

Disabled students and a VLE - Practical considerations

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Interface and navigation

Contrast between background and text colours

- Many dyslexic and dyspraxic students experience problems with navigation text due to slow reading speeds. Ensuring text is well contrasted to the background and that distracting background images are kept to a minimum will maintain clearer navigation.

Use of banner images

- Banner images can be used to convey meaning visually. This immediately helps students recognise which course they are in.
- Animated content, if not used for illustrative purposes, should be avoided.

Currency of information

- Out of date announcements can cause confusion for some students who have concentration or organisational difficulties.
- Current information is vital to help students plan and prepare and helps students with mobility problems know in advance of any changes to scheduled face-to-face sessions.

Organisation

Consistency

- It is important to maintain consistent navigation and a logical document structure in the VLE. This helps students who rely on memory to find information more easily.
- Ensure documents are in a logical place, for example, place the course handbook in a folder called "Course Documents".

Naming files and folders

- By giving files and folders obvious and meaningful names, students are able to find the information they are looking for.
- For example, a file called "220304.doc" has no real meaning to a student when looking for links or saving the file locally to their computer. A file named "lecture1relativity.doc", however, allows the student to place the document in an organised, scheduled structure and know the main topic.

Empty folders

- Try to avoid leaving folders empty, as this causes confusion and frustration. Many students with organisational or concentration difficulties become discouraged from using a VLE when they find "shell" courses or folders with no useful content.

Dead links:

- Make sure that all links are live, whether to documents or external web pages. Linking to external content encourages independent research amongst students.

Staff information

Contact details

- Students appreciate having complete contact details readily available on the VLE.
- By including your email address, office location and hours when you are available, students will know where and when to find you.

Use of images

- Posting a picture of yourself and colleagues will allow students to identify you.