

Guidelines for inclusive remote and hybrid education

This guide addresses the need for the Faculty to continue to adapt to more flexible teaching including a variety of remote and hybrid models, recognising that both staff and students are affected by the pandemic and other changes to academia. It recognises the imperative both to provide high quality, accessible and inclusive education for our students and to maintain space for staff to teach in ways that work for them as individuals, without undue burdens.

While remote and hybrid teaching are not new, what is new is the requirement for all staff and students to participate in these, and thus to make changes to their teaching and learning practices. This reinforces the need for considerations of equality, diversity and inclusion for both staff and students to be at the fore.

This guide aims to:

- introduce some general principles of EDI that are important in the current context
- increase awareness of the varied teaching and learning experiences of our diverse students and staff, and how they interact with different pedagogic and communication formats
- raise some of the main practical considerations.

It is intended for all who are involved in the education of students, whether directly teaching them, or leading, managing, administrating, or otherwise supporting education in our faculty.

It is understood that staff work extremely hard to convert or expand modules for new and different modes of teaching and learning. The aim in sharing guidelines for inclusive education is not to add to that workload, but by incorporating EDI awareness at the planning stage, to minimise issues of exclusion in advance, and avoid the need for making substantial adjustments or extra work at later stages.

Staff will need clear guidance from management on expectations regarding any changes to teaching of their modules, including how the time required to make substantial changes is reflected in workload distribution or potential mitigations (e.g. extension of probation periods, changes to publication requirements for promotion applications etc.). Similarly, professional services staff should not be expected simply to add additional duties to their existing ones; assignments will need to be clearly prioritised and potentially redistributed.

Principles

King's is committed to providing inclusive education that does not unfairly disadvantage particular groups or individuals.

There is a legal responsibility to ensure equity for persons with protected characteristics or disclosed disabilities, and requirements to provide the specific supports agreed in their KIPs. The ethical imperatives for inclusive education are, however, broader in compass.¹ Pedagogic and cultural norms of academia have traditionally excluded various groups or made it substantially more difficult for them to participate (on equal terms), and change is needed.

Disadvantage in higher education is a structural and multidimensional issue.

Diversity should not be thought of as a binary between a majority group of normal/regular/typical students and a minority group who have something that marks them out as different (whether one of the legally protected characteristics, a medical diagnosis, or particular life circumstances). There has never been a single 'normal' experience of education shared by all; individuals have a variety of capacities and face different challenges that can change according to the environments they find themselves in, resulting in the enabling or disabling of learning.

Disadvantages in higher education may be invisible to others.

Regardless of whether teaching takes place online or in a classroom, it is characterised by a pattern of advantages, disadvantages, trade-offs and workarounds, and these vary between individuals. These may be invisible and undisclosed, fluctuating or conflicting. Flexibility is, therefore, vital in responding to the needs of both students and staff.

Inclusive education is best practice.

Inclusive education should not be thought of as something separate and different from 'normal' education, or an add-on to be done after planning a pedagogy aimed at an imagined typical student. Instead, we should aim to plan and design proactively so that the arrangements allow all to participate fully in the academic community. It is better to assume a diverse student (and staff) body, and plan for inclusion and accessibility from the start. While there are a number of standard recommendations to follow, we would also discourage a 'tick-box' attitude to EDI.

Technologies can both assist and hinder inclusion.

A wide variety of facilitative technologies are at our disposal, each with different affordances and limitations. Used thoughtfully, these technologies may not only help address the current challenges of education during a pandemic but also open up and widen participation in HE for some who have previously been excluded. Used thoughtlessly, they could exacerbate existing disadvantages.

¹ See this link for government guidance on the nine protected characteristics enshrined in the Equality Act 2010: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Practical Considerations

While we have particular duties under the Equality Act, and specific support measures for students with inclusion plans, in planning inclusive education it is useful to think more broadly about the different aspects of the educational environments we create and control, who may be advantaged and disadvantaged by each, and of how to maximise equitable participation.

