'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist

Introduction from the Disabled Members' Standing Committee

The Disabled Members' Standing Committee (DMSC) works for 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 is disabled - including members with visible or invisible disabilities and with a hearing impairment, neurodivergent and/or have lived experience of mental illness and/or mental distress.[1] 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 has designed this short review checklist to gather data and anecdotal information on how accessible our education institutions are. Despite legal protections, access and accessibility remain issues that impact 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 provides 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**.

---

[1] As per the social model of disability for more information see Beresford, P., Nettle, M. & Perring, R. 2010 *Towards a social model of madness and distress? Exploring what service users say.* York, UK: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

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 checklist or 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 they can assist you with completing the review.

5. Where data is missing (because reps cannot 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 your institution's Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (or equivalent) to pressure your employer to take action.

8. Please share the review's results and recommendations 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 environment
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: A – Working Conditions

A. Working conditions are the physical and psychological conditions workers are exposed to.			
Area		**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.**
A01	Are workloads designed to be flexible to accommodate the pace at which a person experiencing mental distress and/or a Disabled or Neurodivergent person works?			
A02	Are workloads designed to reduce mental distress, stress and anxiety that may lead to sensory overload for some people, including Disabled and Neurodivergent people?			
A03	Are additional aids provided to support time management such as extended time to complete tasks, extra reminders and notices, flexibility, patience and understanding from others?			
A04	Are communal areas/work spaces designed to absorb and interrupt sound, such as portable and/or desk dividers?			
A05	Are noise-cancelling headphones provided for Disabled and Neurodivergent people who may be sensitive to sound?			
A06	Does the workspace accommodate adequate storage space to avoid clutter?			
A07	If fluorescent lighting is installed, does it include variable lighting options?			
A08	Are all line managers required to undertake training to understand better the needs and experiences of disabled and neurodivergent people and people experiencing mental distress in the workplace?			

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: A – Working Conditions

A09	Are workers required to use their holidays in phased returns to work following periods of sickness absence?			
A10	Does the organisation anticipate the needs of disabled workers, providing reasonable adjustments that meet their needs in a timely and comprehensive manner?			
A11	Is Resilience-Based supervision available to workers on request?			

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

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

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: B - Information

B. Information should be accessible to all			
Area	**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.**
B1 Is the building equipped to assist people with hearing impairments?			
B2 Is there a tactile plan or diagram of the building?			
B3 Are there large-print versions of information about the building/activities available?			
B4 Is there an 'audio' version of information about the building available?			
B5 Are maps of the building and other areas available to help people navigate the facility?			
B6 Where a payphone is provided, does it have a hearing aid coupler?			
B7 Are all relevant locations (toilets, lifts, canteens, libraries, reception etc.) signed?			
B8 Are there clear instructions on how to use the lift?			
B9 Are communal areas fitted with an induction loop? This includes staff work rooms, canteens, lecture halls etc.			

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: B - Information

B. Information should be accessible to all continued				
Area		Y	N	How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.
B10	Where there are staff available in the building at information/refreshment facilities, are they trained in communication with people with physical or sensory impairments, neurodivergent people, people experiencing mental distress and people with learning disabilities?			
B11	Does institutional policies and procedures address support/protection for disabled staff including, but not limited to, disabled people under all protected characteristics? For example, policies/procedures for inclusive, supportive and accessible meetings?			
B12	Was the branch involved in the development of these policies/procedures? How were disabled people, and others with protected characteristics, involved in the development of these policies and procedures?			
B13	For those progressing to other parts of the building is information provided by signs, supported by tactile information such as a map or model?			

Completed by: (Equality Rep) _____   Date: _____

　　　　　　　　(H&S Rep)   _____   Date: _____

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

C. Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) refers to how inclusive the provision is, including curriculum and accessibility design			
Area		**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.**
C01	Is the technology used compatible with common software platforms (Google, Microsoft, Android, iOS)?			
C02	Is assistive technology readily available to all disabled staff and students? Is the technology 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, background etc? How easy is it for users to navigate to use these adjustments?			
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: _____

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: D - Fixtures and Fittings

D. Fixtures and fittings consider whether they pose a hazard or are inaccessible for disabled and Neurodivergent workers			
Area	Y	N	How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.
D01	If the building has fixed seating, are there also spaces for wheelchair users at regular intervals on long routes?			
D02	Can wheelchair users and other Disabled people approach and use all vending machines, drinking water dispensers, etc.?			
D03	Are all fittings readily distinguishable from their background?			
D04	Where there are display stands, bookstalls, etc., are they visible/reachable/navigable/ and accessible by wheelchair users and Disabled people?			
D05	In any eating /meeting space, do tables, chairs and the layout allow for wheelchair users and other Disabled people?			
D06	Are there handrails on both sides of the stairs?			
D07	Are door fittings/locks and light switches easily reached and operated?			

