MASTS Actions and Guidance on Accessibility

MASTS wishes to **promote inclusivity and improve the accessibility of MASTS communications and activities.** Below we outline actions and guidance that MASTS pledges to undertake in its communications and events so that all content is accessible to those who wish to engage with the organisation. By improving the accessibility of MASTS events, we can promote an inclusive environment and proactively combat discrimination that our members may face.

If you have any questions about this document, please email MASTS at masts@st-andrews.ac.uk.

Pledges

1. We commit to handling access requests confidentially and respectfully.
2. We commit to making our social media accessible, with the use of image descriptions, capitalising the start of each word in hashtags such as #SaveOurSeas, and ensuring all videos have, or can be, captioned.
3. Where we provide food, we will meet stated dietary requirements.
4. Where we provide documents, we commit to making those documents accessible and providing them in other formats or online editable formats when requested.
5. When talks or presentations are being given MASTS will provide guidance to its speakers on how to make their talks accessible to as large an audience as possible.
6. As far as possible, we commit to hosting our events in accessible venues and we will actively seek out accessible venues for all our events.
7. MASTS is aware some of the previously uploaded content on its website may not be accessible; but MASTS will endeavour to update its pages with accessible format where possible.

Access Requests

When approached with questions or requests about access, MASTS will treat these conversations appropriately to minimise stress and exclusion. All requests will be treated confidentially and respectfully. MASTS pledges to be considerate and honest (e.g., if a certain access requirement cannot be met). Reporting accessibility problems about any of MASTS communications should be done via email to MASTS at masts@st-andrews.ac.uk

Website

The content of the current MASTS website is edited and updated by the MASTS Directorate. The overall format and layout of the website is maintained by Academic Digital. The website is hosted on WordPress which has its accessibility statement that is accurate and meets the Equality Act 2010 regulations stating that public sector websites must comply with two criteria:

- Meet the international WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standard

- Publish an accessibility statement

Actions

- The website will be kept under review to ensure it continues to meet regulations. We will continue to seek ways to improve the overall accessibility of the website and its content for a variety of users and web browsers.
- All new images uploaded to the MASTS website will have alternative text provided.
  - A review of older images will be undertaken to ensure these too have alternative text.
- If using an image which describes a process (such as a flowchart, for example), we will ensure that the process is clearly described in HTML text.

- We will avoid idioms, jargon, technical or unfamiliar terms.
- We will provide descriptive anchor text for links (e.g., "sign up for the event here", not "click here"). Pages that include unclear links with meaningful context will be amended when reviewed or highlighted.
- Full URLs in text will not be displayed, rather the text should be hyperlinked.
- We will use HTML wherever possible. Only use PDFs for content such as: forms that need to be printed and signed, important documents that need to be shared externally, or online distribution of printed documents that need to preserve their printed appearance.
- We will avoid videos that play automatically and other features that move automatically like carousels.
- We will use closed captions wherever possible. All videos embedded into the website are hosted on the MASTS YouTube channel and have subtitling enabled.
- MASTS is aware many of its our PDFs and other documents may not meet current accessibility standards – for example, they may not be accessible to screen reader software. Advice on how to save future PDFs for maximum accessibility is provided in the Sections "Presentation and information material".
- There may be some areas of the website that do not resize with the browser and require scrolling in both directions when zoomed. When encountered, MASTS will liaise with its web developer to correct this issue.

Social Media

Twitter and LinkedIn Actions

For our Twitter and LinkedIn posts, we will use the following guidelines.

- Images within posts should have alternative (ALT) descriptions.
  - The text should give context: what is the image trying to convey and what is the key focus of the image?
  - The text must be concise.
  - The most important details will go first, and then more detail about the less important elements afterwards.
- If using an image which describes a process (such as a flowchart, for example), make sure the process is clearly described in ALT text.
- Since text in the image cannot be recognised by the screen-reader, any text will be written out again in the image description along with its placement in the image.
- When using hashtags that are compound phrases each word much be capitalised e.g., #CapitaliseEachWord. This allows screen-readers to pronounce words and phrases in the hashtag correctly.
- Ensure all videos used come with closed captioning or the ability to turn it on if taken from YouTube or another platform.

YouTube

- Ensure all videos are uploaded and published with the automated closed captioning (can be turned on or off) provided with YouTube.
- If the closed captions are incorrect MASTS will edit these within YouTube.

Advice from YouTube can be accessed here.

