ACCESSIBLE TEACHING TOOLKIT

for Higher Education Teachers



A practical guide for lecturers, tutors, and teaching staff
Prepared for higher education institutions in Uzbekistan

RIX. | University of East London | Disability Inclusion Partnership | O'zMPU | Funded by BRITISH COUNCIL

Supported by funding from the British Council's Going Global Partnerships programme

Contents

How to Use This Toolkit 3

Part 1 – Foundations 4

1. What Is Inclusive Education? 4

2. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) 5

3. Why This Matters in Uzbekistan 6

4. Your Responsibilities as a Teacher 7

5. Inclusive Teaching vs. Individual Adjustments 8

Part 2 – Teaching, Materials and Assessment 9

6. Accessible Teaching Materials 9

7. Inclusive Assessment 15

8. Ready-to-Use Wording 17

Part 3 - Accessibility Categories 18

9. ADHD 19

10. Autism 23

11. Dyslexia and Other Specific Learning Differences 27

12. Depression and Anxiety 31

13. Hearing Impairment and Deafness 35

14. Visual Impairment and Blindness 39

15. Physical Disabilities and Mobility Requirements 43

Part 4 – Putting it into Practice 47

16. Short Teaching Scenarios 47

17. Final Teacher Checklist 51

Glossary 52

Frequently Asked Questions 53

Key source materials 54

Contributors 55

Acknowledgements 55

How to Use This Toolkit

Most teachers want to teach inclusively but are rarely given specific, practical guidance on how. This toolkit closes that gap. It is organised in four parts:

Part 1 (Foundations) - why this matters, and what your role as a teacher specifically involves.

Part 2 (Materials & Assessment) - how to make your existing slides, documents, and exams accessible without redesigning your whole module.

Part 3 (Categories) - what a specific condition means for your teaching, today. One section per category, same structure throughout, so you can jump straight to what you need.

Part 4 (Practice) - what to do in the moment something goes wrong, plus a one-page checklist.

Read it once, then use Parts 3 and 4 as a quick reference: a teacher preparing a Thursday seminar for a student with dyslexia should be able to open that section and be ready in under five minutes.



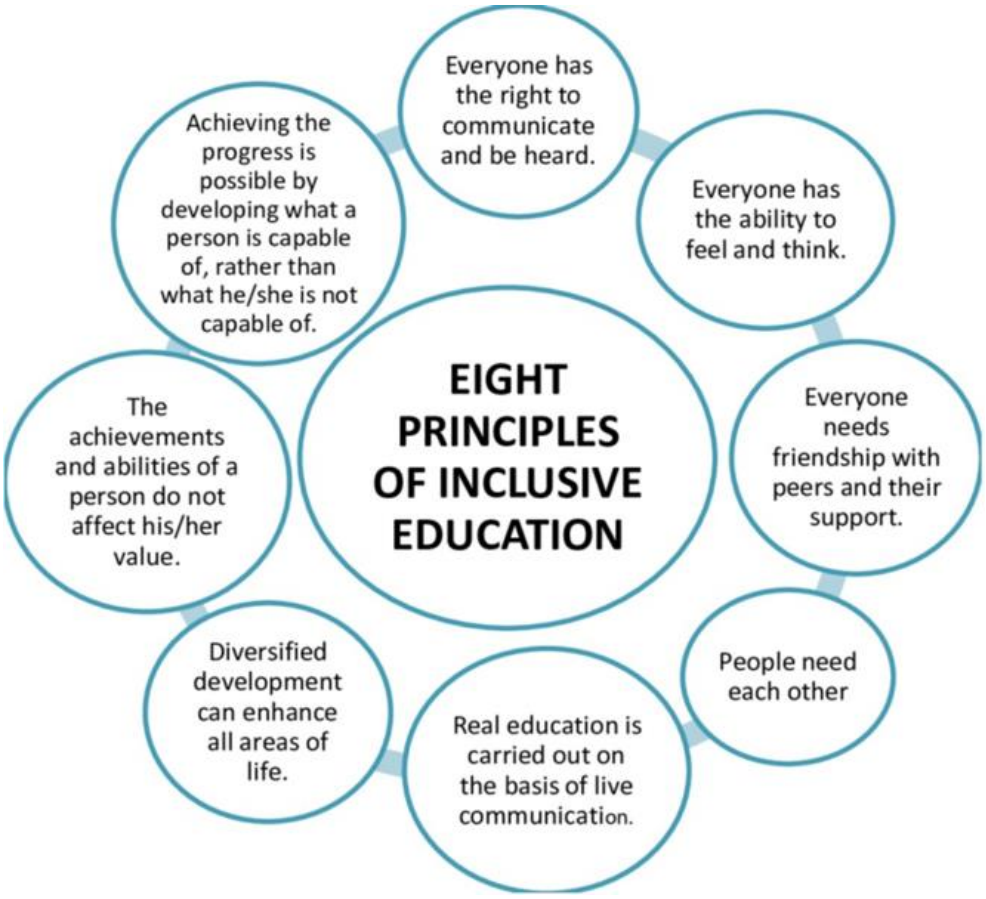
A longer version of this toolkit is available on the RIX Inclusive Education website: https://rixinclusiveeducation.org/

Part 1 – Foundations

1. What Is Inclusive Education?

Inclusive education means all students can participate meaningfully in higher education, regardless of disability, learning difference, or other circumstance. Barriers are removed proactively, learner diversity is anticipated in course design, and accessibility is treated as a standard of educational quality, not an optional extra.

