

Making Your Teaching Materials More Accessible

Learn a digital skill, help students reach their potential.



I am so grateful for the support I've been given in school. They gave me extra help and revision materials. I wouldn't have the grades I achieved if it wasn't for them.

I believe schools genuinely want to help and support all of their students the best they can, however, I feel the issue is more in understanding how to.

Challenges

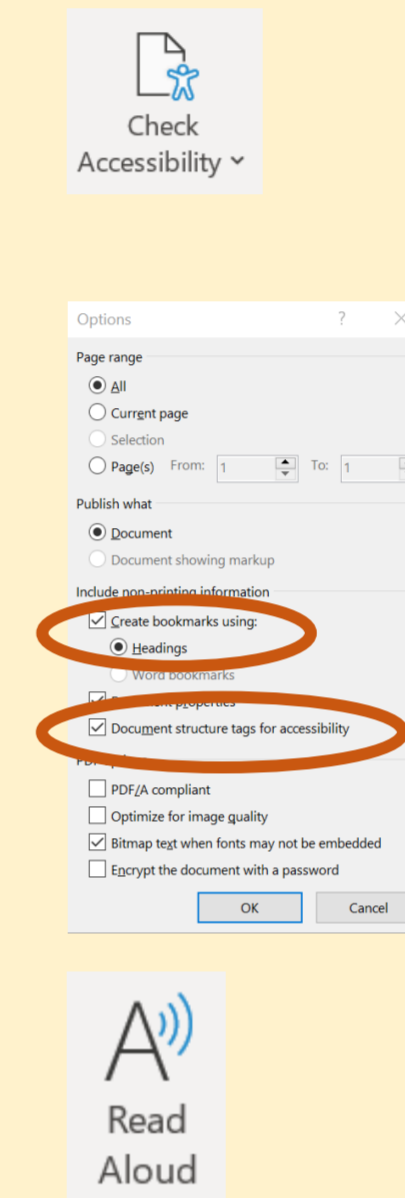
Making teaching accessible can be time-consuming and overwhelming, adding extra workload to staff.

There are so many types of guidance on accessibility it is hard to know where to start and how to approach things.

Accessibility to me means everyone can have the same educational and life experience when at university.

Improve PDF accessibility in five quick steps

1. Ensure the original document follows accessibility guidelines such as adding alt text and using styles.
2. Use the Accessibility checker in Microsoft 365 apps to ensure you are not forgetting anything.
3. Use the 'export' option in the desktop app for Word or PowerPoint.
4. Click on 'options' in the 'save as' dialogue box and make sure 'create bookmarks using headings' and 'document structure tags for accessibility' have been ticked.
5. Try to open your newly created PDF in Microsoft Word. If it opens as an editable text, then the document will be machine-readable. Alternatively, you can check it using an immersive reader or a read aloud option in your PDF viewer or browser.



Other things to consider

Play around with accessibility tools to better understand what they do and how they work.

Use OCR (Optical Character Recognition) software when scanning documents to convert the PDF into an editable and searchable document.

Find more guidance on how to improve accessibility of existing PDF documents on the Welsh Government Website.

SCULPT your materials for accessibility



Structure
Making your materials predictable and easy to follow for all.



Colour and contrast
Keep it easy on the eyes. Check your colours with the WebAIM: Contrast checker.



Use of images
No more confusions about what an image is and what is its purpose.



Plain English
Using plain English does not mean you cannot explain complex ideas or topics. Instead, it helps you get your point across with fewer misunderstandings.

Find more guidance on the Plain English Campaign website.



Tables
Make them easy to read with accessibility tools.

Part of the reason I had so little support at University is because I was afraid of the backlash I would receive if I asked for them.

In group discussions or content with high levels of collaboration it can be harder to engage, and the noisy surroundings can make it harder still.



Links
Use descriptive links rather than 'you can find the link here'.



I've never felt able to raise any issues due to my lack of diagnosis.

I would like for PowerPoints to be the same format as much as possible within a course or module to make it easier for individuals with specific learning differences or visual impairments.

I think more could be done to help peers have a greater understanding of other people's difficulties and barriers, to reduce stigma and promote inclusivity.

Conclusions

Leveraging technology and digital skills can help improve access to teaching for all and help people feel more included and welcome in higher education. If you have any questions about accessibility or would like help with using technology to enhance your teaching contact the Digital Skills Team at tad@abdn.ac.uk.

Our team: Claire Molloy, Pauline Fraser, Kim Richmond, Tim Riley, Sarah Todd, Lida Rocmanova.

References

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