ARCHER Training Accessibility

Wednesday 4th November
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- Why are we doing this?
- What is the recommended best practice?
- Examples from our own experience
- Getting the information we need
- How we can improve
- Conclusions

- Because we have to!
  - Equality Act 2010
- Enable participation
- Removing barriers

Student Disability Service

- http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service/staff/supporting-students

Student Disability Service

- Physical disability
  – wheelchair accessible rooming
- Specific Learning Difficulties
  – Dyslexia
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders
- Visual Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
- Assistive Technologies

- ARCHER course delegate requested wheelchair access to a training venue outside of University of Edinburgh

- Initially advised by the venue that it was NOT accessible

- Further research revealed a well documented, fully accessible access route

- ARCHER course delegate contacted the venue not us, that due to a badly broken leg, they required wheelchair access to the venue.
- Whilst accessible accommodation had been requested when booking the venue, the training room was swapped at the last minute and was actually upstairs with no lift.
- Catering and toilet facilities were on a different floor to the training room

- Delivering as a guest speaker at a conference, the mic was not being used by any of the presenters.

- It was a small room, so had not been thought necessary.

- Afterwards a hearing-impaired attendee complained that they could not follow the talks – would have been able to if mic had been used as it was linked to an induction loop.

- Visually impaired delegate requested practical session handouts be printed in 24 point text.

- Materials had been prepared in LaTeX

- LaTeX style file ran to so many pages, and was so complex, no one was able to make the required changes in time.

- (Though we did manage an alternative solution, in time)

- Ensure ALL venues to be used for training are fully wheelchair accessible
    - Even if no one requests wheelchair access at the time of booking
- Ensure ALL venues have induction loop facilities or else take our portable kit
    - And ensure ALL presenters ALWAYS use the mic
    - Your local university will usually be able to provide this.

- Ensure all materials are in a format that can be easily resized
  - Use simple Latex or powerpoint documents that are easy to resize
- Working with external hosts is often difficult: other universities have the same legal obligation to us, but will put their students first as that is their responsibility. They are not responsible for ensuring accessibility on our behalf.

- Make it clear that you are willing to provide any accommodations we can to make attending our courses as accessible as possible.

- Use HackPad or similar to share information with and between delegates during a course and afterwards.

- Use SkypeChat or similar to allow discrete communication between a delegate and the tutor during a course.

- Open conversation between attendees and tutor before the start of a course, bringing down the barrier to discussing their accessibility requirements.

Teaching students who are deaf or hard of hearing

- 1 in 5 people have some form of hearing impairment
- Many people lip read, some extremely adeptly
- Communication may be through the use of sign language, gestures, writing, language interpreters.
- Always speak directly to the student not the interpreter
- During discussions ensure one person speaks at a time
- Do not loose visual contact – avoid giving out information while handing out papers

Teaching students who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Provide seats near the front
- Use captioned videos whenever possible
- If a classroom must be darkened ensure student's interpreter is clearly visible
- When reading from text provide a copy in advance to participants
- When working with the chalkboard or overhead system, pause briefly to allow student to look at screen then interpreter/you

- Often varying physical limitations, may use crutches, braces, wheelchair
- May use a dictaphone to record lectures
- A wheelchair is part of a students 'personal space' – do not lean, touch it or push unless asked. When talking to a student in a wheelchair one-to-one always be seated so they do not have to peer upwards at you
- Understand they may be late!
- Be prepared to make special seating arrangements
- Not all impairments are constant or unchanging, exacerbations/relapses or hospitalisation may occur.

Teaching students with psychological disabilities

- Depression, bipolar disorder, severe anxiety… and many more. Every case is different.
- Not well understood or accepted in our society.
- Many will fear the reaction of others and will not disclose information to you
- Do not press students to explain their disabilities if they do not wish to.
- Students may miss class, be late, leave the room in the middle of a class – they are responsible for catching up, but appreciate that they may ask for help to fill in the gaps
- Be respectful: don't jump to conclusions about why someone appears lazy, grumpy, or misses classes

- Considerable variation from no vision to being able to read standard print if magnified
- May need preferential seating
- Well before the start of the lecture (at least three days) provide slides/notes
- Use large font on slides
- Avoid making statements that can not be followed by someone without sight (e.g. 'This diagram sums up what I am saying').

- Ensure there is plenty of time for breaks
- Late start/early finish is often beneficial
- Start communication with participants before a course starts
- If possible provide catering so attendees don't need to leave the venue (also improves networking opportunities)

- Participants are under no obligation to tell you their requirements
- You are only expected to help if you have been told
  - Try and minimise the difficulty in asking for help, making you aware of their requirements
  - Disassociate being accepted for a course etc. with providing sensitive information
  - E.g. send out separate questionnaire after acceptance on course asking for adjustments needed

- Don't assume anything about someone's behaviour

- Being late, having a bad day may not be their fault – they may have very good reasons they don't want to share with you

- Understand that many of them may just 'make do' because they don't want to be seen making a fuss – we need to work to reassure them that we want to help (and act that way ourselves when we need help!)

- What else could we / should we do?
- How can we do things better?
- What would ARCHER users like us to change/do better?

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- Vital to know what accessibility needs the delegates have
  - Not one-size-fits-all
  - e.g. Some dyslexics benefit from a background colour being applied to PowerPoint slides
  - But each individual will require their own colour

- Also vital to ask for things such as dietary requirements
  - Not a protected characteristic but excludes participants if food provided for everyone except them
  - Participants can end up missing activities to go in search of suitable catering.
  - Local small outlets may not cater for special allergies (dairy, gluten etc.)

- Everyone must be aware of the
  - requirements of the UK Equality Act
  - What facilities are available already
  - How to get help and further advice

- We should aim to share and document best practice

Questions?