Accessibility Checklist for Course Content

The value of making accessibility a priority is to ensure all potential users, in particular people with disabilities have equal access to content and information. The checklist was developed for staff (both academic and non-academic) to develop accessible and inclusive content for example: text documents, PowerPoint slides, videos, flyers, infographics, web content, blogs, emails and content embedded into the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment). Accessibility is not the responsibility of any one department, school, team or directorate, but involves a combined whole institution approach, where everyone strives to be more accessible. All staff have unique roles and responsibilities, so we hope this checklist will serve as a great starting point to enhance accessibility requirements.

To ensure accessibility is at the core of what we represent is ethically and morally the right thing to do. As a public body sector we are legally obliged to comply with the EU directive on Web Accessibility that requires website and mobile applications to achieve accessibility standards. The guidelines also include accessible conformity to content on the VLE, and content developed by staff, which is the focus on this checklist.

This Accessibility Checklist is complimented by an Accessibility Series which presents information using multiple formats e.g. a blog, poster and video. Incorporating choice in content design and development provides users with a variety of ways to engage with the material. The series is underpinned by Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guidelines that focuses on designing and developing accessible:

- Text Documents
- Presentations (e.g. PowerPoint (PPT) slides)
- Videos

In terms of accessibility it is important to be consistent in areas such as text styles, heading styles, colour contrast, hyperlinks, Alt text, captions and images etc. These can be applied to all forms of content development such as web design, VLE and other forms of communication. The accessibility checklist is the first step to ensuring you plan, design and develop your content in a more inclusive and accessible way.

The legend within each header references what type of criterion is outlined:
★ Rating indicates an **Essential** and standard implementation of Accessibility and;
★★ Rating is considered **Best Practice** and adds value to Accessibility.

CED and the Canvas VLE team would be delighted to hear how you are using this checklist and if you wish to give any feedback, provide further suggestions or write a Canvas blog post on how this checklist informed your practice, please contact us at: ced@qub.ac.uk

Text		★ Essential ★★ Best Practice
Yes ✓	**Star**	**Accessible guidelines**
❑	★	Sans Serif is one of the most accessible and widely available fonts that includes Arial, Calibri, Century Gothic, Helvetica, Tahoma and Verdana. Sans serif fonts means "without the decorative line" where letter shapes are well defined and regular in shape and size. In general, sans serif fonts display better on computers and mobile devices.
❑	★	Write in short sentences, using clear and simple language.
❑	★	Use a minimum 12 point for text documents and 24 point for PowerPoint Presentations.
❑	★	Where there is sequential information, it could be displayed in bullet points or visually using a flow chart to make it easier to follow the content or instructions.
❑	★	Text needs to be clearly read left to right (left aligned) and top to bottom for clear structure and navigation purposes.
❑	★	Styles (Paragraph, Headings etc.) are used to format text and ease of navigation. This makes it easier for people using screen readers to navigate through content.
❑	★	Include descriptive and unique headings for each slide in PowerPoint.
❑	★	Complex language can be a barrier, consider a glossary page to describe key terms and symbols, if there is a lot of technical language.
❑	★	Do not use descriptions that rely only on sight e.g. 'click on the tab' or 'click on the square'.
❑	★★	Include a Table of Contents in long documents.
❑	★★	Use whitespace to retain focus so text is easily readable. Set the space to each sentence to 1.5 relative to the line-height of the font.

Things to avoid:
- Large blocks of text in PowerPoint slides.
- For Alt text avoid words such as 'image of' or 'picture of'.
- Use of CAPS as it can be difficult to read.
- Complex or technical language without it explained or a glossary provided.
- Jargon and acronyms (where possible) that are not described.
- Limit or avoid text in graphics where the text is difficult to see.
- Building complex and cluttered layouts.
- Justified text which creates whitespace within the content that makes it difficult to read.
- Line spacing between paragraphs not to exceed 2.0 times larger than the text line spacing.

Colour		★ Essential ★★ Best Practice
Yes ✓	**Star**	**Accessible guidelines**
❑	★	When combining colours on PPT slides consider colour groupings, as well as quantity and contrast. It is pretty safe to combine warm colours (reds, oranges and yellows) with each other as they tend to pop out and attract attention. Greens, blues, and purples are cool colours. They tend to recede into the background and draw less attention, especially darker shades. White and very light colours also catch the eye, whereas black and very dark colours generally are less noticeable.
❑	★	Use high contrasting foreground/colours (text and background colours). Some users have difficulty perceiving text if there is too little contrast between foreground and background so it is important to check the colour contrast. The W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 require that colour combinations meet clearly defined contrast ratios. In order to meet the guidelines, text or images of text must have a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 (or 3:1 for large text).
❑	★	Use more than colour to represent meaning, such as colour **and** text/shape. For example if you say click the green button to start and the red button to stop, it would be more accessible to also have the words 'start' embedded in the colour green and 'stop' included with the colour red, or instead of text use two different shapes.
❑	★★	Let users change the contrast between background and text in PowerPoint slides by not converting to PDF or provide both options.