This is different from simply making individual accommodations for students who ask. That deficit model depends on a student disclosing a private diagnosis, but many students never disclose. The alternative is to design teaching so it already works for a wide range of learners before anyone has to ask. In practice, every reading is produced in an accessible format as standard, so the blind student never has to request it.



Eight guiding principles of inclusive education

2. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Essential for some, beneficial for all.

UDL is the framework this toolkit leans on most. It means designing teaching, materials, and assessment to be accessible to a diverse range of learners from the outset, reducing the number of individual adjustments needed afterwards.

Captioned video, staged deadlines, and written instructions alongside spoken ones were designed for one group, but usually help many more, including second-language students, students revising for exams, and students who learn better from text

UDL doesn't replace individual reasonable adjustments –

it just shrinks how many are needed.

UDL Principle	Meaning	Example
Multiple means of **engagement**	Different ways to motivate and involve students	Discussion, group work, independent tasks, structured choice
Multiple means of **representation**	Different ways to present information	Text, audio, captions, diagrams, accessible slides
Multiple means of **action & expression**	Different ways to demonstrate learning	Essays, presentations, portfolios, recorded responses

3. Why This Matters in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2021 and has a National Action Plan (2023–2025) for implementing it. Widening access for people with disabilities is a named priority under the “New Uzbekistan” Development Strategy 2022–2026, and a national Inclusive University Working Group (under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovations) has coordinated good-practice sharing across universities since 2022.

This is already producing concrete results:



Gulistan State University seats a Society for the Blind representative on entrance-exam panels and permits Braille writers in assessments; Gulistan State Pedagogical Institute offers a fully oral exam pathway for blind students.



Westminster International University in Tashkent runs a dedicated Diversity and Inclusivity Support Unit coordinating adjustments across the whole student lifecycle and offers full-tuition scholarships to applicants with disabilities.



National University of Uzbekistan has installed Uzbek- language screen-reading software campus-wide and trained staff in sign language.



Tashkent State University of Economics has added accessible routes, ramps, and disabled toilets across its buildings.

These show meaningful change is achievable in a small number of years when institutions prioritise it - this toolkit is meant to help individual teachers do their part.

4. Your Responsibilities as a Teacher

- Plan teaching with learner diversity in mind from the start
- Know your institution's disability/inclusion procedures
- Apply agreed adjustments and confirm they were delivered
- Maintain confidentiality and communicate respectfully
- Provide accessible materials with clear instructions and sufficient notice
- Support different ways of participating
- Ensure assessment measures learning, not disability-related barriers
- Report barriers you can't resolve alone
- Never place the full burden of accessibility on the student



Your job is to remove educational barriers, not to second-guess a disclosed need.

5. Inclusive Teaching vs. Individual Adjustments

These are often confused, but the distinction shapes how you plan a session.

Inclusive teaching is planned for everyone in the room from the start, without requiring disclosure:

- accessible slides
- captions
- materials shared in advance
- multiple ways to participate
- plain language

Individual reasonable adjustments are specific changes for one student because general inclusive design alone doesn't remove a barrier they face:

- extra time
- an interpreter
- a modified deadline
- a specific seat

Use both

When planning a session, ask first: ***"What could I build in for everyone, without knowing who's in the room?"***

Then ask: ***"What does this specific student additionally need?"***

Answering the first question well makes the second one smaller

Part 2 – Teaching, Materials and Assessment

6. Accessible Teaching Materials

Most accessibility barriers aren't dramatic - they're small, easily-fixed, repeated formatting choices.



The same content, made available across formats

This section provides information on how to increase the accessibility of:

- Documents
- Presentations
- Video and Audio
- Online Teaching

Documents

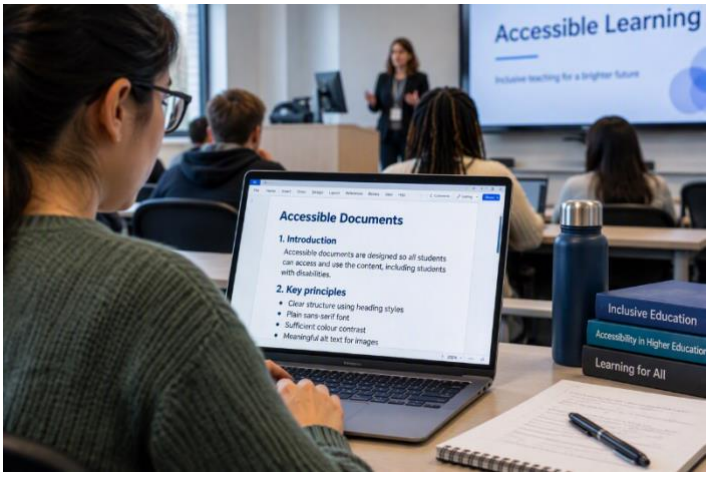
- Use built-in heading styles, genuine header rows in tables, and descriptive link text so a screen reader can navigate the structure