In each section below we have highlighted some of the key aspects to consider, with a non-exhaustive list of some of the individuals who may be most affected by these decisions. Some of it is particularly relevant to certain groups of staff: *Timings* for module convenors, *Spaces* and *Relationships* for department leadership, while the sections on *Communication* and *Design* are relevant for all staff. We have also included a selection of characteristics and circumstances to identify some of the affected groups, but this list is indicative only, others are affected as well.

Spaces: Home and campus

<p>Workspaces e.g. physical impairment, illness or injury; carers; financial hardship</p>	<p>Just as some struggle on campus because teaching spaces do not comfortably fit all bodily configurations, sensory sensitivities and capabilities, etc. there are many who do not have comfortable spaces at home to work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module convenors should avoid organising activities that require long periods without movement; staff and students need breaks for mental and physical well-being. • Departments should remind staff and students of the need to organize their workspaces to be as ergonomic as possible, and to stretch or move around regularly. <p>Some staff and students will be living with family, friends or others in shared housing environments where it is difficult to arrange the space, quiet or privacy to work undisturbed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In remote meetings, keep all microphones muted as default and consider headphones. Some interruptions should be expected.
<p>Travel as above</p>	<p>Risks associated with travel to campuses, libraries or other locations is not equally distributed across student and staff populations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On reopening, there must not be a two-tier hierarchy for students and staff who can attend campus relatively safely and those who cannot. Ensure those who cannot are not penalised.

Timings: Scheduled and asynchronous

<p>Scheduled e.g. caring for family members at certain times; fluctuating medical conditions; located in different time zones; day jobs</p>	<p>Be aware there will be a variety of times of day that are more and less accessible to students and staff in different circumstances and that these may have changed due to Covid-19 arrangements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module convenors, where possible, should plan for and enable flexibility in the timing of necessary activities, and foster broader engagement from students. • Department leadership should remember that many such challenges also apply to staff, and ensure teaching duties are balanced with other demands created or exacerbated by the pandemic. <p>Access to high internet speeds is variable, so do not assume everyone's works smoothly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow time for catching up and repeating things when needed. If using live video, providing recordings and/or transcripts will allow those who lose signal to catch up what they missed.
<p>Recorded e.g. English as an additional language (EAL); language disorders; unreliable internet</p>	<p>Recorded lectures enable all students to return to, and reflect upon, the information presented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live recording or pre-recording of sessions will allow those forced to miss all or part of them (for any reason) to catch up later. • On courses where campus-based teaching has resumed, recordings will help prevent presenteeism while sick (either with Covid-19 or any other transmissible infection).
<p>Asynchronous e.g. low self-confidence; EAL; neurodiversity</p>	<p>Some students benefit from the opportunity to take more time to consider their responses and organize their thoughts into words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider always including some asynchronous discussion and collaboration activities, e.g. in online forums, shared editable documents.

Communication: Speech, text, audio and video

<p>Speech</p> <p>e.g. D/deaf; hearing loss; auditory processing disorders; EAL; noisy background; unreliable internet</p>	<p>The tempo, tone and clarity of how you communicate your material is particularly important when teaching and learning (and communication in general) is via online platforms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that you are not speaking faster when talking into a camera, compared to a face-to-face class. This could be done by listening to a recording of yourself or audience feedback. • Ask your audience if your speech is coming across clearly. You may not have the same visual cues to help identify if some are struggling, and it may be more difficult for them to tell you.
<p>Captions</p> <p>as above, plus: injury or condition preventing making written notes</p>	<p>Captions for lectures and presentations, webinars, etc are very important for everyone to be able to access and engage with the material presented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally, make captions and/or a transcript available for all previously recorded video content. • For live video or audio presentation, either use a platform that includes an automatic captioning option or assign someone to transcribe spontaneous speech. • However, be aware that the accuracy of automatic captioning is variable, depending on sound quality, internet connection, and the devices being used, as well as accent. If possible, test your platform in advance.
<p>Structure</p> <p>e.g. ADHD; autism; dyslexia</p>	<p>Some of us focus better in short chunks and others in extended periods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure your presentations clearly and consider how they are organised in terms of user experience. • Try to strike a balance between variety (in presentation and engagement activities) and consistency. If possible, provide options by presenting content in multiple ways. • If making a series of short recordings, allow them to be easily watched in a playlist. If making longer recordings, break them up into short and clearly delineated 'chapters'. • As with face to face teaching, slides should be disseminated in advance to allow time for reflection of the material and individual preparation.

