

YUSU Elections 2020 – Making your campaign accessible to disabled students

Running an Accessible Physical Campaign

- **Not all disabilities are visible!** Be aware that you aren't going to be able to tell if a student is disabled by looking at them, and more importantly that this may not be something they want to disclose to you.
 - If you are running a major manifesto point related to disability, mention it! Don't wait for a student to tell you they're disabled before sharing that information.
- **Keep your signs/posters off visibility strips!** I will be removing any of these I see/are brought to my attention and returning them to YUSU.
 - 'Visibility strips' are high contrast, painted strips across objects that may be obstacles for blind and partially sighted students. The purpose of these is to highlight obstacles that may blend into the environment to visually impaired students, as to prevent injury – please don't cover these!
 - For sighted candidates/campaigners - I've included an example photo of the visibility strips outside YUSU below, with one of the visibility strips circled in red.



- **Avoid placing signs in a way that may be obstructive**, e.g.: if the edge of the cardboard is poking in towards a walkway
 - o Try to place cardboard signs so that the decorated side is parallel with the walking direction – having the edges of cardboard poking into the walkspace of a path creates additional obstacles for blind and partially sighted students. While cardboard is unlikely to seriously injure anyone, it is unpleasant and stressful for blind students to be constantly bumping into things, and contributes to an inaccessible campus.
- **Don't play loud music!** This makes campus itself inaccessible to hard-of-hearing (HoH), deaf, and auditory processing impaired students, as well as disabled students who are sensitive to noise.
- Make your **leaflets** as **accessible** as possible, and keep copies of plain text alternatives that you can offer to students.

How to make Accessible Flyers

- All text on a flyer should be an **absolute minimum of size 12**, in a **'sans serif' font** (Arial or Verdana are good examples, but a google search should provide you with a list).
- **High contrast** - text should preferably be dark coloured on a light or white coloured background for easy readability.
- For graphics and text, **avoid colour combinations that are susceptible to colour blindness**.
 - o Red/Green and Yellow/Blue are the two most common types of colour blindness, and the combinations which will cause readers the most problems.
- **Avoid italic text, and text in all capitals** (e.g: DON'T TYPE LIKE THIS!)
- Format the leaflet so that **the text is 'linear'** - having bubbles of text all over the place can be confusing, and those with visual impairments may struggle to find the start of a sentence. If the text follows a linear route through the page it is much easier for the reader to understand and get all of the information.

- If you are using any graphics, images, logos, or coloured text on your flyer, make sure to have **a second flyer which is in 'plain text'**. This is a copy of your first flyer but with just the text on it in **size 14-16+, black on white, sans serif font**. You shouldn't need to print as many of these, but it is important for students to have the option

How to make Accessible Online Content

It would also be great if you could provide **a version of your flyer online which is compatible with screen readers**, for students who can't read printed text at all. A way of doing this might be to post an image of the flyer in a social media post, and at the end of your post, describe and type out the text in the image.

Similarly, you should be providing **subtitles on any videos** you upload (for deaf and HoH students) and **providing text descriptions of any of your images and videos** used on your online campaign pages (for blind and partially sighted students).

Image descriptions are a great thing to get into the habit of doing to allow blind students to engage effectively with any of your union work - here is a brief guide on image descriptions, screen readers and what to include: <http://www.perkinselearning.org/technology/blog/how-write-alt-text-and-image-descriptions-visually-impaired>

Below are some examples of image descriptions me and previous officers have written:



CHANGE.ORG
Sign the Petition
 City of York Council: Executive Member for Transport and Planning: Hold ...

[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, capitalised, 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.]



[Image Description: In the centre of the square graphic is a photo of blue badges that have the wheelchair symbol, a stick figure with cane, the symbol for sign language, and the symbol for neurodiversity, under which is written "not all disabilities are visible".

Above and slightly to the right of the photo in the centre of the graphic, is white text that reads, "Pick up one of our campaign badges at YUSU Reception, Equality and Diversity Office or the Student Support Hub reception!"

In the bottom right hand corner of the graphic, is white text that reads, "Suggested donation: 25p to cover costs."]

If you aren't confident about your descriptions and don't know anyone who uses screen readers, try asking a sighted or non-disabled friend who hasn't seen your video or image if they can understand what is being described!

Chloe Hann (*she/her*)
Past Disabled Students Officer