- Use a plain sans-serif font, 12–14pt; avoid underlining (except links), ALL CAPS, and excessive italics

- Ensure sufficient colour contrast, never use colour alone to convey meaning, and provide meaningful alt text on informative images; leave purely decorative images unlabelled

- Never distribute scanned, image-only documents; export directly from the source file

- Provide an editable or alternative format (large print, audio, Braille conversion) on request



Presentations

- Keep slides uncluttered with limited text per slide - dense slides are hard to read for many students, not only those with a specific difficulty

- Describe diagrams and images aloud - avoid “as you can see here” without further description

- Don’t rely on colour alone to distinguish content; avoid flashing or rapidly changing content

- Share slides before the session, not just after, so students who benefit from pre-reading vocabulary have the chance to do so



Video and Audio

- Provide accurate captions (checked, not just auto-generated - uncorrected captions often garble technical vocabulary) and a transcript where possible

- Ensure clear audio quality - poor audio compounds every other barrier a student is managing

- Describe important visual information verbally within the recording itself

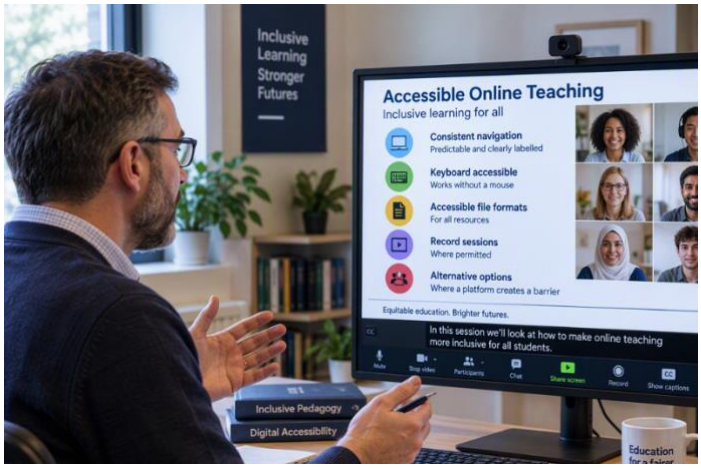
- Never use uncaptioned video as essential, non-optional content - if it’s the only source for required material, its inaccessibility becomes a barrier to the module itself



Online Teaching

- Use consistent, predictable navigation and clearly labelled resources
- Ensure keyboard accessibility
- Provide accessible file formats for anything students download or interact with
- Record sessions where permitted and explain participation expectations clearly
- Provide an alternative where a specific platform creates a barrier

(Refer to WCAG 2.2 AA as the international standard for anything published online.)



Before-You-Send Checklist



☐ Built-in headings used, not just bold text?

☐ Plain 12pt+ sans-serif font?

☐ Colour contrast checked, and colour not the only signal?

☐ Alt text on meaningful images?

☐ Not a scanned image-only document?

☐ Captions on any video?

7. Inclusive Assessment

A barrier that costs a few minutes in a lecture can cost marks in an exam. Good assessment design separates **what is being tested** from **how it is demonstrated.**

Provide clear information:

- Give clear, written instructions and marking criteria well in advance
- Provide sufficient notice of assessment dates and any changes
- Communicate assessment changes promptly, and confirm arrangements are in place before the assessment begins

Assess learning fairly:

- Ensure assessments measure the intended outcome, not unrelated skills such as spelling accuracy, unless these are being assessed
- Avoid penalising disability-related differences that are unrelated to the learning outcome

Offer flexibility and remove barriers:

- Offer alternative assessment formats that could demonstrate the same learning outcome, such as posters, presentations, or podcasts
- Implement approved adjustments reliably, including extra time, rest breaks and accessible assessment materials
- Avoid unnecessary time pressure. Only use timed assessments where timing is essential to the learning outcome

Alternative assessment methods

Worked example:

A learning outcome of “demonstrate understanding of the theory” can be validly assessed by an essay, a recorded explanation, poster or a group presentation.



Choosing between formats is a design decision, not a fixed rule about the subject.

8. Ready-to-Use Wording



Plain, low-key scripts that don't require specialist knowledge and don't ask the student to justify their needs:

- **Asking about support (e.g. in a first session):**

"Please let me know whether there are any agreed adjustments or accessibility arrangements I should be aware of for this module."

- **Responding to a disclosure:**

"Thank you for telling me. I will treat this confidentially and work with you and the appropriate university service to support your participation."

- **Checking an adjustment is working:**

"I'd like to confirm the agreed arrangement is working as intended. Please let me know if there's still a barrier."

