UCU
University and College Union

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: C - Virtual Learning Environments (VLE)

Introduction from the Disabled Members' Standing Committee

The Disabled Members' Standing Committee (DMSC) works on behalf of all our members from Further Education to Higher Education, Prisons, Adult and Continuing Education and academic-related, professional services staff and researchers.

One in four members are disabled - including members with visible or invisible disabilities and with a hearing impairment, neurodivergent and/or have lived experience of mental illness. The DMSC recognises that access barriers within our workplaces result in members facing difficulties in delivering their professional skills whilst taking an intersectional approach to equality, for all members of our union.

The Disabled Members' Standing Committee have designed this short review checklist to gather data and anecdotal information on how accessible our education institutions are. Despite there being protections in law, access and accessibility remain an issue that impacts Disabled members both individually and collectively. This checklist aims to increase accessibility in our workplaces, including within physical buildings and virtual learning environments, so that we see 'accessibility as standard'.

The checklist is especially useful for Health & Safety and Equality reps. It helps to improve accountability for accessible workplaces locally as well as providing data that feeds into UCU's national campaigns and forms a basis for branches to pressure employers to act.

The Annual Day of Action for Disability Equality in Education (which usually takes place during Disability History Month) is a cornerstone of the DMSC's work. The DMSC welcomes feedback from members and branches about how we can collectively improve access and inclusion in our workplaces: **Nothing About Us, Without Us**.

How to use the 'Accessibility as Standard' checklist:

1. Health & Safety and Equality reps may wish to conduct the review together.
2. You may complete the entire checklist or choose to undertake one or more sections.

3. Ideally, the review should be conducted at the same time every year (i.e., at the beginning of each academic year)

4. Inform the lead for Health and Safety and the Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (or equivalent) at your institution about this checklist so that they can assist you with completing the review.

5. Where data is missing (because reps are unable to find the required information), inform the lead for Health and Safety, and your branch committee.

6. When you have completed the checklist, discuss the results with your branch committee. You may wish to include some recommendations or priority areas for attention.

7. Please share your results and recommendations each time it's conducted with the Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (or equivalent) at your institution to put pressure on your employer to take action.

8. Please share the results and recommendations of the review each year with UCU including sending your completed checklists to eqadmin@ucu.org.uk.

How to complete the checklist
Instructions: Please specify the location you are auditing, for example:

A. Doors and entrances including reception				
Area	**Reception**	**Y**	**N**	**Notes / Comments**
A01	Is the reception point fitted with an induction loop?	✓		Notices displayed to inform visitors

This checklist, which is not exhaustive, should be answered about how accessible your institution is concerning workers with visible and non-visible disabilities and those with a hearing impairment, neurodivergent and/or a mental health condition. The checklist is divided into the following sections and branches are encouraged to complete, it in full, or to choose an area, for example, if disabled members have raised issues around '**Information'** and access, then branches should use that checklist to support engagement with employers. The checklist covers the following sections:

A. Working conditions
B. Information
C. Virtual learning environments
D. Fixtures and fittings
E. Doors and entrances including reception
F. Ramps, steps and floors
G. Lavatories
H. Evacuation routes
I. Car parking

J.   Auditory / visual

K.   Support

This checklist is not intended to be a representative sample, it will allow branches to analyse the data to feed into local and national equality campaigns. If you have any suggestions on how this checklist can be improved, please contact the DMSC via Sharon Russell (srussell@ucu.org.uk).

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: C - Virtual Learning Experiences (VLE)

C. Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) refers to how inclusive the provision is including curriculum and accessibility design				
Area		**Y**	**N**	**Notes / Comments**
C01	Is the technology used compatible with common software platforms (Google, Microsoft, Android, iOS)?			
C02	Is the technology used compatible with assistive technology used by staff and students such as speech-to-text, screen readers or text-to-text?			
C03	Does the technology allow the user to, for example, change colours, contrast, size of text etc?			
C04	Are there guidelines for students and staff on using the VLE platform?			
C05	Are staff and students trained in the use of the VLE platform?			
C06	Is there an accessibility statement for the VLE platform used?			
C07	Does the technology abide by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1)?			

Completed by: (Equality Rep) _____   **Date:** _____

                (H&S Rep)   _____   **Date:** _____