

Accessible Communications

Social Media Guide

Accessibility: why should it be on everyone's radar?

Between 2017/18, 13% of students in Higher Education had a known disability (HESA). Although we don't have the full stats for UoY, 10% of those who completed our Big Student Survey in 2019 said they consider themselves as having a disability.

Nearly everything that YUSU does comes through the marketing department at some point, meaning it's crucial that our team members are clued up on how to make our output accessible. However, it also helps if others in the organisation are aware of best practice and can prepare accessible content to be passed onto the marketing team.

Please enjoy this guide to learn more about accessible communications at YUSU, and drop h.patten-chatfield@yusu.org an email if you have any feedback or questions.

Disability myths and facts ([source](#))

MYTH: "Blind people don't use the internet"

Assistive technology, such as the ability to vary website colours, font and text sizes, and text-to-speech software, allows visually-impaired people to fully access the internet.

MYTH: "Deaf people can't access YouTube"

YouTube, and all major TV catch up/on-demand providers, provide subtitles for those with hearing impairments.

MYTH: "We don't have any disabled people visiting our website"

Approximately 12 million people, or 1 in 5 people in the UK, have a disability, the chances are that many of your colleagues are disabled.

MYTH: "PDFs aren't accessible"

PDFs can be made accessible. [This document](#) from Adobe offers an introduction to creating accessible PDFs for document authors. Saving documents as PDFs rather than in Word format can also preserve some features that make reading easier for people with visual impairments or dyslexia, such as font size or colour. It also means that some people who don't have Word or other software on their device can read your documents.

MYTH: “Accessibility is all about big fonts”

There are other important aspects to accessibility, including voice-to-text or text-to-voice technology, use of colour and use of language.

Social Media

When creating social media posts (or filling in the social media request form) please bear the following in mind. Use the list below to skip to the relevant section:

1. [Plain text](#)
 2. [Using image descriptions](#)
 3. [Making graphics](#)
 4. [Uploading videos](#)
 5. [Content warnings](#)
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Plain text

Plain text is text that has no special formatting which means it can easily be read via a screen reader. Plain text can be the text that is already included in a graphic.

The bulk of your social media post will probably be the text that accompanies an image or graphic. For the most part, social media networks do not allow you to alter text formats such as size and colour. However, the following can still help to ensure the post is as accessible as possible:

- Where possible, avoid using big chunks of text that are all in capital letters. If you need to emphasise something, and it is possible to do so, **put it in bold**.
 - Supplement a post with a text-heavy graphic with a plain text version too.
 - Make sure to capitalize all words in a hashtag e.g. #LoveYork, #RosesAreWhite, so screen readers can pick them up properly.
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Using image descriptions

Image descriptions are plain text explanations of an image, graphic, photograph, illustration or thumbnail of a video. They are important for visually impaired students or those using a screen reader on their device.

Image descriptions can include but are not limited to:

- Placement of objects in the image
- Image style (painting, graph)
- Colours
- Names of people
- Clothes (if they are an important detail)
- Animals
- Placement of text
- Emotions, such as smiling
- Surroundings

In general, include any information that is important in understanding the context of the post.

Image descriptions:

- Should be around 125-150 characters in length.
- Should include any text written on the graphic as screen readers will not pick this up.
- Should not include obvious details (e.g. 'a dog with four legs, a nose and two ears'), overly poetic or detailed descriptions, emojis or multiple punctuation marks (e.g. student stands in front of accommodation block looking angry!!!)

'Where should I place the image description on a social media post?'

- Facebook - in the first comment of the post or in the caption of the image.
- Twitter - reply to your own tweet with the image description.
- Instagram - either in the text of the post or as the first comment.
 - Instagram stories - write out any sound/speech included on the post itself.

'When are image descriptions not needed?'

Image descriptions are not necessary if:

- The graphic being used is very text heavy. In this case, the post should be supplemented with a plain text version rather than an image description. Find out more about [plain text](#).

'When will I be asked to provide an image description?'

When you are using the social media request form to give to the Marketing team, or when you are preparing content for your own channels.

Example post



[Link Thumbnail Image Description: a student union staff member is holding and looking towards a black and white sign with the hashtag “#BUSTICE” written in plain, capitalized, black text. This staff member is stood in front of a purple First Bus bus which reads “Rail Station, via York City Centre, 66”, which is stopped at a university bus stop.]

Example credit: Chloe Hann, 2018-19 Disabled Students' Officer

[Further guidance on image descriptions](#)

Making graphics

Our graphic designer will probably be making your graphics, but if you are it's worth bearing the following in mind:

- All text on the graphic should be a minimum size of 12 point.
 - Ensure there is a high contrast of colours used
 - Text should preferably be a dark colour on a white or light coloured background.
 - Avoid using colour combinations that are susceptible to colour blindness, for example red/green and yellow/blue. [Check the accessibility of colours online.](#)
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Making accessible videos

With YUSU using video more often, it's important that they are accessible for deaf, hard of hearing, blind and partially sighted students. See below on how to do this:

- Subtitle every video uploaded online.
 - Both Youtube and Facebook have built-in functionality to generate automatic captions. However, if you use this function then make sure you edit the generated captions before publishing, correcting any errors and inputting punctuation.
 - You can use Youtube's auto-generated captions to obtain an SRT file, download it and then upload the file to your video publisher on Facebook.
 - Putting subtitles on videos on Instagram is more difficult as the network does not yet have any in-built functions to assist. In this case, the subtitles must be part of the video file itself. If this happens, please transcribe the video and get in touch with the marketing team.
- Any videos uploaded to Youtube should also include an image description of the thumbnail in the comments.

'Isn't subtitling videos really time-consuming?'

Using the techniques above may seem fiddly to begin with, but will become quicker as you get the hang of it. If in doubt, talk to Marketing.

'What if there is no way I can add subtitles to a video online?'

If you've tried everything and it's not working, transcribe the video and add this as a plain-text version as the first comment on the post.

Content Warnings

For a lot of YUSU's posts, these probably won't be needed but occasionally we may talk about the work of other charities that deal with sensitive and potentially distressing situations.

Put simply, content warnings alert readers that the following content contains potentially distressing material. These allow students affected by such material to make an informed decision on whether they'd like to read on.

Content warnings should be used if a post contains any content about:

- Sexual violence and/or abuse.
- Child abuse/pedophilia/incest.
- Animal cruelty or death.
- Self harm and suicide, which can happen in many forms.
- Eating disorders or body image.
- Violence, blood or injury
- Pornographic content
- Any quoted hateful language about a protected characteristic (e.g. transphobia, racism, religious based hatred, sexism, homophobia, phobias and ableism etc.)

If your post requires a content warning, then the finished post should look like this:

“CW: Sexual violence

If you've been affected by sexual violence or abuse, get in touch with local charity Survive on 01904 642830 or take a look at the university's web pages here <https://bit.ly/2qVILmt>”

If you're a student at The University of York and have been affected by these issues or need support, get in touch with your [College team](#) or visit <https://www.york.ac.uk/students/health/> to see what services and support we have available.

Social Media Checklist

Use the below to make sure your social media post is as accessible as possible and ready to publish.

My social media post has:

- No large chunks of text in all-caps
- An accessible image (e.g. dark text on light background)
- An image description (for graphics or thumbnail of video/article)
- Capitalized hashtags (e.g #RosesAreWhite)
- Subtitles and/or transcription (if video)
- A content warning (if post contains sensitive content)