- **Addressing an accessibility problem:**

"Thank you for raising this. I will provide an accessible version and review how the material was prepared."

- **Referring to support:**

"I may need support from the relevant university team to arrange this properly. I will explain the next steps and follow up."

Part 3 - Accessibility Categories

One principle applies throughout:

Base adjustments on what an individual student says helps them, not on assumptions from a diagnosis label.

Two students with the same diagnosis can need very different things.



This section provides information on how individual adjustments may be used to remove common barriers faced by students experiencing:

- ADHD
- Autism
- Dyslexia and Other Specific Learning Differences
- Depression and Anxiety
- Hearing Impairment and Deafness
- Visual Impairment and Blindness
- Physical Disabilities and Mobility Requirements

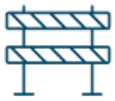
9. ADHD

A. What the Teacher Needs to Understand



ADHD is a difficulty with executive function - planning, working memory, time management, emotional regulation - not a lack of effort or attention. Performance can genuinely vary week to week; this is frequently misread as inconsistent effort. Many students don't disclose, so build these practices into standard teaching rather than offering them only on request.

B. Key Barriers in Teaching



- Unstructured time
- Unaided working memory demands
- One-off verbal explanations with no written back-up
- Long unstructured lectures
- Informally negotiated group roles

C. What the Teacher Should Do



Before teaching

- Upload materials, readings, and slides early, in a consistent, predictable location - same place, same day each week if possible
- Give advance notice of any change to plans, deadlines, or format
- Break larger assignments into staged submissions with interim checkpoints, rather than a single distant deadline
- Prepare a concrete example of what a strong answer looks like, not just a description of the criteria

During teaching

- Give instructions in both written and verbal form; show a concrete example rather than relying on implicit expectations
- Break longer explanations into clearly signposted steps (“first… next… finally…”) rather than one continuous stream
- Repeat and visually highlight key information
- Allow movement or a short break in sessions over 60–90 minutes; use active, hands-on learning where the format allows
- Avoid unexpectedly calling on a student to answer without warning

After teaching

- Share notes, recordings, or a written summary so a lapse in concentration doesn't mean losing the content entirely
- Check whether agreed adjustments (extra time, staged deadlines) were actually implemented, not just agreed on paper
- Where a student struggled with a task, separate feedback on what they understood from how they organised or delivered it

D. What Teachers Should Avoid



- Treating inconsistent performance as low effort
- Relying on verbal-only multi-step instructions
- Changing deadlines or format at short notice
- Naming a student's support needs in front of the class
- Assuming a student who manages well in one module will manage equally well in another

E. In Practice - An unstructured deadline sequence

A first-year student with ADHD consistently submitted strong individual pieces of work but missed the overall deadline for a multi-part portfolio, two terms running, despite starting early both times.

What helped: the module leader restructured the assignment into three staged submissions with brief feedback at each stage - no change to the content or standard required, only to how progress was checked along the way.

The barrier was never the student's understanding of the subject; it was the absence of external checkpoints. The same staging benefited several other students in the group too.

F. Quick Teacher Checklist



- ☐ Materials shared early, in a predictable place?
- ☐ Instructions in writing as well as spoken?
- ☐ Multi-step tasks broken into staged checkpoints?
- ☐ Advance notice given of any changes?
- ☐ A natural break point built into longer sessions?
- ☐ Agreed adjustments verified as actually applied?

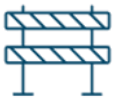
10. Autism

A. What the Teacher Needs to Understand



Autistic students are a highly varied group - no single profile fits every student. Unpredictability, not autism itself, is very often the biggest barrier. Many bring real strengths (attention to detail, sustained focus, unusual problem-solving angles) that are under-recognised.

B. Key Barriers in Teaching



- Unplanned changes to room, time, or format
- Unclear or informally negotiated group roles
- Sensory overload (noise, lighting, crowding)
- Being unexpectedly asked to speak

C. What the Teacher Should Do



Before teaching

- Give advance notice of any change to room, time, format, or routine - consistently identified as one of the single most effective things a teacher can do
- Share a clear, written agenda or outline ahead of the session
- Plan explicit group roles in advance rather than leaving them to be negotiated informally
- Consider sensory factors in room choice where possible - lighting, noise, and crowding matter more here than for many other students

During teaching

- Keep to a predictable session structure; flag transitions between activities clearly
- Avoid calling on a student to speak or present without warning
- State expectations and instructions explicitly and literally, not by implication, idiom, or assumed shared knowledge
- Allow access to a quiet space, or the option to step out briefly, if sensory overload builds
- Recognise and name a student's demonstrated strengths, not only areas of difficulty

After teaching

- Offer a brief, low-pressure check-in rather than addressing concerns only in front of the group
- Provide a written summary of key points and decisions made
- Confirm an agreed adjustment (e.g. advance notice of changes) is applied consistently across the whole module, not only by the teacher who agreed to it

D. What Teachers Should Avoid



- Reading atypical eye contact as disinterest
- Changing plans at short notice
- Cold-calling without warning
- Treating one accommodation as sufficient without the wider picture
- Assuming reduced social interaction means a student doesn't want to connect with peers

E. In Practice - A last-minute room change

An autistic student who had been managing a module well became visibly distressed and left a session when it was relocated at short notice to an unfamiliar room, with no explanation given.