<p>Viewing e.g. blind; vision loss; hearing loss; sensory processing disorders; migraine; financial hardship</p>	<p>Keep in mind that your students/your audience may be using devices with smaller and/or lower-quality screens. You may need to enlarge visual content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that presentations designed for the projectors in teaching rooms, or which look good on your own screen, are still legible when viewed on screen share. • Text and images will be lower-resolution and may appear fuzzy. <p>Lip reading, facial expression, gestures and body language play a significant role in communication and interpretation, for some individuals more than others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As standard, live presentation and synchronous communications should use video rather than audio only. It is also helpful if students have cameras on when they speak. • However, be sensitive to individual issues (e.g. faulty camera or slow internet connection) that may prevent some from using video.
<p>Student/ audience input all of above</p>	<p>Consider when and how to request student/audience inputs in video, audio, text or other forms of communication. There will be differing comfort levels with each.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always consider which online strategies will maximise engagement and encourage all to take a turn participating. • Consider accepting multiple modes of input from students.

Design: Materials, interfaces and interaction

<p>Text e.g. blind; vision loss; visual processing disorders; dyslexia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use sans-serif fonts of no smaller than point 12. Arial, Verdana, Calibri, Tahoma, and Trebuchet are often recommended. • Structure documents with consistent hierarchical heading styles. • Blocks of text should be in sentence case. Only use bold, italics, underlining or all-caps sparingly, for emphasis of a short sentence at most. • Use left alignment. Avoid right-aligned, centred or justified text. • Choose text and backgrounds that have high contrast; however, where possible choose a pale background rather than pure white. • Never place text over an image or patterned background. • Do not use colour as the only means of conveying information (e.g. headings, links, positive/negative). • Individuals have different needs (e.g. minimum font size) and preferences (e.g. dark-on-light vs light-on-dark). Where possible, provide documents in an editable format, where users may apply their own adjustments to maximise readability.
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<p>Images e.g. blind; vision loss; visual processing disorders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Caption all images. If an image conveys important information, use alt-text to add a short description of the content. (Screen readers will read this out.) ● Where possible, use high-resolution images that may be resized by the user to the appropriate scale. ● Include animated images sparingly. In interactive documents or pages, allow users control to start and stop animations. Do not include any that move continuously (e.g. looping GIFs) – they can be distracting.
<p>Navigation and interaction e.g. injury or condition preventing use of mouse or trackpad; vision loss</p>	<p>Remember that users may not be using a mouse or trackpad with their computer, but keyboard or voice for some or all commands and/or text input.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With web pages and PDFs in particular, check that links, buttons, etc. can all be reached (and in a logical order) using keyboard (tab and arrow keys) or voice commands. ● Allow time to introduce students to the functionality and expectations of platforms you engage with, including how the different parts are accessed.
<p>Files as above</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share files in common formats that can be opened on a variety of devices. ● While PDF has many advantages, be aware that the formatting is not visually adjustable (see above) and can also cause problems for screen readers. When exporting to pdf, check that text-to-speech reads out the contents in the correct order. ● Use the Accessibility Checker (built into Word, PowerPoint, and some other packages).
<p>New tech e.g. low confidence with technology; heavy workload and little available time</p>	<p>If you are personally experiencing any challenges in having to acclimate quickly to new or unfamiliar hardware, software, platforms or interfaces, use the experience to empathise with the similar or different challenges your students and colleagues may be experiencing with accessibility. Note any particular difficulties and strategies, for sharing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide advance guidance for nonstandard or specialist software or hardware you will use and consider technological requirements. Include links to technical support documentation, guides, FAQ pages, etc. ● Faculties and/or departments to provide guidance for online teaching, tailored to their various subject requirements.

