Accessibility Policy for Societies

Definitions

- **Societies:** Groups of students with an established governing committee which has been sanctioned by the Society Life Committee.
- **Society Activity:** Events, social media, and tasks which are organised by Societies.
- **Society Life Committee (SLC):** The governing body of Societies in DCU. The SLC is elected each year by Societies.
- **Subordinate Committees:** The organising committees of Societies which are sanctioned by the SLC.
- **Office of Student Life (OSL):** The office responsible for student-facing services and activities in DCU in relation to their extracurricular activities. The OSL provides funding for Societies in DCU.
- **DCU Students' Union (DCUSU):** The Students' Union of Dublin City University as established by its Constitution.
- **DCU Disability & Learning Support Service (DLSS):** A support service of Dublin City University which aims to provide a student-centred multi-disciplinary service which empowers and enables students to reach their full potential in an inclusive learning environment.
- **Confidence Network:** The immediate network of people which personal data has been shared with.
- **Accessibility Contact:** The designated person on each Society Committee which has been designated as the person responsible for ensuring accessibility concerns are managed.
- **Student with a Disability**: For the purpose of this policy, can be defined as any student with a disability, sensory difficulty, mental health difficulty, significant ongoing illness or neurodiversity.
- **Accessibility Symbols:** Small graphics to represent certain accessibility accommodations.

Scope

- This policy applies to all DCU Societies sanctioned by the Society Life Committee (SLC), and their related Society Activity.

SLC Accessibility Policy

- DCU SLC recognises the need to support students in their accessibility requirements. Students with invisible and visible disabilities should be facilitated in equal participation in Society Activity where possible.
- The SLC recognises that the onus is not on students with disabilities to make Society Life more inclusive for them. Rather, that onus is on the officers who make up the SLC and subordinate Committees.
- This policy is established in collaboration with DCUSU, DCU SLC, DCU SU's Students with Disabilities Advisory Group, and DCU DLSS.

Aims & Objectives

- The aim of the policy is to ensure students with disabilities are included in Society Life and ensure inclusivity is at the forefront for those organising Society Activity.
- The policy aims to provide guidance to the SLC and its subordinate Society Committees on reasonable accommodations that can be made to facilitate inclusive Society Life for students with disabilities.
- The policy aims to establish a Complaints Procedure for Students within Societies who identify actions that contravene this policy.

Responsibilities

- All members of SLC, inclusive of OSL Representatives and subordinate Societies, are responsible for maintaining confidentiality as is laid out in this policy.
- The SLC are responsible for developing symbols to denote accessibility requirements on posters / social media graphics which do not allow for text explanations. These symbols should include:
  - Accessible Room (as defined in ""Room Bookings").
  - Sign-Language Interpretation provided
  - Captions will be provided

- ○ High Volume event
- ○ Intense Lighting / Strobe Lighting

SLC Chairperson

- The Chairperson of SLC has ultimate responsibility for the effective development and implementation of the policy.
- The Chairperson of SLC will give an annual verbal report at the final meeting of SLC each year on the status of the policy implementation.
- The Chairperson of SLC will regularly check-in with fellow SLC Committee members and ensure they are communicating with their Societies on the status of accessibility.
- The Chairperson of SLC will both establish, and regularly monitor, the secure anonymous reporting form.
- The Chairperson of SLC is responsible for notifying DLSS, SwD AG, and DCU SU of any proposed amendments to this policy.

SLC Committee Members (Society Reps)

- SLC Committee Members are delegated responsibility by the SLC Chairperson for coordinating the day-to-day implementation of the policies in coordination with the Societies they represent, including monitoring ongoing projects and offering support.
- SLC Committee Members are required to remind Societies of their obligations should they notice Society Activity which contravenes this policy.

Society Committees

- Society Committees have the responsibility for following this policy and ensuring all of their Society Activity is accessible, as is laid out in this policy.
- Society Committees are responsible for familiarising themselves with the policy with support from SLC Committee Members.
- Society Committees are responsible for designating a contact person for Society Members to communicate with regarding any accessibility concerns.
- Society Committees are responsible for communicating with their Members which Committee Member is designated the Accessibility Contact.
- Society Committees are responsible for making their members aware that they will provide captions during Zoom Events if needed.

OSL Representatives

- OSL Representatives are tasked with providing operational and financial support to allow the SLC and its subordinate Societies to pursue accessibility as laid out in this policy.
- The OSL are responsible for organising recurring and mandatory Accessibility Training each year for Societies alongside the SLC.
  - This training must be run as a mandatory training in Semester 1. Based on demand, a follow-up optional training should be organised in Semester 2.
  - The Chairperson and at least one other Committee Member (preferably the Accessibility Contact) must attend the mandatory training.
- The OSL are responsible for ensuring support staff for Societies also undertake Accessibility Training each year.
- The OSL are responsible for updating their Event Administration Forms and processes so that information on accessibility must be provided by Societies when seeking approval for events.

Disability & Learning Support Service

- The DLSS is responsible for providing Accessibility Training for the SLC / OSL if required.
- The DLSS is responsible for reviewing any proposed amendments to this policy and providing relevant input, approval, or disapproval.

Confidentiality & Disclosure

- In line with [SS&D Policy](#) & [DCU's Contact with Third Parties Policy](#), confidentiality is to mean no personally identifiable information regarding students' accessibility concerns shall be shared without expressed permission from the student outside of the Confidence Network. This may not apply where issues of safety and/or legality apply.
- The Confidence Network will seek out written consent for sharing information externally. If a student chooses not to provide consent, this will be respected but the student will be made aware that this may restrict the support available to them.
- Societies who collect accessibility information from students are required to delete this information within a year and only store this information on a secure Google Drive.

