

ERUA Inclusivity and Accessibility Guideline

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ERUA's Guideline of Inclusivity and Accessibility

At ERUA, we are dedicated towards creating an academic environment that embraces diversity and ensures accessibility for everyone. Our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility remains fundamental to our mission of fostering innovation and excellence in education and research.

An inclusive project is an endeavour where everyone feels welcome and supported. ERUA is committed to inclusivity by promoting equal opportunities, irrespective of anyone's race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, geographic location, or language. We strive to create a welcoming and supportive environment where every individual feels valued and respected.

Accessible project planning is proactive and responsive to the needs of attendees while maintaining transparency about available accommodations in the event space. Accessibility from every prospect i.e. **emotional, functional, and technical** is a central part of our approach. We are dedicated to assure full participation in our programs and activities. This includes but is not limited to providing application materials in various accessible formats, offering flexible submission options, and delivering support services such as assistance with form completion, writing support, access to translated materials or translators or interpreters.

This guide has been created to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all, including those with disabilities or other specific needs and to assist individuals or groups throughout the project life cycle. From project design to implementation stage, this is going to be your point of reference on what should be in your consideration. This guideline aims to provide an outline to assist you in making your project inclusive and accessible.

Bear in mind that this guideline covers the broader understanding of inclusivity and accessibility. Various resources have been consulted including UQ Guide to Planning an Inclusive Event, A Guide to Planning Inclusive Events, Seminars, & Activities at Syracuse University, Bristol Aging Better: Making Your Project More Accessible and Inclusive, and The University of Melbourne: Culturally Inclusive Social Events among others. Applicability of all the specifications may vary from project to project.

Important Inclusivity Considerations

Your specifications should address these considerations as much as possible in all project phases. The implementation of each point would vary depending on which project phase you're working on.

- 1. Encouraging Participation from Underrepresented Groups:** While your project should concentrate on all the relevant stakeholders, it is recommended to place particular emphasis on addressing the participation of underrepresented groups and minorities. Conduct a targeted outreach to identify and reach out to student clubs, associations, and organizations that support underrepresented groups.
- 2. Diversity in Team Formation:** Forming a diverse team has many advantages. Not only, your project benefits from various opinions, ideas, and experiences but it minimizes any unconscious biases. It is recommended to keep this in mind while forming the team.
- 3. Multilingualism:** Your project plan, if applicable, should focus on facilitating the intended audience to communicate in the language they feel comfortable with. Despite English being a widely spoken language, do not assume that everyone has the same level of proficiency.
- 4. Inclusive Language:** Devise the key messaging for your audience that encourages inclusive participation from all stakeholders irrespective of their gender, culture, religion, or sexual orientation.
- 5. Inclusivity Metrics:** Establish specific metrics to monitor inclusivity and accessibility throughout the project lifecycle. Regularly evaluate these metrics to identify gaps and make necessary improvements. For example, you can include number of accessibility features (e.g. elevators, ramps, signage) tested before project completion as a metric and the goal could be to test all of installed accessibility features for functionality and usability.
- 6. Feedback Mechanism:** Establishing an inclusive post-project feedback system is crucial to identify the areas of improvement. An inclusive feedback system should be open to all stakeholders including but not limited to the project participants, local community members, project administrators, relevant faculties, and professors to share their input.
- 7. Inclusive Budget Allocation:** It always comes in handy to allocate a portion of your project budget to accessibility for example in case you need to acquire translation services to translate certain documents or in case an interpreter is needed.

Accessibility Considerations

“The degree to which a product, service, or environment is accessible by as many people as possible.” (Harvard Human Resources Glossary of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (DIB) Terms). A project must be accessible to be inclusive. It guarantees that every person, no matter their abilities, backgrounds or any circumstances, can actively participate. All attendees should feel welcomed, respected and valued.

Following are the baseline standards of an accessible project. However, it is recommended to go beyond these standards.

1. Venue Selection:

- Is the venue conveniently accessible to most if not all participants? Review the venue from multiple criteria such as its proximity to public transportation, parking areas with accessible drop-off points, wheelchair accessibility of rooms, infrastructures, and toilets.
- For indoor events, make sure that the physical layout of the venue meets the general accessibility standards such as attendees' convenience to hear and see the presentations, appropriate lighting for the space, and adequate ventilation of the area.
- Add multiple directional signages at the venue to direct the attendees to all the essential places for example conference rooms, cafeteria (if applicable), bathrooms etc.