Things to avoid:
- Using red/green, red/blue, orange/blue and blue/yellow combinations of colour. These colour combinations can cause discomfort and fatigue.
- Bright contrasting colours can cause eye strain and be very difficult to read.
- Pale blue on white background.
- Relying on colour alone to convey messages (e.g. click on red button for the visually impaired).

Visuals (images, charts, tables, maps, photos, illustrations, diagrams or infographics etc.) ★ Essential ★★ Best Practice		
Yes ✓	**Star**	**Accessible guidelines**
❑	★	Decorative images such as a photo that do not add information to the content, leave the ALT text null (empty) so a screen reader can ignore it.
❑	★	Functional images initiate actions rather than convey information e.g. icon, buttons and links. The ALT text should convey the action that will be initiated (purpose of the image), rather than the description. Type "print this page" rather than "image of a printer".
❑	★	Where a visual conveys a message, use the ALT (alternative) text to provide a text equivalent and describe the meaning or what is represented. In a simple visual present,

Yes ✓	Star	Accessible guidelines
		the content and function, not necessarily a description. If you had to remove the image, what text would you put in its place?
❏	★	In a more detailed visual that represents a lot of data or information you will need a longer description or transcript in the notes section of a PPT or an audio file with captions. To be fully accessible it needs a title of the visual, the structure of the visual (the colours, pictures and number of sections/layout) and the key information provided in each section (repeat the text contained within the image) so the user has an equitable experience.

Things to avoid:
- Ignoring the importance of ALT text.
- Not providing a longer description for detailed visuals.
- Inaccessible visuals that are difficult to read.

Videos and Audio ★ Essential ★★ Best Practice

Yes ✓	Star	Accessible guidelines
❏	★	Include a script or transcript with audio files.
❏	★	Include in sync closed captions for videos or screencasts to accurately reflect the text/audio in the video.
❏	★	Incorporate descriptions of visual content in video's.
❏	★	If a live recorded session is hosted on a website or VLE for people to access, after 14 days closed captions are required.

Things to avoid:
- Background noise and clutter.
- Blinking and flashing animations.
- Rapid visual effects.
- Complicated transitions.
- Using terms like 'look here' without fully describing the image or what you are demonstrating.

Hyperlinks ★ Essential ★★ Best Practice

Yes ✓	Star	Accessible guidelines
❏	★	Hyperlinks should be embedded within the text, be meaningful and describe where they will take the user.
❏	★	If the page is likely to be printed, links should include the destination URL.

❑	★★	If a link opens a new window, this should be indicated in the text.
❑	★★	Ensure the hyperlink works when clicked on and is directed to the correct webpage or content.

Things to avoid:
- Using terms like 'more info' or 'click here'.
- Using too many hyperlinks, as the message can get lost.
- Underlining text for emphasis, so not to be confused with hyperlinks.
- Using too many disorganised hyperlinks may result in the user becoming lost in the content.
- Including the long URL in the document as it will be read out for screen readers.
- URLs as link text, unless the intention is for it to be printed.

Recommendations

All PPT slides should be uploaded to Canvas **at least 24 hours** in advance of the class. Use a **live link** for updates.

Provide PPT slides in both PDF/EPUB and **PPT format** so students can manipulate text, colour, include hyperlinks, change slide deck background and add their own notes.

When designing curriculum think about mobile, touchscreen users or other adaptive technology devices.

Microsoft Stream will provide a transcript from a MS Teams recording but ensure to check the audio as you may need to make minor edits for in sync CC. If you upload a video or use a third-party YouTube video there is an option to download transcripts but check the audio if any minor edits are required.

Make navigation buttons large enough for ease of use and use descriptive functional meaning.

EPUBs are the first choice for the assistive technology community, not PDF. Text documents and PowerPoints can be converted to EPUBs in two ways. One way is to open drive.google.com, go to new, file upload and open the file in Google Docs and download as an EPUB. The second way is open www.online-convert.com, go to ebook converter, choose file and convert to EPUB.

Use the built-in Accessibility Checkers in Microsoft Office applications and other software e.g. Google Suite to ensure you are adhering to all accessible regulations where content is easy for people of all abilities to read and edit content.

The Rich Content Editor in Canvas includes an accessibility tool that checks common accessibility errors within the editor. This tool only verifies content created within the Rich Content Editor. The Accessibility Checker can help you design course content while considering accessibility attributes.