

# What is Accessibility?

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*“Accessibility involves designing systems to optimise access. Being inclusive is about giving equal access and opportunities to everyone wherever possible”.  
(Jisc, 2018)*

This is important for educators as the Equality Act 2010 requires education providers to ensure that they do not discriminate against a student:

- In the way they provide education for the student
- In the way they give the student access to a benefit, facility or service
- By not providing education for the student
- By not affording the student access to any benefit, facility or service
- By excluding the student
- By subjecting them to any other detriment

(Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014)

The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (PSBAR) came into force on 23 September 2018. It means our websites, intranets, virtual learning environments, online applications and the content on them (including learning resources) needs to meet accessibility standards. It aims to ensure that our services and information are accessible to all

users, especially those with disabilities. The Government Digital Service (GDS) will monitor compliance.

Not only do we have a legal requirement to make sure that the services we provide are accessible but we also have a moral obligation to make education inclusive.

As it states on the University of Derby (UoD) website:

“Our inclusive community of academics and professional service staff work hard to support and enable everyone to thrive and be the best version of themselves”

University of Derby - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

## **Why do we need to think about accessibility when using learning technology?**

Learning enhanced via the use of technology can provide a variety of benefits and challenges for students, including:

### **Benefits**

- Flexible access to learning opportunities
- Formats that are easier for some students to process (e.g. audio instead of text)
- Effective provision of alternative formats
- Content available for reference and review
- Use own customised equipment to access learning opportunities
- Increased accessibility for all students not just disabled students.

### **Challenges**

- Not all electronic formats are designed to include accessible features
- No alternative has been ‘automatically provided’ for resources that are inaccessible to some students (e.g. transcript of audio, alternative text on images) requiring an adjustment to be made in response to need.
- Some online services and electronic resources will not work with the assistive technology that students use to access computers.

When designing and delivering learning using technology you will need to consider the challenges that students might face. Many of the features that make a resource more accessible to disabled students will also make it more accessible to all students. Planning and designing your curriculum to be inclusive from the beginning can help to reduce the time and resources needed to make reasonable adjustments later on. This is often referred to as taking an 'anticipatory approach' and you can find more on this on the page about reasonable adjustments and learning technology.

If you want to find out more about accessibility and technology enhanced learning take a look at *Accessibility of eLearning*, a free online course with the Open University.

## References

Equality and Human Rights Commission (2014) *Equality Act 2010 Technical Guidance on Further and Higher Education* [online] <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/equalityact2010-technicalguidance-feandhe-2015.pdf> (19 February 2019).

JISC (2018) *Getting started with accessibility and inclusion* [online] <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/getting-started-with-accessibility-and-inclusion> (19 February 2019).