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: D - Fixtures and Fittings

D. Fixtures and fittings consider whether they pose a hazard or are inaccessible for disabled and Neurodivergent workers continued			
Area	**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here**
D08 Are emergency call systems accessible?			
D09 Is equipment/furniture accessible?			

Completed by: (Equality Rep) _____   Date: _____

               (H&S Rep)   _____   Date: _____

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: E - Doors and entrances including reception

E. Doors and entrances including reception			
Area	**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.**
E01 Is the door distinguishable from the façade?			
E02 If glass, is it visible when closed?			
E03 Is there clear visibility through the door from both sides at standing and seated levels?			
E04 Can the door be easily opened on both sides?			
E05 Does the door have an opening/closing mechanism on both sides?			
E06 If the door has an opening /closing mechanism, does it have a delayed closure action?			
E07 If the door is power-operated, does it have visual and tactile information?			
E08 If the door is security protected, is the system suitable for use by and within reach of people with sensory or mobility impairments?			
E09 Are signs designed and positioned to inform those with visual and mobility impairments with reduced eye levels?			

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: E - Doors and entrances including reception

E. Doors and entrances, including reception continued				
Area		**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.**
E10	Does the lighting take account of the needs of people with visual impairments?			
E11	Is the reception point suitable for approach and use from both sides by people in standing and seated positions?			
E12	Is the reception point fitted with an induction loop?			

Completed by: (Equality Rep) _____   Date: _____

(H&S Rep) _____   Date: _____

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: F - Ramps, steps and floors

F. Ramps, steps and floors should not pose a hazard to users				
Area		**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.**
F01	Thinking about access to buildings, are there handrails to one or both sides?			
F02	Is a portable ramp available if a permanent ramp (or regraded levels) cannot be formed (perhaps to a listed building)?			
F03	How is a portable ramp accessed or requested? Does this process take into account all disabled people's needs and respond on time?			
F04	Are ramps and steps adequately lit?			
F05	Is there step-free access to the building?			
F06	Is the flooring level?			
F07	If there is a ramp, are the surfaces level?			
F07	Are there kerbs? And if so, are there edges protected to prevent accidents?			

Completed by: (Equality Rep) _____   Date: _____

(H&S Rep)   _____   Date: _____

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: G - Lavatories

G. Lavatories			
Area	**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.**
G01 Is WC provision made for Disabled people?			
G02 Do all lavatory areas have slip-resistant floors?			
G03 Are they easy to distinguish by colour contrast from walls?			
G04 Are all fittings readily distinguishable from their background?			
G05 Are all door fittings/locks easily gripped and operated?			
G06 Is provision made for Disabled people and/or people using wheelchairs?			
G07 Is the location signed?			
G08 Is there an emergency call system, and is someone designated to respond?			
G09 Can the emergency call system be operated from the floor level?			

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: G – Lavatories

G. Lavatories continued				
Area		**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.**
G10	Is the wheelchair WC compartment large enough to permit manoeuvre for frontal lateral/angled/backward transfer, with or without assistance? (delete)			
G11	Are the fittings arranged to facilitate these manoeuvres?			
G12	Are handwashing and drying facilities within reach of someone seated on the WC?			
G13	Is the tap appropriate for use by someone with limited dexterity, grip or strength?			
G14	Are suitable grab rails fitted in all the appropriate positions to facilitate the use of the WC?			
G15	If more than one standard layout WC compartment is provided, are they designed to offer a left-sided approach and a right-sided approach?			

