

Accessible Information Policy

1. Why do we need accessible information?

In line with King's College London's commitment to a comprehensive equal opportunities policy, the Equality and Diversity Department is recommending that each School, Department and academic service takes steps to ensure all new publications produced by the College are available in alternative formats on request.

Under current Disability Discrimination Act [part 3] legislation, as well as good practice guidelines, the College has a responsibility to provide reasonable adjustments in information provision. This has been further endorsed by the post-16 amendments [part 4] to include current and prospective students.

In order to make sure King's College's information is equally accessible to all, any new publications should be produced in a range of formats for those who need and request this. When requested, publications should be of equivalent quality and within a reasonable timescale.

Accessibility of information should always be borne in mind, not only for disabled students but also for the wider community. It is important to remember that accessible information does not simply mean providing a document in an alternative format. Information may come in many forms, through leaflets, signs and posters and the Internet. It is important to be aware of your audience and ensure information is clear and concise.

2. When should alternative formats be offered?

Assess each new publication or piece of information on an individual basis. Generally speaking, anything for mass distribution amongst students, staff or the wider community should be available in alternative formats on request. Providing information in alternative formats on request highlights a positive attitude towards disabled people and goes some way towards anticipating 'reasonable adjustments' that lawfully need to be made. It is important not to assume that lack of demand for different formats means that disabled people don't want them – it is more likely to mean they don't know it's available. By including the standard alternative format statement, disclosure is actively encouraged.

2.1 Flyers and posters

There is no need to publish the alternative format statement on these publications, however if you receive a request to produce this in an alternative format it may be reasonable to do this, or to talk through the flyer with the

individual. Think about other issues such as the type of paper you use (minimal reflection), colour contrast (this must be high) and typeface (sans serif fonts such as Arial are recommended).

2.2 Leaflets and small publications such as:

Profile
Guide to student healthcare provision
The campus guides¹

The alternative formats statement [see section 3] should be included in your publication if it is aimed at staff, students or the general public. Despite the small size of these publications, it is still important to plan for alternative formats.

2.3 Large publications such as:

Welcome to King's
International Students Handbook
Departmental Student Handbooks
College Prospectuses
Academic Regulations

The alternative formats statement should always be included here, owing to the nature of the information and the length of the publication. It is important to plan for alternative format requests when budgeting for large publications, as these may take longer to produce. Transcription services usually charge on an hourly rate basis.

Indexes, context pages and introductions become more important as navigational tools in larger publications; this is equally true for alternative formats. It may be advisable to divide large publications into manageable sections when producing in an alternative format. Providing the individual with 20 audio cassette tapes may be impractical and extremely costly, therefore think about how to condense information into a manageable size.

Good transcription services will advise on how to provide your information in a concise, practical and effective way.

Example 2.31

Provide an audio cassette which includes a brief description of each section and contact details for further information about each area.

Example 2.32

When placing a College Prospectus onto a computer disk, divide school sections into separate components on the disk that can be opened individually. Contact details should be easily accessible at the beginning and end of each section.

¹ As these include maps, it may be useful to enquire about tactile maps (see section 3 or contact the Equality and Diversity Department for more information). A visually impaired student may request audio description, remember this may be preferred on CD or audio cassette.

3. How should alternative formats be offered?

The College is committed to equality in information provision and therefore the following statement should be included in any new publication that is aimed at students, staff or the wider community:

Alternative formats statement:

‘This material can be provided in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, tape and on disk upon request to [add relevant contact details within your department].’

The Royal National Institute for the Blind recommends that this be stated in a prominent position, at the front of the publication, preferably in 14 point type size. The inside front cover is recommended.

4. Which formats should we offer?

Not all visually impaired people read Braille or require a document in large print, therefore it is important not to assume which format will suit a particular disability. Requests may be for any of the following formats. It is useful, however, to anticipate which are most likely to be requested. The following guide is not an absolute recommendation and it is important to treat each request individually. For more information about any alternative formats, contact the Equality and Diversity Department.

Key guide

- ✓✓✓✓ Available from the onset
- ✓✓✓ Available from the onset for large quantities (10,000 copies)
- ✓✓ Request quote in preparation
- ✓ Be aware of transcription services

Computer disk (CD or floppy disk) ✓✓✓✓

This is a very popular format amongst prospective students and staff. The individual is able to use the disk in conjunction with access software such as a screen reader or magnifier. Remember that not everyone will have immediate access to a PC so other options should always be offered.

Internet/Email ✓✓✓✓

This will enable the publication to be available to a wide audience and as above, enable users to read the document in conjunction with access software. However it is important to remember that the document is only accessible online if the website itself is accessible. This is a wider issue for the College and ongoing discussion and work continues in this area.

How the document is placed online is also crucial in relation to access. If documents are provided in Portable Document Format (PDF), ensure that HTML or plain text versions are also available. Consider how to make any charts or graphs in the PDF file accessible.

PDF documents are readable by blind people using access technology with the help of 'Access Adobe'. Access Adobe translates PDF into HTML or into a text email, making it readable by someone unable to access PDF in the usual way. If you offer PDF files on your site, ensure that you give the URL of each PDF file and that a link to <http://access.adobe.com/> is available.

Large print ✓✓

There is no standard definition of large print, as no one print size will suit everyone. Most blind and partially sighted people prefer their large print between 16 and 22 point. Ask the individual which type size they prefer. When requesting a quote, most transcription services will use 16 point as a minimum.

Large print documents should be as close as possible in format to the standard print version. Large print can be produced on most desktop PCs running word processing or publishing software. Make sure that any alternative format produced in-house is of equal quality to the published version of the publication.