What helped: the tutor followed up privately afterwards (not in front of the group), explained clearly in writing what had caused the change, and agreed to always flag room changes by message as soon as known, even when the change seemed minor.

The distress wasn't disproportionate to the disruption - it was disproportionate to the lack of warning. The fix cost almost nothing and prevented the problem recurring.

F. Quick Teacher Checklist



☐ Advance notice given of any changes?

☐ Instructions explicit and literal, not implied?

☐ Group roles planned in advance?

☐ No unwarned cold-calling?

☐ A quieter space available if sensory overload builds?

☐ Strengths recognised, not just difficulties?

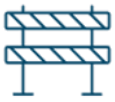
11. Dyslexia and Other Specific Learning Differences

A. What the Teacher Needs to Understand



Affects reading fluency, spelling, working memory, and processing speed - not intelligence or effort. Often invisible: years of compensation can mask a difficulty until a high-pressure moment (timed exam, unexpected read-aloud) exposes it.

B. Key Barriers in Teaching



- Long readings assigned with little lead time
- Image-only, scanned PDFs
- Timed, speed-based exams
- Unexpected read-aloud tasks

C. What the Teacher Should Do



Before teaching

- Share reading lists and key materials well in advance.
- Provide slides and notes in an accessible, screen-reader-compatible format - never a scanned image-only document
- Give clear, written marking criteria and, where possible, a model example of a strong answer
- Where reading aloud might come up, decide and communicate in advance whether it will be optional

During teaching

- Never ask a student to read aloud unexpectedly - offer it as a choice made in advance, not sprung as a surprise
- Break longer verbal explanations into smaller, signposted chunks
- Reinforce key terms and instructions in writing as well as speech, particularly discipline-specific vocabulary
- Allow extra processing time before expecting a response to a direct question

After teaching

- Give feedback on content and ideas separately from spelling and grammar, unless accurate spelling/grammar is itself the learning outcome
- Check that agreed adjustments - extra time, assistive software access - have actually been applied, not just recorded
- Share a written summary or recording, so students aren't solely reliant on real-time note-taking

D. What Teachers Should Avoid



- Cold read-aloud requests
- Marking down spelling where it isn't the outcome being tested.
- Distributing scanned PDFs as standard
- Assuming slow reading reflects low effort
- Withdrawing support because a student compensates well sometimes
- Treating extra time as an unfair advantage rather than a levelling of an unequal starting point

E. In Practice - A read-aloud request in seminar

A student with dyslexia had been contributing confidently to discussion all term but became visibly anxious and asked to be excused when a new seminar leader, unaware of the dyslexia, asked students to take turns reading a passage aloud.

What helped: the leader moved on immediately without drawing further attention to the moment and afterwards agreed that reading aloud would always be offered as a choice rather than a rota.

Confident verbal participation in discussion had masked a genuine difficulty with reading aloud specifically - fluency in one mode of communication doesn't predict fluency in another.

F. Quick Teacher Checklist



- ☐ Documents accessible, not scanned images?
- ☐ Materials shared well in advance?
- ☐ No unwarned read-aloud requests?
- ☐ Marking criteria explicit and written?
- ☐ Content and spelling marked separately?
- ☐ Extra time/software access verified as arranged?

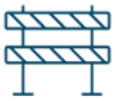
12. Depression and Anxiety

A. What the Teacher Needs to Understand



Affects concentration, memory, motivation, and energy - not simply mood. Reduced participation is not evidence of reduced care. Presentation varies: some students withdraw, others appear highly engaged while managing significant anxiety underneath. Unlike other categories, this can develop or change within a single term, so your response needs to stay flexible.

B. Key Barriers in Teaching



- Being unexpectedly asked to speak or present
- High-stakes, single-attempt assessment
- Unclear expectations that generate anticipatory anxiety
- No low-stakes way to participate

C. What the Teacher Should Do



Before teaching

- Give advance notice of how participation will work in a session, so students can prepare mentally
- Offer a low-stakes way to contribute (written, anonymous, or small-group) alongside open discussion, as a standard option
- Make expectations and marking criteria explicit and available in writing - ambiguity itself generates anticipatory anxiety

During teaching

- Avoid cold-calling students to speak; invite contributions rather than demanding them
- Keep instructions and expectations clear and predictable, minimising unnecessary uncertainty
- Notice - without singling a student out publicly - if someone appears to be struggling, and plan to follow up privately

After teaching

- Follow up privately and without pressure if a student seemed distressed or disengaged
- Signpost available support clearly, without requiring the student to disclose anything first
- Confirm flexible deadlines or alternative assessment formats have been arranged, not just agreed in principle

D. What Teachers Should Avoid



- Publicly questioning absence or reduced participation
- Framing an adjustment as special treatment in front of others
- Pressuring a student to disclose a diagnosis
- Assuming quiet participation reflects a lack of engagement
- Treating flexibility requests as inconvenient rather than as removing a genuine barrier

E. In Practice - An unexpected presentation request

A student managing anxiety had been quietly attending and submitting strong written work all module, then appeared visibly distressed when asked, with no warning, to present findings to the group the following week.