- Students with disabilities are not required to disclose their disability if they choose not to.

Confidentiality & Disclosure in Practice

- If accessibility concerns are shared with a Society Committee, this means the Society Committee is the Confidence Network and not the SLC. No personally identifiable information should be shared by the Society Committee with the SLC unless expressed permission is granted by the Student. Vice-versa applies.
    - For example, Jane informs the Chairperson of the Fun Society that they have a disability. The Chairperson can approach the SLC / OSL / DLSS for guidance on how they may accommodate this disability, but they must not share Jane's name or other personal information. Oppositely, if Jane informs the SLC that the Fun Society has not accommodated her disability, the SLC can inform the Fun Society that they need to accommodate the disability, but must not reveal Jane's identity to the Fun Society without expressed permission from Jane.

Funding Policy

- Society Committees may apply for funding for accessibility projects from the SLC. Provisions of accessibility which are considerable include but are not limited to:
    - Sign-Language Interpreters
    - Captioning of Videos
    - Accessibility Workshops

Provision of Sign-Language Interpreters

- The SLC is responsible for providing funding, where appropriate, to societies who require Interpreters to keep their activities accessible.
- Societies of SLC are required to reach out to their Members in advance to determine if any Member would benefit from Interpretation. This must be done as an open question to all members of the Society.
- Societies of SLC are further required to seek out Interpretation for large-scale and/or overly public events where it is likely that Interpretation would remove barriers for attendance, even if no Members have indicated the need for this.

In-Person Events

Room Bookings

- Societies must ensure that the rooms booked for in-person events are accessible for those with mobility concerns, including wheelchair users. Preferably, rooms must be booked on the ground floor that is not obstructed by double doors, or must be located next to an elevator that is not obstructed by double doors.
    - Societies must liaise with the relevant bodies (such as Estates) to remove double doors as a barrier for attendance (i.e., keeping the double doors open, provided this does not cause a health & safety risk).
    - Where rooms are not wheelchair accessible, this must be publicly disclosed ahead of the event. This should always be avoided.

Video Content / Movie Screenings

- All Movie Screenings or Video Content must be provided with Closed Captions, without exception.

Audio Volume

- In accordance with accessibility requirements of their Members, Societies should adjust audio volumes (including reducing volumes for those with sensory concerns, or increasing volumes for those Hard of Hearing, etc.).

Advertising

- The Accessibility Contact must be provided in all event advertisements.
- Information on the Accessibility of the event must be provided in all event descriptions and Accessibility Symbols must be used on graphics / posters which do not allow for explanatory text.

Ticketed Events

- If, due to the nature of their accessibility concerns, a student must be accompanied by another person to an event, Societies must not charge for the entry of the designated assistant.

Text-based Activities

- Society events which rely on text-based documents must provide a suitable alternative for students with visual impairments.

Online (Virtual/Hybrid) Events

Zoom Captioning

- Societies must provide captions during Zoom Events if requested by any Member or potential Member.
- [Managing and viewing closed captioning – Zoom Help Center](#)

Off-Site Events

Venues

- When booking events off-campus, Societies must enquire about the accessibility of the space they are looking to book, details of which should be included in event administration forms.

- Societies should consult and adhere to the advice set out on accessible venues as outlined: [Accessible_Events.pdf (tcd.ie)](Accessible_Events.pdf)

Accessibility of Communications & Social Media

Alt Text

- All images posted on Social Media (including Instagram & Twitter) must include Alt Text. Alt Text can be found in "Advanced Settings" on Instagram. Alt Text can be found beside the edit button in Twitter Images.

Emails

- All Society Emails must have a plain text version.

CamelCase Hashtags

- Hashtags should be written in CamelCase. (i.e., #ThisIsAHashtag rather than thisisahashtag).

Further Guidance

- [Social Media Accessibility Guidelines | Digital Accessibility (princeton.edu)](https://princeton.edu)

Procedure for Complaints

- Should Members feel Societies have contravened the Accessibility Policy, they may follow the following Complaints Procedure.

Informal Request to the Accessibility Contact

- The concerned student should get in contact with the Society Committee's designated Accessibility Contact outlining their concerns.
- The Accessibility Contact should then raise the concerns with the Committee and provide a response to the student, with a resolution, within one working week.

Formal Request to the SLC Chairperson

- The concerned student, if informal requests to the Accessibility Contact do not resolve the issue or if the Accessibility Contact is not available, may make a formal complaint to the SLC Chairperson.
- These complaints should be emailed to: [slc chair email]
- The SLC Chairperson must then investigate the claim, protecting the student's confidentiality, and provide a response, with a resolution, within 8 working days.

Anonymous Complaints

- If for any reason, a student would like to submit an anonymous complaint referring to failure to abide by the Accessibility Policy, they may utilise the following Secure Form.
- The Secure Form will be monitored by the SLC Chairperson.
- The SLC Chairperson must investigate the complaint and seek to resolve the issue within 8 working days.

Amendments to This Policy

- Amendments to this policy may be proposed by the Society Life Committee, DCU SU's Students with Disabilities Advisory Group (SwD AG), DCU SU's relevant Sabbatical Officer, and/or DCU's Disability & Learning Support Service.
- Amendments to this policy may be proposed once a year, at Week Two of Semester Two, and must be submitted to the SLC Chairperson.
- Amendments to this policy are subject to a two-week review period where all of the above stakeholders can review the proposed amendments.
- Proposed amendments to this policy must be approved by the SwD AG, DLSS & SLC to be adopted.
    - The SwD AG provides approval by majority vote, which is communicated to the SLC by the Chairperson of the SwD AG.
    - The DLSS provides approval through the Head of the DLSS.
    - The SLC provides approval by majority vote.