Audio tape ✓✓

Audio tapes may be requested. As digital technology improves, however, information on CD, mini-disk or MP3 can be broken down to manageable chunks, making sections easier to find and update.

Braille or Moon ✓

A Braille page is different in size to a print page and holds less information. Braille is also heavier in print and uses thicker paper. For large documents such as College Prospectuses, the sheer size of a Braille document may not be a viable option for the individual. In these cases, discuss possible solutions with the individual e.g. if any other format, such as computer disk, would be acceptable. Alternatively, think about producing individual sections or a brief description of the document along with contact details for further information.

Good transcription services will be able to advise on producing alternative formats in manageable sizes.

Moon letters are made of raised shapes based on the standard alphabet. According to the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) Moon is much less common than Braille.

Audio description services ✓

This format is often used to convey very descriptive information, such as the appearance of a building, or a map.

Tactile maps ✓

These should be offered if publications include a number of maps, graphs and illustrations of technical and scientific equipment. As some of these diagrams may be uniform, there is a chance a tactile diagram already exists of the particular object. There is a Tactile Diagram Library and Archive. For more information please contact the Equality and Diversity Department.

Other ways of providing information

Well designed signs and posters, telephone services and assistance with guiding – for example around the School or Department, are all ways of conveying your message.

5. Where can we get a quote for an alternative format?

When requesting a quote for the overall publication, the College's Press and Publications Department may be able to provide a 'dual quote' for production in alternative formats. If you are unsure about which format to produce from the onset, or you are unable to obtain a dual quote, the Equality and Diversity Department can provide details of regional and national transcription services for further advice.

Specialist transcription services have a wide range of experience in producing publications in alternative formats; they also often work with higher education institutions. In providing details of possible transcription services, this implies no recommendation and each department should be advised to make their own enquiries subject to each document produced.

The Equality and Diversity Department welcomes any feedback of the work provided by transcription services, in order that other departments can benefit from positive experiences.

6. How long will alternative formatting take?

The timescale to produce a document in an alternative format will depend on its size and style. External transcription services may need prior notice and have their own turnaround times. When you receive a request, make sure you have procedures in place so that the individual gets the information they require promptly. Remember that many publications include deadlines for responses. This means ensuring all staff are aware of what steps to take when a request is received.

See example 7.1 for the production time estimate for the College's Disability Handbook.

7. How much should we budget for?

Many of the formats highlighted above have no cost implications at all; it may simply be a case of careful formatting and providing a document in manageable chunks.

Where there are cost implications, such as a request for an audio tape, the cost will depend on the size of your publication. As mentioned in section 2.3, large transcriptions may not be a practical solution. It is always best to discuss with the individual the basic information that they need and work out a suitable solution. During the planning stages the approximate size of your document will be enough information to get an estimate quote. The initial transcription is often the main expense, after which any further requests are seen as 'copies'.

Example 7.1

The College's Disability Handbook is approximately 50 pages in length; the type size is 12 point Arial. During the final draft stages of this publication a quote was requested for audio tape, Braille, large print and disk. It was recommended by this transcription service that a large print version could be suitably produced in-house. The estimates were as follows:

Format	Master	Copies
Audio tape	£160.00	£2.20
Braille	£487.50	£6.15
Disk	£487.50	£1.50

A PC disk version of the Handbook would be available as a by-product of the Braille transcription process. Production time was estimated at four weeks from approval of the final artwork or text.

8. Planning alternative formats

Similarly to print publications, other formats such as audio tape or disk will need planning. It is good practice and a legal requirement to ensure anticipatory measures are in place. The following checklist may help you through the process of planning and producing alternative formats:

Budgeting

- Have you financed for alternative formats in your Departmental annual budget?

Draft stage

- Have you included the basic statement regarding alternative formats?
- Is this statement in Arial 14 Point font size and style?

- Is the statement on the inside cover or in a prominent position?
- Do you have quotes for the production of large print and CD or disk versions?
- Do you know how long it will take to produce your publication in each of these formats?

Distribution and request stage

- Is the request being responded to within a reasonable timescale?
- Are any covering letters, attachments or add-ons also provided in the preferred format?
- Is the alternative format of equal quality to the original document?

9. Responding to requests

As already emphasised, make sure procedures are in place for responding to requests within a reasonable timescale; this may mean making initial enquiries during the draft stages of a publication and ensuring you have initial quotes.

When responding to telephone requests for information, always ask which format is best for the enquirer; s/he may not be aware this information is available in different formats.

If sending out the alternative format ensure that any covering letters, attachments or add-ons are also provided in that preferred format.

10. Where can we get further information and guidance?

The Equality and Diversity Department can provide details regarding aspects of producing material in alternative formats. We cannot produce documents in alternative formats on your behalf.

We can refer you to resources available for departments looking to produce material in alternative formats as well as providing information on any of the following areas:

- Legal responsibilities to make reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act
- Reproducing a document in-house or via an external transcription service
- Contact details and basic information regarding external transcription services (please note these services have not been vetted by us and departments are encouraged to make their own enquiries once contact details have been supplied)
- Producing a document in an accessible format and alternative languages

- Where to obtain guidelines for in-house production of alternative formats such as large print or audio tape
- How to check if your webpage and online information are accessible.

Transcription services have vast experience in producing material in accessible formats, including university information and prospectuses. They are a useful source of advice and guidance and often provide suggestions and practical solutions.

The Department welcomes any feedback from staff producing information publications in alternative formats.

Equality and Diversity Department
Room 7.36
James Clerk Maxwell Building
Waterloo Road
London SE1 8WA
Tel: 020 7848 3398
Text: 020 7848 3398
Fax: 020 7848 3490
Email: equality@kcl.ac.uk

Equality and Diversity Department
26.6.02