



Lucy Cavendish College: accessibility and inclusivity guidelines for communications

This guide outlines best practices for creating accessible designs and communications, ensuring inclusivity for everyone within the Lucy Cavendish College community. It is not comprehensive but aims to provide principles and specific suggestions for writing and talking about diverse groups of people.

Contents

1. General Principles	3
Prioritise Clarity and Simplicity	3
Consider Diverse Needs	3
Test and Iterate	3
Provide Alternatives	3
Stay Updated	3
2. Content creation	3
Colour Contrast	3
Text	3
Fonts	3
Images	4
Layout and Spacing	4
Avoid Flashing Content	4
Headings and Structure	5
Links	5
Lists	5
Tables	5
Forms	5
Audio and Video	5
PDFs	5
3. Addressing readers	5
Age	6
Gender	6

Race	6
Disability	6
Classism	7
4. Brand Colours	7
5. General email etiquette	8
Use a professional email address	8
Always include a clear and concise subject line	8
Think before using 'reply all' or forwarding	8
Remember that others may see your email	9
Address each concern separately	9
Is an email the best form of communication	9
Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Act	9

1. General Principles

Prioritise Clarity and Simplicity

Use clear, concise language and avoid jargon and acronyms. Structure information logically with headings, subheadings, and bullet points. Keep sentences short and to the point.

Consider Diverse Needs

Remember that accessibility encompasses a wide range of disabilities. Think about how your design choices might impact people with visual impairments, hearing loss, dyslexia, cognitive differences, and motor difficulties.

Test and Iterate

Whenever possible, test your designs with people with disabilities to get feedback and identify areas for improvement. Don't be afraid to revise your work based on this feedback.

Provide Alternatives

Offer alternative ways to access information, such as transcripts for audio content, plain text versions, captions for videos, and alt text for images. Use Sensus Access to create accessible alternative formats of inaccessible digital documents

Stay Updated

Accessibility standards and best practices evolve. Stay informed about the latest guidelines and adapt your approach accordingly. Refer to resources like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

2. Content creation

Colour Contrast

Ensure sufficient contrast between text and background colours. Low contrast can make it difficult for people with low vision to read.

Text

Choose clear, legible fonts. Avoid overly decorative or script fonts. Use a reasonable font size and ensure adequate line spacing. Left-align text for better readability.

Fonts

An accessible font means using a typeface designed for easy reading by a diverse audience, including individuals with visual impairments such as low vision or reading disability such as dyslexia. Making text accessible should be part of everyday practice.

The most accessible font is Inclusive Sans, which is free and open source. It can be downloaded [here](#). Other fonts which are considered accessible (and include the ones our Comms Team use on the website – underlined) are:

- Arial
- Helvetica
- Verdana
- **BEBAS NEUE**
- Calibri
- Cambria
- Poppins
- Proxima nova
- Comic Sans

Images

Provide descriptive alternative text (alt text) for all images. Alt text should convey the meaning and purpose of the image for people who cannot see it. Aim for under 125 characters, if possible, for optimal screen reader compatibility. Omit "Image of..." or "Picture of..." as screen readers automatically announce images, so these phrases are redundant.

Example

Image: A close-up photograph of a bright red apple with a single water droplet on its skin.

- Poor Alt Text: image of apple (Too vague)
- Better Alt Text: Red apple with water droplet (More specific)
- Best Alt Text: Close-up of a bright red apple with a single water droplet, highlighting its freshness. (Provides context and meaning)

Layout and Spacing

Use white space effectively to create clear visual hierarchy and avoid clutter. Ensure sufficient margins and padding around elements. Use a logical layout that is easy to navigate.

Avoid Flashing Content

Flashing or rapidly moving content can trigger seizures in some people. Avoid using such elements in your designs.

Headings and Structure

Use headings (H1, H2, etc.) to structure your content logically. This helps screen reader users navigate the information easily.

Links

Use descriptive link text that clearly indicates the destination of the link. Avoid using generic phrases like 'click here.' For example, use 'book an open day' instead of 'click here'. Ensure links are visually distinguishable from surrounding text (e.g., underlined and/or a different colour).

Lists

Use bulleted or numbered lists to present information in a clear and organized way.

Tables

If you need to use tables, keep them simple and well-structured. Provide table headers and ensure that the data is presented logically.

Forms

Make sure forms are accessible by providing clear labels for all fields and using appropriate form elements.

Audio and Video

Provide transcripts for audio content and captions for videos. This makes the content accessible to people with hearing impairments. Consider also providing audio descriptions for visual content.

PDFs

Ensure PDFs are accessible. Use an accessibility checker such as:

- axesCheck PDF Accessibility Checker (in browser, 10MB file size limit)
- PDFix Desktop Lite's Free PDF Reader and PDF Accessibility Checker (Windows, Mac, or Linux, download required)
- PDF Accessibility Checker (PAC 3) (Windows only, download and installing required, more advanced)
- Adobe Acrobat Pro's built-in accessibility checker (if you have a paid licence). Free plug-ins for Acrobat like Common Look's PDF validator are also available.

3.Addressing readers

Use the active voice and avoid the passive voice. Be direct. It's easier for our users to understand when we speak to them directly. 'You can contact us via email or phone', for example.

Age

Avoid ageist language and stereotypes. Ensure content is relevant and accessible to all age groups.