2. Date and Timing:

- Structure the event schedule to avoid dates that coincide with or are close to public holidays, festivals, or religious events.
- The timing of the event should allow the maximum number of attendees to participate.
- Structure your event in a way that finishes at the originally stated time. It is recommended to provide participants with a clearly structured schedule, prior to the event.
- In case of an event of longer duration, it should include multiple breaks for the audience.
- Try to schedule the event while keeping in mind the public transport schedule.

3. Accessible Communication:

- Clearly communicate the value of the project for the target audience. Emphasize skills and opportunities that they can acquire.
- In case of any unforeseen circumstances such as change in venue, event cancellation, or change in timing, have a comprehensive communication plan in place to reach out to the attendees in a timely manner.

- It is highly recommended to design documents with accessibility in mind such as heading usage, meaningful hyperlinks (not 'click here'), adding a short written description of an image, and identifying document language. Refer to [University of Greenwich guideline for creating accessible documents](#) for more details.
- Communicate according to gender neutral principles.
- Communicate the accessibility features of the venue. Remember that accessible actually means accessible – if the venue is not fully accessible, be explicit about what you are able to provide.

4. Individual Needs of Participants:

- Every individual has a different learning style. It is better to integrate multiple learning methods in your project to address this.
- Understand that every participant will have a different level of confidence participating in activities for example some attendees may require additional support in-between sessions in order to feel comfortable continuing to participate at every level.

5. Registration and Accommodation:

- Include gender neutral titles in your registration form.
- Add questions about any additional accommodation required by the attendees in the registration form. Provide contact information ideally an email or phone number as well as alternate communication channels of the relevant person in case any attendee expresses the need. State a clear deadline for the participants to convey these requests.
- Avoid any questions in the registration process that serve no purpose to the project.
- Make sure that registration can be accessed via an official and accessible website, e.g. your university's website. Ask the responsible persons for support to confirm accessibility.

6. Virtual Accessibility:

- Wherever possible, plan a hybrid arrangement that accommodates both in person and online participation.
- In case an internet connection is required to carry out any activity, be sure to provide on-site participants with reliable connectivity. Prominently display a QR code to connect to the Wi-Fi for the participants. Alternatively, provide assistance to the participants who need additional support to do so.

7. Privacy and Participants' Consent:

- Be mindful of participants' consent when you're recording the event. In case a participant does not provide explicit consent, have alternate arrangements in place to address this.

- Provide the participants with consent forms pertaining to the activities that require their permission such as usage of the event photos on social media for promotional purposes. Please ask your ERUA contact person to provide you with a template.

8. Identifying the Appropriate Number of Moderators:

- Try to anticipate the number of participants beforehand in case there is no limit to the participation. This will help you to determine the appropriate number of moderators.
- In case of group activities, it is better to have at least two moderators.

9. Active Participatory Environment:

- Do not rush through the content just to finish everything. Regularly check-in with the participants if they have any questions.
- In interactive discussion formats, always give the participants enough time to talk and do not interrupt them or try to finish their sentences.
- Make sure that every participant gets an equal chance to participate. Avoid having one participant taking away all the time to speak.
- Be mindful of participants that are hesitant to participate. Try to encourage more participation from them but always be respectful of their choice.

10. Resource Planning and Sharing:

- It is recommended to offer the attendees access to the resources e.g. power point slides and PDFs in accessible formats.
- Plan out the adequate availability of stationery items such as pens, markers, paper, or handouts with environmental considerations in mind.
- Select environmentally friendly solutions, whether digital or paper-based. Recommended tools include Mentimeter for real-time feedback and Slido for audience polls, among others.

Additional Resources

Consult the following resources to further develop your understanding about inclusivity and accessibility:

[The University of Massachusetts Amherst inclusive Events Planning Guide](#)

[W3C: Web Accessibility Initiative](#)

[NSW Government: Toolkit for accessible and inclusive events](#)

[Eventbrite: The Essential Guide to Inclusivity at Your Events](#)