What helped: the tutor offered an alternative - submitting the same findings as a short, recorded video instead - made available to the whole group, not singled out for one student, so no one needed to explain their choice.

The barrier wasn't the content of the task, which the student could clearly handle; it was the specific, high-exposure format.

F. Quick Teacher Checklist



- ☐ A low-stakes participation option offered?
- ☐ Recordings/materials available without needing to ask?
- ☐ Expectations explicit and written?
- ☐ No cold-calling?
- ☐ Follow-up done privately, not in front of the group?
- ☐ Flexibility confirmed as actually arranged?

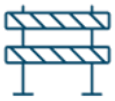
13. Hearing Impairment and Deafness

A. What the Teacher Needs to Understand



Sits on a spectrum; students use hearing aids, lipreading, captioning, or sign language - often in combination. No single method works for everyone. Equipment alone doesn't guarantee inclusion: a hearing loop switched off, or a lecturer who talks while facing the whiteboard, creates a real barrier regardless of what's technically installed.

B. Key Barriers in Teaching



- Speaking while facing away from the class
- Uncaptioned video
- Overlapping speakers in discussion
- Verbal-only announcements

C. What the Teacher Should Do



Before teaching

- Caption all video content and provide transcripts where possible, well ahead of when it's needed
- Share materials in advance so key vocabulary is familiar before it's used verbally
- Check the room's acoustics, and that assistive listening systems (hearing loop, FM system) are working before the session

During teaching

- Face the class when speaking; avoid talking while facing a whiteboard or screen, even briefly
- Use a microphone consistently, not only when specifically asked to
- Repeat or summarise contributions from other students before responding - often the hardest part of a session to follow
- Structure group discussion with one speaker at a time and clear turn-taking

After teaching

- Offer a short check-in to confirm nothing important was missed
- Share a written summary or recording of key points
- Ensure any agreed communication support (interpreter, note-taker) is confirmed for the next session, not re-arranged from scratch each time

D. What Teachers Should Avoid



- Speaking with your back turned
- Assuming lipreading gives full comprehension of a fast or unclear speaker
- Relying on a single verbal announcement for anything important
- Waiting for a problem to emerge rather than checking in proactively
- Assuming every student wants the same type of support

E. In Practice - A lecturer who paced while speaking

A hard-of-hearing student who relied significantly on lipreading found a particular lecturer very difficult to follow, because the lecturer habitually paced back and forth and often spoke while turned toward the whiteboard. What helped: once flagged, the lecturer agreed to stay facing the class and to write key terms on the board before, not during, explaining them - small changes that cost almost nothing in delivery style but restored the student's ability to follow the session.

The barrier had nothing to do with the content, which the student found genuinely interesting - it was an unexamined delivery habit, simple to fix once named.

F. Quick Teacher Checklist



- ☐ Facing the class when speaking?
- ☐ Videos captioned with transcripts available?
- ☐ Microphone used consistently?
- ☐ Contributions repeated or summarised?
- ☐ Important information also given in writing?
- ☐ Interpreter/note-taking support confirmed for this session?

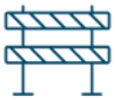
14. Visual Impairment and Blindness

A. What the Teacher Needs to Understand



Ranges from low vision to total blindness. Most students rely on screen readers, magnification, or large print - Braille literacy should never be assumed. Most barriers here come from how materials and systems are built, not from vision itself: a well-structured document removes the barrier entirely.

B. Key Barriers in Teaching



- “As you can see here” with no verbal description
- Scanned, image-only PDFs
- Undescribed diagrams
- Locked or image-only exam papers

C. What the Teacher Should Do



Before teaching

- Produce all materials as structured, accessible, screen-reader-compatible documents by default, not adapted only on request after a problem occurs
- Add meaningful alt text to any image, chart, or diagram used in teaching materials
- Check that exam papers will be produced in an accessible format well before the assessment date, not the week of the exam itself

During teaching

- Describe diagrams, charts, and any visual content aloud rather than saying “as you can see here” and moving on
- Avoid relying on pointing or gesture alone to reference something on screen or on a board
- Ask, rather than assume, before offering physical guidance around the room

After teaching

- Confirm agreed adjustments have reached everyone responsible for delivering an assessment, not just recorded on a file an invigilator may never see
- Ask the student directly what support genuinely helps, rather than defaulting to a standard equipment list
- Provide a written or audio description of any visual content shared during the session, for later reference

D. What Teachers Should Avoid



- Distributing scanned documents as standard practice
- Saying “as you can see here” without describing
- Issuing default equipment without checking fit
- Assuming an agreed adjustment automatically reaches everyone delivering a class or exam
- Questioning or overriding a student’s own judgement of their own capabilities

E. In Practice - A locked, image-only exam paper

A blind student using a screen reader had an agreed adjustment for a screen-reader-compatible exam format, confirmed at the start of the year - but the exam paper was distributed as a locked, image-only PDF, and the invigilator hadn't been told any adjustment was in place.