Gender

Use inclusive language and avoid gendered assumptions. Consider using gender-neutral terms where appropriate. If you're unsure about which language you should be using when it comes to gender, seek help or ask how a person would like to be referred, including when using pronouns.

Three ways to avoid gender-specific pronouns:

- repeat the noun (for example, "a person is entitled to a benefit if the person...");
- change the pronoun (for example, by using "they" or "their" in the singular: "a person fails to comply with their duty...");
- rewrite to avoid the need for a pronoun (for example, "It is an offence for a person to...", rather than "A person commits an offence if he...").

Race

Use respectful and inclusive language. Avoid perpetuating stereotypes or making assumptions based on race. Be mindful of cultural sensitivities.

Disability

Use person-first language (e.g., "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person"). Be mindful of the diversity of disabilities and avoid making assumptions. If you are unsure of the correct terminology, it is always best to ask the individual how they prefer to be referred to. Also keep the tone and intent of what you are saying in mind – how you say it is as important as what you say.

Here is a starting point on some words to use and avoid:

Avoid	Use
(the) handicapped, (the) disabled	Disabled (people)
Afflicted by, suffers from, victim of	Has [name of condition or impairment]
Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound	Wheelchair user
Mentally handicapped, mentally defective, retarded, subnormal	With a learning difficulty (singular) with learning disabilities (plural)
Cripple, invalid	Disabled person
Spastic	Person with cerebral palsy
Able-bodied	Non-disabled
Mental patient, insane, mad	Person with a mental health condition
Deaf and dumb; deaf mute	Deaf, user of British Sign Language (BSL), person with a hearing impairment

The blind	People with visual impairment; blind people; blind and partially sighted people
An epileptic, diabetic, depressive, and so on	Person with epilepsy, diabetes, depression or someone who has epilepsy, diabetes, depression
Dwarf; midget	Someone with restricted growth or short stature
Fits, spells, attack	Seizures

Mistakes happen – if they do – apologise and take it as an opportunity to develop.

Classism

Acknowledge the multidimensional nature of social class and respect that individuals may identify differently with their social class and may use different terms to describe their background or experiences. We should only refer to social class when it is relevant and necessary as well as acknowledge and be sensitive to the fact that social class intersects with other aspects of identity such as race, gender and disability.

4. Brand Colours

The College has guidelines and templates to ensure consistent presentation of materials and websites. It is important these guidelines are followed, and they can be found as follows:



- #0e1d4a
- #f1b031
- #044aad
- #ffffff
- #1e1e1d
- #f0f0f0

- #619ebd

Users can enter these hexadecimal codes in **PowerPoint** to create custom colours for backgrounds, text, and shapes in presentations:

When you want to change the colour of a shape, text, or background, you'll typically start by selecting the "Fill," "Text Colour," or "Shape Outline" options.

Within the colour selection menu, look for an option like "More Colours" or "Custom Colours."

This opens a dialog box where you can specify the colour.

You can directly type or paste the six-digit hexadecimal code (e.g., #0e1d4a) into the hexadecimal field and confirm.

The same codes can also be entered in **Canva**:

Canva's user interface is designed to be very visual. When you select an element (text, shape, background), a colour picker will appear in the toolbar.

The College crest and various logos can be found [here](#). Unless prior permission is granted, the college logo is not allowed to be used outside of College and for personal purposes. This includes both physical and digital print (including social media accounts).

5. General email etiquette

Use a professional email address

All employees have a work email address and should use this for all work-related correspondence, please do not use a personal email address. You are strongly encouraged to use role-based emails where used and these can be found on the College Contact List. For those who prefer not to use a role-based email, this will not be displayed next to their name on the College Contact List.

Always include a clear and concise subject line

A clear subject line means your recipient instantly knows what your email is about and allows them to prioritise it accordingly. This will also help when it comes to searching for a specific email.

Think carefully about who should receive a copy of your email, too.

Think before using 'reply all' or forwarding

Make sure that using 'reply all' or forwarding an email is the right thing to do. It can be distracting to receive emails that are intended for someone else because other people are using the reply all button.

Long email chains, where a number of people are copied in, will all need to be reviewed should a Subject Access Request be received, so make sure you are only forwarding or copying in the relevant people.

Some emails are only intended for you, so think about whether forwarding them on is appropriate, and avoid unnecessary copying (bcc and cc). Always check who are replying to make sure the email is going to the intended person.

Refrain from forwarding lengthy email chains, instead provide a summary so your recipient can quickly understand what you need from them. This will also help to ensure that you are not forwarding information that shouldn't be seen by others.

Remember that others may see your email

Emails always leave a trail. There's also always the possibility that your recipient forwards your email or shows it to other people. Keep this in mind when you're writing emails and stick to positive, polite and professional language and comments.

Address each concern separately

If you receive an email with a list of concerns or questions, you should clearly address each point separately in your response. Ideally you would send a separate email for each of the questions, so that the email chains are kept distinct.

Is an email the best form of communication

Consider whether an email is the best form of communication based on the information you are sharing. Is it highly sensitive? Would a phone call or face to face conversation be more appropriate.

Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Act

Be mindful that all written communications are subject to Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Act (i.e. Subject Access) requests. You should:

- Be limited to its intended purpose and topic, i.e. a single subject
- Remain professional and objective in tone
- Contain concise and relevant subject lines, avoiding personal data
- Avoid copying in others unless completely relevant
- Use role-based email addresses where possible