The University
of Manchester

# THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

# Making Meetings and Events Accessible

# Guidance

# 2023

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**Introduction**

This guidance aims to assist people when organising events and meetings at The University of Manchester in order to make them more accessible to all staff, students and visitors.

Hundreds of meetings and events are organised at the University each week. You can make your events accessible to as many people as possible by taking into consideration different factors that are often overlooked. This guidance will assist you in making your event accessible to everyone by considering a number of different factors. These are simply guidelines and it is appreciated that not all events and meetings will be able to action each point mentioned, but they should be considered.

1. **Timing & Length**

   When organising an event you need to be aware of a range of factors that could influence people's availability. For example:

   - For events within the working day it is advisable that the start and end times are within the period 10.00 am – 4.00 pm. Meetings with an earlier start or later finish may cause difficulties for people with caring responsibilities.

   - Meetings scheduled to last longer than around 2 hours should allow for one or more short breaks. In timing the breaks thought should be given to scheduling them around meal times (e.g. for people who may need regular food intake relating to a health condition) or prayer times. Such breaks will also benefit all those present and will assist concentration.

   - If the event involves a number of sessions in different venues, allow sufficient changeover time for people with mobility impairments to move between them.

   - Consideration should be given to the time of the week. If you are aware of the work pattern of those who should attend (e.g. for an internal team meeting), you should take account of anybody who works part time, or has non-standard hours. There may also be times in the week relating to religious observance that should be avoided. For example Friday is a significant religious day for the Muslim and Jewish communities.

   - There may also be an annual cycle to take into account e.g. avoiding important meetings during school holidays if parents are more likely to be on holiday, or significant religious festivals when people from that faith may wish to take leave.

   - When planning events such as research seminar programmes, it is advisable to vary the days and the times at which the seminars are held over the course of the programme, to support maximum participation and inclusion of diverse groups of staff, such as those working part-time, with caring responsibilities or other such commitments.

   - Try to make meetings or events run to time and not be too long so people can plan their diaries and time accordingly. Take into consideration travel time to and from the venue and signage within the building.

   For larger events it is always a good idea to consult the Diversity Calendar so that special religious events and days can be avoided whenever possible:

2. **Location and Building Access**

The venue needs to be accessible to people who may have a range of access needs. If most people are based in one building, then look for a venue in the same building. Also consider where people are based on campus or travelling from if external people are to attend.

Things to consider include:

- Is there disabled parking near to the venue?

- Is the route from the nearest entrance to the car park easily accessible?

- Is the building accessible for people with a mobility impairment. This may include wheelchair users, but may also include people who tire easily, or may find stairs difficult etc. Things to consider include:

  - Is the level entrance to the building near to the meeting room?

  - If the entrance has a ramp, would this allow a wheelchair user to enter the building independently?

  - Are there handrails next to stairs and ramps?

- If the event is on an upper or lower floor, is there a lift that is wide enough to accommodate a motorised wheelchair and/or a wheelchair user with a personal assistant?

- Is the speaker area accessible e.g. if s/he will be suing a lectern or microphone are they of adjustable height?

- Are there toilets within easy reach of the meeting room?

- Is there a fully accessible toilet near to the venue i.e. one that will accommodate a wheelchair user, possibly accompanied by a personal assistant?

- Does the room incorporate a hearing loop and are those who will be running the event aware of how it works?

- Is there private space near to the venue for people who may need to use them for a short period e.g. for religious observance, to administer medication etc.

- What are the emergency evacuation arrangements and places of safety for people who may not be able to use stairs in the event of a fire or other emergency?

More information on room accessibility is available from [Central Teaching Spaces](#) (CTS):

There is a [specific campus map](#) showing accessibility of our buildings on campus and this is provided by Disabled Go.

3. **Parking**

If you are inviting external people to the event, ensure you are familiar with the closest parking facilities and whether these cater for disabled travellers. You need to make arrangements for parking with the Permit Office in advance. A booking form need to be completed and sent to the Permit Office. A charge will be made to the department. If you are reserving a parking space for a visitor who is disabled, please follow the normal procedure, but state that the visitor holds a blue badge. We will then arrange a suitable parking space and waive the visitor parking fee. A full list of car parks on University Grounds and car parking procedure can be seen here:

4. **Religious facilities:**

Identify the nearest reflection/prayer facilities, and highlight these within the conference literature. The sacred spaces map can be accessed from the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion website.

5. **Catering**

- If buffet refreshments are to be provided where people may not all be able to take a seat it helps if the food can be eaten without the need for cutlery.
- You should ask in advance about special dietary requirements. Ensure that any special foods are clearly identified and kept separate from other food or are delivered directly to the person who has requested them. It also important to find out if anyone attending the event has allergies.
- Even if you have not received any special requests, it can help to include a relatively high proportion of vegetarian options as this is likely to meet most requirements.
- Provide a range of beverages, including plain water.
- If alcohol is to be served, ensure this is advised in advance and clearly marked (or served on separate tables) – this takes account of those who may not drink for religious reasons and those who may not be drinking due to driving.

Food on Campus can provide full information on their services as well as outside caterers which may be used from time to time. Any outside catering should be provided by an approved supplier.

6. **Special Requirements**

Certain delegates may have special requirements. These can include things such as induction loops or screen readers. It is always a good idea to check in advance, so such items can be provided. The catalogue of rooms and features is always a good reference to begin with:

And specific AV requirements can be booked using the Audio Visual Booking Service.