Relationships: Community, power dynamics, peer networks, disclosure

<p>Awareness of diversity all</p>	<p>From the earliest planning stage, remember the diversity of student and staff populations – both characteristics that you will know about and those you may not. In particular, bear in mind the additional challenges for some groups.</p> <p>As well as the regular challenges some students and staff face, some may be worsened during the time of Covid-19 are, for example: exacerbated medical complications and/or risks; additional caring responsibilities; financial hardship and instability; living in a hostile or unsafe space; participating from different time zones; unequal access to study space, time and materials.</p> <p>Disclosure of personal circumstances and non-visible marginalisations should not be required or assumed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departments may need to be more proactive in advertising the process for King’s Inclusion Plans. • Assuming diversity and embedding inclusive culture is more effective than making adjustments later (although this may be needed too).
<p>Community all</p>	<p>Your students and colleagues need ways to chat, share experience, and support each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with your group on what kinds of engagement and platforms they can access and would find helpful. However, be aware of the risk of marginalising those whose communication preferences/needs do not align with the majority.
<p>Etiquette for online interactions e.g. cultural differences; autism; EAL ; social awkwardness</p>	<p>You may wish to set ground rules or a code of conduct at the start. This can be a dynamic process – consider regularly reviewing these with your group and renegotiating if needs be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be explicit in clarifying what constitutes appropriate conduct, interaction and communication. • Remember that bullying and harassment takes place in online environments as well. <p>If you will be using small group work and online spaces for discussion, etc, make it clear to students that ‘ground rules’ and ‘codes of conduct’ apply here as well.</p>

<p>Disclosure and personal circumstances</p> <p>e.g. disabled individuals or with other protected characteristics; situations with significant power dynamic</p>	<p>Take the time to get to know your new students or staff. It will help create an environment where particular issues can be raised and addressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Module conveners might set students introductory mini essays (for teaching staff to read), or forum posts or videos (for other students). This will help everyone feel comfortable participating. ● Invite students and staff to share any particular challenges and support needs with you at an early stage. However, bear in mind that many individuals with additional or atypical learning needs may not feel comfortable disclosing diagnoses and requirements until they have got to know you better or may not in fact have a clear diagnosis or set of strategies (yet). ● Be aware that many of our community decide to conceal their struggles because they do not trust that speaking out will help rather than hinder them. In particular, people may be wary of criticising inclusivity/accessibility when there is an obvious power dynamic in place. There may be exacerbated in online communities, so you may have to work harder than previously to build trust. ● Individuals from various marginalized groups will have concerns about stereotyping or stigmatization based on their disclosures, perhaps additionally so where interactions are primarily online. Watch carefully for any signs of this happening.
<p>Feedback</p> <p>as above</p>	<p>Communicate clearly to students (and staff, if relevant) the rationale for your design of the module, readings, tasks, etc. They need to know why things are done the way they are.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow students and colleagues to engage critically with the curriculum. Welcome suggestions of alternatives and consider where there might be room for flexibility. ● It may be harder to build rapport with students in online spaces, so they may be less forthcoming with comments and suggestions. Assure them that their feedback is welcome and provide a variety of opportunities.

Useful links

This page provides equality, diversity and inclusion guidance and resources to support King's in making informed decisions in responding to the coronavirus outbreak.

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/hr/diversity/edi-coronavirus/index>

This guide for creating, editing and managing content at King's provides an introduction to Accessibility, plus support, tools and training to help ensure all users can find, access and understand the digital content we provide.

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/content-editors-hub/accessibility>

The Flexible Teaching and Learning site on KEATS has been created to align with the Academic Strategy 20/21 and support you in providing a flexible education for your students. The development and support provided here have been created in collaboration with multiple teams across King's, including contributions from faculties.

<https://keats.kcl.ac.uk/mod/page/view.php?id=3299722>

King's guide to supporting teaching, learning and assessments with technology

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/teachlearntech>

Teaching online – 2 hour self-paced training, developed by King's Online, for academics teaching online for the very first time.

<https://keats.kcl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=75793>

King's Academy is a centre for educational development dedicated to supporting all staff in enhancing the teaching and learning environment within the College. It includes some online educators' community links and Covid-19 FAQs.

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/kingsacademy>

Guide to using Microsoft's built-in Accessibility Checker

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Improve-accessibility-with-the-Accessibility-Checker-a16f6de0-2f39-4a2b-8bd8-5ad801426c7f>