Online Events

Online events can make it harder for people who have difficulty speaking or recognising when to speak in conversations. MASTS acknowledges that currently there are many accessibility requirements that cannot be met with certain online event platforms, however, MASTS will endeavour to implement actions that can completed on the platforms used and will complete research into any accessibility options where appropriate.

Actions

- Use services with automatic captioning for live events. MASTS acknowledges these are not fool proof, but the captions will often be sufficient to provide context. Information about close captioning will be included in the "housekeeping" information of any online event.
    a. Microsoft Teams and Zoom include live captioning which can be turned off by attendees
    b. Hopin live captioning integration will be included on events
- Where appropriate, MASTS will consider pre-recording events or talks included in events to then permit closed captions to be included.
- MASTS will make use of text comments, pre-submissions, and the virtual raise hand, or verbally call on people for contributions. MASTS will not advocate relying on body language as this is much harder to recognise online.
- Where appropriate, talks and presentations will be recorded and uploaded to YouTube for catchups, recapping and inclusion of closed captions.
- All uploaded videos to the MASTS YouTube page will have the option for closed captions which can be edited in YouTube if incorrect.
- Where appropriate, we will endeavour to provide online copies of documents (e.g., Word) that can be accessed during the event so that people can follow along more clearly on their own device. Information on whether this will be provided will be included in any details about the event, such as on the event page.

Actions for scheduling

- Avoid early starts or late nights.
- Include breaks of 15-30 minutes if the event is longer than 1.5 hours. This allows time to get a drink, go to the bathroom, or deal with other needs like medication or to move around.
- Include an adequate lunch break of around 1 hour for day long events which take place between 11.30-14:00

Physical events

Actions

- Information about the venue, any presentations or information materials, the schedule, food and drink, sound (including hearing loop functionality), and lighting will be provided. If there are access requirements in this document that MASTS cannot meet, MASTS will state these in the event's access statement.
- Contact details for anyone who has questions about access to the event will be provided.
- Where food is provided, MASTS will request that:
    o Dietary requirements are collected ahead of the event to ensure dietary requirements are met;
    o Food is labelled with what it contains (e.g. contains gluten);

- If serving alcohol, alcohol-free alternatives and water will are provided;
- food is stored somewhere accessible e.g., clear for a wheelchair user, not too high up.
- MASTS will commit to actively seeking out accessible venues for all our events i.e., a venue with step-free access (ground floor, ramp, functioning lift, etc.), automatic doors, doors that are wide enough for wheelchair users, accessible toilets, near parking or public transport links, break out spaces (this allows people to take private breaks, for instance, to manage sensory overloads or to take medication).
- Where possible talks and presentations will be recorded and uploaded to YouTube for catchups, recapping, and inclusion of closed captions.
- Offer registering attendees the opportunity to spell their name phonetically so that their printed name badge informs other attendees the correct pronunciation.
  - Phonetic spelling can be completed via this **digital tool**.

Actions for scheduling

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- Include an adequate lunch break of around 1 hour for day long events which take place between 11.30-14:00

Accessibility statements

Here is an example of an access statement that should go in an event description and on publicity materials for a panel discussion followed by a drinks reception:

The event will take place in the [room name] in [building name]. A full access guide for the [building name] is here: https://www.accessable.co.uk/ [venue link] .

The event will be followed by an informal drinks reception in [room] in the [building]. [room] is on the top floor of the building, and lift access is available. Seating is available inside the bar, although this is limited and we ask that this is prioritised for disabled attendees. Outside the bar, there is a quiet space with lots of comfortable seating.

If you have any questions, requests, or concerns about access at this event, please contact [name of MASTS contact] at masts@st-andrews.ac.uk.

Access statements can also be generated online here using the Cambridge Disabled Students' Campaign Access Statement Generator.
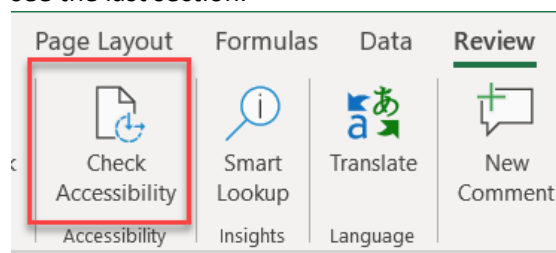
Presentation and information material
Actions for MASTS and for presenters at MASTS events

The below information will be extracted and amended to form a guidance document for presenters providing talks at events hosted or organised by MASTS.