What helped: the issue was escalated and an accessible version produced on the day, but the underlying fix was structural - the department moved to producing every exam paper as an accessible document by default, and added a pre-assessment checklist confirming adjustments had reached the specific person delivering each exam.

An adjustment being "agreed" on paper doesn't guarantee it is delivered in the room.

F. Quick Teacher Checklist



☐ Documents structured and screen-reader compatible?

☐ Visual content described aloud?

☐ Alt text added to images?

☐ Asked the student what helps, rather than assumed?

☐ Exam adjustments confirmed with everyone delivering it?

☐ Materials shared in advance?

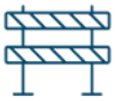
15. Physical Disabilities and Mobility Requirements

A. What the Teacher Needs to Understand



Covers wheelchair users, students with limited mobility, and chronic pain or fatigue conditions - a wider group than “mobility difficulties” suggests. Fatigue and fluctuation are easy to underestimate: a student who manages well one week may struggle the next, with no change in effort. Etiquette matters as much as physical adjustment.

B. Key Barriers in Teaching



- Stairs-only routes or blocked access
- Fixed-height lab benches
- Assuming all students can handwrite under time pressure
- No flexibility for lateness linked to a fluctuating condition

C. What the Teacher Should Do



Before teaching

- Check that the assigned room and route are accessible before the term starts, and confirm space is available for a wheelchair at a table
- Meet individually with the student to discuss their specific needs rather than assuming from the diagnosis or category alone
- Share materials in advance in case they need to be adapted by the student or their support worker

During teaching

- Approach and speak to a wheelchair user from the front, not from behind; sit down for longer conversations to be at eye level
- Ask if a student wants help, and in what way, rather than assuming - don’t push a wheelchair unless asked to
- Keep aisles and pathways clear, and avoid rearranging furniture without notice
- Consider recording sessions as a standard option, which particularly benefits attendance flexibility for fluctuating conditions

After teaching

- Communicate any room or schedule change as early as possible, and directly to the student, not only via a general notice
- Confirm the assessment format still works given any physical requirement - for example, whether handwriting under time pressure is genuinely feasible
- Check in outside class time about how ongoing support is working, rather than waiting for a problem to be raised

D. What Teachers Should Avoid



- Approaching from behind
- Moving belongings or a wheelchair without being asked
- Relocating a session to an inaccessible room without checking
- Assuming every student in this category needs the same adjustment
- Penalising lateness or absence linked to a fluctuating condition without discussion

E. In Practice - A relocated lab session

A wheelchair-using student attending a practical module found their scheduled lab session moved, with only a day's notice, to a room up two flights of stairs with no lift access, because the usual room was double-booked.

What helped: the module leader identified an alternative accessible room in the same building and moved the session there. They then put in place a standing rule that any future room change would be checked against accessibility requirements before being confirmed, not after.

The barrier was entirely avoidable - it existed only because accessibility wasn't part of the standard room-reallocation checklist. Once added, the problem didn't recur.

F. Quick Teacher Checklist



☐ Room/route confirmed accessible before term starts?

☐ Individual needs discussed directly with the student?

☐ Help offered, not assumed?

☐ No unannounced furniture or room changes?

☐ Handwriting alternative available for assessment if needed?

☐ Lateness/absence policy agreed in advance?

Part 4 – Putting it into Practice

16. Short Teaching Scenarios



Ten realistic scenarios, each grounded in a barrier covered in more depth in Part 3. Use these directly in staff training discussions or read individually when facing a similar situation for the first time.

Scenario 1: A student cannot access a scanned PDF

- **Immediate response**: Send an accessible, text-based version immediately, or read the key content aloud in the next session
- **Preventing it next time:** Stop scanning printed pages entirely; export directly from the source document to PDF instead

Scenario 2: A deaf student cannot follow an uncaptioned video

- **Immediate response:** Pause the video and summarise key points verbally; follow up with a transcript
- **Preventing it next time:** Caption all video content before the session, not after a problem is raised

Scenario 3: A student with anxiety is unexpectedly asked to present

- **Immediate response:** Offer an alternative way to contribute in the moment - written, or at a later point - without pressure
- **Preventing it next time:** Give advance notice of who will present, or make presenting genuinely opt-in for everyone

Scenario 4: A visually impaired student receives an undescribed diagram

- **Immediate response:** Describe the diagram's content and structure aloud immediately, and provide a text description afterwards
- **Preventing it next time:** Build description into the lesson plan wherever a diagram or image is used - try describing one of your own regularly used diagrams aloud, without looking at it

Scenario 5: A wheelchair user is allocated an inaccessible teaching room

- **Immediate response:** Relocate the session to an accessible room as soon as possible, communicating directly with the student
- **Preventing it next time:** Check room accessibility before the term starts, not after the first session