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

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

15

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: H - Evacuation Routes

H. Evacuation routes are vital for all Disabled and Neurodivergent people to fully access safe routes in an emergency			
Area		Y	N	How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.
H01	Is there a visible and audible fire alarm system?			
H02	Are exit routes as accessible to all, including wheelchair users, as are the entry routes?			
H03	If Disabled people cannot evacuate from the building independently, are designated and signed refuges available?			
H04	If refuges are available, are they equipped with 'carry chairs'?			
H05	Is there a 'management evacuation strategy' for staff, students and visitors and are staff trained in evacuation procedures?			
H06	Is the evacuation strategy checked regularly for its effectiveness?			
H07	Are evacuation routes checked routinely and regularly for freedom from combustible materials/obstacles/locked doors? (delete)			
H08	Are all fire warning devices and detectors checked routinely and regularly?			
H09	Are Disabled staff/students provided with a Personal Evacuation Plan (PEP), and are these reviewed?			

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

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

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: I - Car Parking

I. Car parking				
Area		Y	N	How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.
I01	Is the building within convenient distance of car parking			
I02	Is the route marked/found?			
I03	Is the area free of hazards such as bollards, litter bins, etc?			
I04	Is it adequately lit?			
I05	Is it identifiable by visual, audible and tactile information?			
I06	Is the car parking near the entrance as is possible?			
I07	Is the car parking area suitably surfaced?			
I08	Is there a policy for illegally parked vehicles?			
I09	If yes, is it enforced?			

Completed by: (Equality Rep) _____   Date: _____

(H&S Rep)   _____   Date: _____

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: J - Auditory / Visual

J. Relating to auditory and visual aids to support disabled workers			
Area	**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.**
J01 Are communal areas/work spaces designed to absorb and interrupt sound, such as portable and/or desk dividers?			
J02 Are noise-cancelling headphones provided for Disabled and Neurodivergent people who may be sensitive to sound?			
J03 If fluorescent lighting is installed, does it include variable lighting options?			
J04 Is the building equipped to assist people with hearing impairments?			
J05 Is there an 'audio' version of information about the building available?			
J06 Where a payphone is provided, does it have a hearing aid coupler, and is it height-suitable for all users? *NB: A hearing aid coupler works like a hearing loop by making a wireless magnetic connection to the hearing aid.*			
J07 Are communal areas fitted with an induction loop? This includes staff work rooms, canteens, lecture halls, etc.			
J08 Are all relevant locations signed?			
J09 Is any servery/counter accessible to all users, including those with hearing impairments?			

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: J - Auditory / Visual

J. Relating to auditory and visual aids to support disabled workers continued			
Area		**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.**
J10	If the door is power-operated, does it have visual and tactile information?			
J11	If the door is security protected, is the system suitable for use by and within reach of people with sensory or mobility impairments?			
J12	Are signs designed and positioned to inform those with visual and mobility impairments with reduced eye levels?			
J13	Does the lighting take account of the needs of people with visual impairments?			
J14	Is the reception point fitted with an induction loop?			
J15	For those progressing to other parts of the building, is information provided by signs supported by tactile information such as a map or model? / reword			
J16	Are the locations of toilets signed?			
J17	Is there a visible and audible fire alarm system?			
J18	Are car parks identifiable by visual, audible and tactile information			

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: J - Auditory / Visual

J. Relating to auditory and visual aids to support disabled workers continued			
Area	Y	N	How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.
J19 Are car parks adequately lit?			

Completed by: (Equality Rep) _____   Date: _____

(H&S Rep)   _____   Date: _____

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: K - Support

K. Support (physical/technical) provided for members				
Area		**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.**
K01	Where there are staff available in the building at information/refreshment facilities, are they trained in communication with people with physical or sensory impairments, people experiencing mental distress and neurodivergent people?			
K02	Thinking about the toilets, is there an emergency call system and is someone designated to respond? Does this person receive training related to people experiencing mental distress?			
K03	Regarding evacuation from the building/area, is there a 'management evacuation strategy' for staff, students, and visitors, and are staff trained in evacuation procedures?			
K04	Where are induction loops, and are staff trained/know how to use them?			
K05	Are staff trained and informed to assist with access requirements? How comprehensive is this training? Does it take into account Disabled, neurodivergent people who are members of groups with protected characteristics?			

'Accessibility as Standard' Checklist: K – Support

K. Support (physical/technical) provided for members			
Area		**Y**	**N**	**How is this evidenced? Add notes and/or comments here.**
K06	In spaces such as toilets and lifts, is there an emergency call system and is someone designated to respond? Is the responder trained in communication with people with physical or sensory impairments, people experiencing mental distress, neurodivergent people and people with learning disabilities?			

Completed by: (Equality Rep) _____   Date: _____

(H&S Rep)   _____   Date: _____