- When documents are provided for attendees, MASTS will make those documents accessible and provide them in other formats or online editable formats when requested (e.g., Word) to be more accessible for those who use screen-readers, and it allows participates to edit and print documents in their most accessible format.
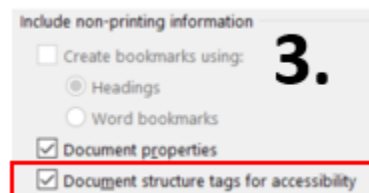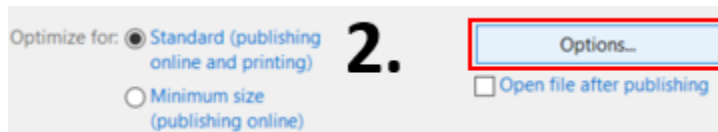
- For printed materials:
  - Use matt paper where possible, since this has less reflection and is easier to read with vision impairments.
  - Use fonts that are sans serif like Arial, Calibri, or Verdana.
  - Avoid narrow margins.
- MASTS encourages presenters to speak slowly and clearly, use concise and obvious language and avoid complex unexplained metaphors. Presenters should be encouraged to add pauses at the end of a slide or an important/technical point.
- Use accessibility checkers on material before circulating:
  - Microsoft Office software on Windows, MacOS, or the Web (Office 365) all have an "Accessibility Checker". Turn this on, and you'll receive a list of fixes for your document to make it more accessible. More information at this link - for older systems see the last section.

- For presentation and videos:
  - Avoid and minimise the use of flashing images and moving animations, as this can cause migraines and seizures. If an image is to be included that does move or flash, the presenter must inform viewers beforehand.
  - Use text in at least size 24 or size 28 for headings to make it readable for attendees viewing the slides from a distance in large venues.
  - Avoid putting large amounts of text on a single slide and over-crowding. Leave adequate space.
  - Have the slides available online in a PowerPoint or Google Slides format.
  - Ensure pre-recorded videos are captioned and that the audio is clear for participates who are hard of hearing.

- For all materials:
  - Do not use all caps, it is harder to read the contrast of the letters.
  - The use of colour to highlight important point should not be heavily relied on,. Instead, presenters should consider formatting such as making text bold.
  - Use plain (single colour) backgrounds rather than graphic ones (especially images).
  - Try to avoid underlining (except for weblinks).
  - Break up large sections of text by using bullet points and numbering.
  - Do not use tables where they are not necessary as screen-readers often read them in an order that is unintuitive.
  - Include image descriptions in documents for people to use with screen-readers. When producing a Word document or PowerPoint, you can right click on the image and there will be a "Alt Text" option. This can also be found under the Format tab when the image has been selected. Advice on Alt image description is provided under the social media tab.
  - Use colour friendly palettes to help those with colour blindness and ensure there is sufficient contrast between text and background colours. Contrasts can be checked

here with these three online tools: [Accessible colour contrast palettes here](), [AIM colour checker website here]() and [the colour oracle here.]()

- To carry accessibility features from editable documents to PDFs, save the document in the following way:
  1. Click File>Save As, change the file type to PDF (*.pdf). Click 'More options'.
  2. Then click 'Options'.
  3. Under 'Include non-printing information' make sure the Document structures tags for accessibility box is ticked, and then hit ok.

- In advertising material for an event, MASTS will provide a clear and concise access statement that will accompany all publicity material so that those with disabilities will know whether the event is accessible to them and can ask for something.
- Add headings levels: Ensure that headings have been applied with the correct formatting. In HTML this should be Headings tags: <H1>, <H2> etc and in Word by using Styles – [Video: Using styles to create headings in Word]()
- Use an appropriate checker to check accessibility, this is built into Word but if creating a PDF, check that it is fully accessible in Word first. For HTML, try using: [WAVE]()

Helpful links

- [Microsoft accessible presentations]().
- [Microsoft Accessibility checker.]()
- [Slide reading order.]()
- [Contrast checker.]()
- [Color Oracle]() (colour blindness simulator).
- [Writing Alt text guidance.]()

General Accessibility

- [UK Home Office Resource]().
- [Microsoft guidance on making material accessible.]()
- [AbilityNet]() has advice on making your device easier to use if you have a disability.

EDI and Accessibility in Science

- [QR codes for posters](#).
- [Rethinking the design of science posters](#).
- [EGU post on inclusive language.](#)
- [EGU post on accessibility and inclusiveness](#).
- [The Ultimate Guide to Accessible Presentation Design](#).

END

Versions

Version 1 – 26/7/2022

Version 2 – 27/6/2022