**Facilities for people with hearing impairments**: There are several options available:

a) An induction loop is essential and all good venues should have one in the meeting room, or they can be hired if not. They are useful for hearing aid users in cutting out background noise and amplifying sound when used in tandem with a PA system.

b) Palantypists type every word said which is then projected onto a screen, so you will probably require a separate screen for this. This is really useful for all delegates especially when busily taking notes or inevitably missing something which was said, but it's also good for a complete transcript of your event (be sure to take a memory stick to save the data onto). Laura Harrison currently provides palantyping service to the Disability Advisory Support Service (DASS).

c) Hi-Linc is similar however, the information can only be viewed via laptops which hearing-impaired people will need to sit in front of.

d) British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreters usually stand next to the speaker. They alternate every 20 minutes so you will need to hire two interpreters for an event and provide chairs for them to sit when not interpreting.

e) Speakers should not stand in front of a window unless curtains can be drawn behind them, as their face will be in shade and make lip reading difficult.

**Facilities for people with visual impairments:** There are several considerations which can ensure visually impaired delegates participate fully in your event. Good colour contrast demonstrates the difference between doors and entrances or floors and walls. Stickers should be applied to any full glass doors that will be used by delegates. Information prior to the event may be necessary and many people now have reader software on their PC's. Your staff could also speak further via telephone with individuals if more information about your event is required. Your booking form could ask whether a Braille transcription is needed, but this is a very rare occurrence. Providing handouts on yellow or off white paper can be very helpful to people with specific difficulties such as dyslexia.

**Creature Comforts:** There are now many sorts of assistance dogs, not just the familiar guide dog but also hearing dogs and some that assist people with physical disabilities. You will need to know numbers and ensure water is provided. Consider whether you can make any volunteer walkers available during break and lunch times if required.

7. **Joining Documents**

If you are sending out documents ahead of the event or meeting, try to make sure they are in an easily readable and accessible format. This can mean using a clear type font and ensuring the background is white with black type. Sending as a pdf is usually the best way to avoid software clashes. Always state that the documents can be made available in different formats so people can contact to discuss specific requirements.

There is specific guidance for report and paper writing that can be found here:

- [Report and Paper Writing](#)

8. **Advertising the event or meeting and marketing materials for the event**

- You should consider how your meeting and event is advertised. Bear in mind that not all university staff have access to e-mail, so alternative methods of contact should be used. This could mean posters, flyers or telephone calls.

- If advertising an event using posters, ensure that they accessible for people with visual impairments.  Some fonts and colour combinations can be difficult for people to read, so ensure all information is clearly presented.  The [RNIB](#) offer some further information on this.

- Provide accurate information on accessibility in advance of your event, as this gives people time to contact you in advance with details of their requirements.

- Consider the images that you use to promote your event, by incorporating diversity in your materials.

- Promotional videos should be subtitled, where possible.

### 9. Paying for Reasonable Adjustments

If there are specific adjustments that are needed then it is the responsibility of the organiser to cover this cost.  It is therefore always wise to build in a contingency for such expenses.  However, there may not always be a cost involved.  The individual may have an 'Access to Work' agreement and therefore adjustments required to attend the meeting or conference should be covered by this agreement.

If this is not the case, then there may be funds available at a school or faculty Level.

DASS cannot provide funding for such adjustments, but they will be able to advise on providers and how to obtain specific support.

### 10. Asking your audience

It is always good practise to ask confirmed and potential attendees for information on special requirements before the event and feedback or suggestions once the event is over.  Feedback after the event can be collected via a number of methods: feedback sheets on the day; e-mail after the event; survey sheets or links to surveys after the event.  The preferred method will depend on the needs of the event planner and also the audience this is directed at.  Ensure that this information is clearly displayed and communicated to all attendees.  This can ensure you reach the largest audience and ensure your event is accessible to as many people as possible.

Suggested wording:

Before the event:

'should you have any specific requirements, accessibility needs or other specific requests please notify {insert e-mail address} by {insert date this information is required by} and we will ensure your needs are catered for'

After the event:

'thank you for attending {insert name of event} on {insert date}.  If you have any feedback that will assist us in planning similar events in the future please respond to [insert name/e-mail address] or complete the attached form or follow the link to fill in a short feedback survey.'

Useful contacts at The University of Manchester

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Office

- Tel: 0161 306 5857 (Internal: 65857)
- Email: equalityanddiversity@manchester.ac.uk
- Location: G035 John Owens Building
- Webpages: www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/equality-and-diversity/

### Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS)

- For Staff - Tel: 0161 306 7976 (Internal: 67976)
  For Students – Tel: 0161 275 7512 (Internal: 57512)
- Email: dass@manchester.ac.uk
- Location: Second Floor, University Place
- Webpage: www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/personalsupport/disabled-staff/

Opening times Monday - Friday: 10.00am - 4.00pm

### Central Teaching Spaces

- Tel: 0161 275 7305 or (Internal: 57305)
- Email: cts@manchester.ac.uk
- Webpage: http://www.estates.manchester.ac.uk/services/centralteachingspaces/

### Internal Communications

- Phone: 0161 275 2112 (Internal: 52112) or 0161 306 1682 (Internal: 61682)
- Email: uninews@manchester.ac.uk
- Location: Room LG0.20, John Owens Building
- Webpage: www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/communications-marketing/internalcommunications/

### Car Parking Services

- Email: carparking@manchester.ac.uk
- Tel: 0161 275 2231
- Webpage: http://www.estates.manchester.ac.uk/services/operationalservices/carparking/
- Location: Room G.002, Beyer Building

Opening times: Monday-Thursday 9.30am to 4.00pm & Friday 10.00am to 4.00pm

**Food On Campus**

- Email: foodoncampus@manchester.ac.uk
- Tel: 0161 275 2751 (Internal 52751) or 0161 306 4083 (Internal 64083)
- Location: University Place (Oxford Rd) and Meeting Place (Sackville St)
- Webpage: www.foodoncampus.manchester.ac.uk/