Scenario 6: A student with dyslexia receives complicated instructions shortly before a deadline

- **Immediate response:** Clarify the instructions in writing straight away, and check whether the deadline itself needs adjusting
- **Preventing it next time:** Share task instructions well in advance, in plain written language

Scenario 7: A student with ADHD struggles to follow a long, unstructured lecture

- **Immediate response:** Pause to summarise key points and signpost what comes next
- **Preventing it next time:** Build in regular structure and short breaks when planning the session - consider three clearly signposted ‘chapters’ with a short pause between each

Scenario 8: An autistic student becomes overwhelmed by an unexpected change

- **Immediate response:** Acknowledge the change calmly, offer a quiet space or a moment to regroup, and confirm what happens next in writing
- **Preventing it next time:** Give as much advance notice of any change as possible, even one that seems minor

Scenario 9: An approved assessment adjustment has not been arranged

- **Immediate response:** Escalate immediately to the relevant service and agree an interim solution so the student is not disadvantaged
- **Preventing it next time:** Build in a pre-assessment check that all agreed adjustments are in place

Scenario 10: A student with a fluctuating health condition misses a compulsory session

- **Immediate response**: Follow up without penalty, and share what was covered along with any recording or notes.
- **Preventing it next time:** Agree in advance how missed sessions linked to the condition will be handled, rather than deciding case by case under pressure.

17. Final Teacher Checklist



A one-page checklist for repeat use - before, during, and after teaching.

Before I Teach

- ☐ Materials accessible and shared in advance?
- ☐ Learning outcomes and instructions clear?
- ☐ Videos captioned?
- ☐ Diagrams described?
- ☐ Room/platform accessible?
- ☐ Agreed adjustments checked?

While I Teach

- ☐ Speaking clearly, using the microphone?
- ☐ Following a predictable structure?
- ☐ Allowing sufficient processing time?
- ☐ Explaining visual information aloud?
- ☐ Avoiding unnecessary pressure?
- ☐ Allowing approved assistive technology?
- ☐ Protecting student confidentiality?

After I Teach

- ☐ Shared follow-up materials?
- ☐ Responded to any accessibility concerns raised?
- ☐ Provided accessible task instructions?
- ☐ Checked assessment arrangements are genuinely in place?
- ☐ Reported any barrier I could not resolve myself?

Glossary



Assistive technology (AT) - Any software or device helping a student access material or demonstrate learning

Captioning - Synchronised on-screen text of spoken audio

Disclosure - Choosing to speak about a disability or support need

Executive function - The mental processes involved in planning, organising, managing time, and regulating emotion and behaviour

Fluctuating condition - A health condition whose symptoms and impact vary significantly day to day

Inclusive education - Designing teaching so it works for a wide range of learners from the outset

Neurodivergent - A term used for a brain that processes information differently from what's considered typical (e.g. autism, ADHD, dyslexia)

Reasonable adjustment - A specific change for an individual student, made when general inclusive design doesn't fully remove a barrier faced

Screen reader - Software that reads digital text aloud or converts it to Braille

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) - A framework for building flexibility into teaching, materials, and assessment from the start

Frequently Asked Questions



Do I need a formal diagnosis on file before applying the strategies in this toolkit?

No. Almost everything in Parts 2 and 3 is good universal practice that benefits students whether or not a diagnosis has been disclosed. Formal reasonable adjustments are the exception - these typically require an agreed support plan.

What if a student's request goes beyond what this toolkit describes?

Treat this as a starting point, not an exhaustive list. Use your institution's named specialist contact rather than declining or improvising alone.

Can I disagree with an agreed adjustment?

Raise the concern with the relevant disability or inclusion service rather than declining to implement it unilaterally - adjustments are typically based on evidence you may not have full visibility of.

How much notice counts as "advance notice" of a change?

As much as is genuinely possible. Even a few hours by message is far better than none. The key factor is whether the student had any warning at all, not a specific time threshold.

Key source materials

Accessible Academy - *https://accessible.academy/*

Advance Higher Education - *https://advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/new-guide-improve-information-sharing-disabled-students-across-higher-education/*

CAST - *https://www.cast.org/*

Equality and Human Rights Commission - *https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/reasonable_adjustments_for_disabled_pupils_1.pdf*

Office for students - *https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/student-disability-guide-for-universities-and-colleges/*

Contributors

Academics: Gosia Kwiatkowska, Paul Watts and Shakhnoza Tokhtiyarova

Student interns: Khadijah Zaidi, Raisa Shaikh, Kathryn E. Brown, Hailey Simonson, Ian Smith, Meredith Ann-legenhma Legenhausen, Robert Chester Johnson, Khushi R. Jain and Wisdom George

Editing: Richard Lohan

Design: Helen Evans

RIX. | University of East London

Acknowledgements

Supported by funding from the British Council's Going Global Partnerships programme.

Disability Inclusion Partnership

O'zMPU

Funded by BRITISH COUNCIL