer screen with large font. Some people with hearing impairments, who do not use BSL, prefer to be able to read this on screen. Make sure that these volunteers have a front row seat with reserved seating either side for any attendees who may need this facility.

Some people with invisible disabilities may have deliberately chosen seating at the back of the auditorium or edge of rows. This might be because they have anxiety about being trapped or have a bladder or bowel problem which means they need to access a toilet easily. Be considerate when making announcements about asking audience members to 'all move to the middle of the rows' or 'come to the front'. It is best to request that people enable other audience members to get past to use empty seats.

Before the event starts, it will be helpful to have a briefing with all event organisers and volunteers to explain any adjustments made, including where lifts are, the accessible route, where designated wheelchair spaces are etc. Everyone should also know who the named Accessibility Contact is and how to contact them if there are any queries. This will enable the event to run smoothly, with as little inconvenience for people with disabilities as possible.

6. Collecting feedback on what worked

This advice guide is designed to help you to improve the inclusivity of University events. However, this will always be an iterative process that will vary depending on the venue used and your event programme. Make sure you give the opportunity for attendees to give feedback on what worked and what could be improved. This can be done through a paper form, comments box or email survey.

About the Oxford University Disability Law and Policy Project

The Oxford University Disability Law and Policy Project develops initiatives which bring new perspectives to academic analyses of law and policy, and generate policy-relevant research which better engages with the intersectional experiences of people with disabilities. It is also intended that in addition to these specific academic aims, expanding the substantive discussion of disability in the University's teaching and research will also have a filter-down effect: improving the accessibility of facilities for students and academics with disabilities, enabling our increased representation, career progression, success and inclusion in the University's academic life.

Visit our webpage here: <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-and-subject-groups/oxford-university-disability-law-and-policy-project>

Appendix 1

A selection of taught courses and option papers on disability related issues, with information on the academics who teach them, can be found here:

University of Leeds: <http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/postgraduates/taught-postgraduates/ma-disability-studies-masters-degree-ma-leeds-university-university-degree>

University of Birmingham, The Department of Disability inclusion and Special Needs (DISN): <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/education/departments/disability-inclusion-special-needs/index.aspx>

University of Bristol, Norah Fry Centre for Disability Studies, MSc in Disability Studies: Inclusive Theory and Research: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/2017/ssl/msc-disability-studies/>

University of Cambridge, Disability Law and Policy Publication Series: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/series/cambridge-disability-law-and-policy-series/ED998DBBAEFD7919542CE6690AF3B780>

University of Edinburgh, Disability Research Edinburgh: http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/research/research_centres/cross_school_research_clusters/disability_research_edinburgh

University of Exeter, Centre for Special Educational Needs and Disability: <http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/research/centres/specialeducationalneeds/>

Sociology, Philosophy and Anthropology, Disability and Society:

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/sociology/modules/ANT3087/description/>

University of Sheffield:

<https://disabilityuos.wordpress.com/people/>

Other Notable Centres for research:

Manchester Metropolitan University, Centre for Inclusive Education and Disability Studies:

<https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/pdei/working-together/cieds/>