



UKSEDS

UK STUDENTS FOR THE EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SPACE

**Diversity &
Inclusion Guide**



FOREWORD

The purpose of this guide is to provide advice and resources to help UKSEDS branches become more inclusive, with equality and diversity as core values. Across the space sector there is a clear lack of diversity and under-representation of minority groups [\[1\]](#). Space is an incredibly fascinating and broad area of research and innovation; anyone with a passion for it should be given equal opportunity to get involved and in a safe and inclusive environment.

UKSEDS is first and foremost a student society; it can be some people's first introduction into space. Therefore, it's important to be accessible and welcoming, encouraging anyone to get involved right from the start. As the space sector continues to grow it becomes even more imperative that the workforce is supported, cultivating an equal and diverse environment that promotes forward thinking. Hopefully by creating change at a student-level, we can spark change to better the wider space sector.

Diversity is the representation of all individuals regardless of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability or socio-economic background. Inclusion is promotion of equality and diversity, ie. putting accommodations in place that support the members of the community. Hopefully this handbook will instil an appreciation of the importance of creating welcoming spaces and provide you with the foundations in ensuring your branch is functioning in the most diverse and inclusive way possible. However, it's not possible to cover the breadth of diversity and inclusion in one document, so we encourage you to look into it yourselves. It's also worth being mindful that often there's no one set way, with diversity and inclusion constantly evolving. The most important thing is to be respectful, tolerant and adaptive to your individual needs as a UKSEDS branch.



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START OF YEAR ADVICE

The start of an academic year for a university society will often involve a large intake of new students. For many, this may be a new and overwhelming experience - creating a welcoming environment is essential. This should be considered when advertising your society and for any initial/welcome events organised:

If your group is attending any society fairs, or giving promotional resources to students, ensure all displays/material are accessible. Consider aspects such as a large, clear and legible font with a non-obstructive background.

At your first event make sure all of your committee introduce themselves:

- Tell them a bit about yourselves
- Include your pronouns - it helps normalise giving/asking pronouns and indicates you're a trans-inclusive space
- Encourage people to ask questions

The first few events are vital in member retention, try to:

- Engage with all new members, make sure no one is feeling isolated or left out.
- Encourage committee and members to wear pronoun badges.
- Ask members to reach out if they have accessibility requirements; this helps ensure that if you have limited resources, you can focus them where it's most needed.

When telling new members about the society make an effort to say that it's important that everyone is welcome and the society is inclusive for all people - discrimination of any kind cannot be tolerated.



COMMUNICATION

When communicating with members of your branch, either verbally or in writing, it is important to use inclusive language. Any piece of communication that is sent out should not exclude any of your audience.

- When addressing people, instead of using 'Dear Sir/Madam', incorporate more gender neutral language such as 'To whom it may concern' or simply 'Hello'. This will include people whose gender does not fit into binary masculine or feminine.
- Including your personal pronouns after email signatures will help normalise the indication of pronouns during communication, and encourage more people to use the pronouns they are comfortable with. Some people may use pronouns outside of He/Him and She/Her. For example 'They/Them', is one possible set of gender neutral pronouns.
- When verbally referring to people whose pronouns are not known, (situation-permitting) ask which pronouns they use. Otherwise, it is usually best to use 'They/Them' rather than assuming what someone's pronouns are.
- Always use simple, easy to read fonts such as Ariel or Calibri.
- For any documents or resources, consider creating accessible versions, this may include HTML (so it can easily be read by screen readers), large font (for people who are visually impaired), and monochromatic (for colour blindness) [\[2\]](#).



SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media plays a crucial role in diversity and inclusion, showcasing the core values of your branch. It's important that all posts via social media are easily accessible and represent a wide range of people. This provides a welcoming space for your audience; any bullying or harassment online should not be tolerated.

Text-to-speech capability

Text-to-speech capability in posts allows the content of a post to be converted to audio. This makes content accessible to people who cannot read written language [\[3\]](#):

- Provide text alternatives to text in images.
- Include image descriptions: a concise and descriptive summary of an image. If this cannot be directly integrated, the caption or comment feature should be used instead.
- Write hashtags with capital letters starting each word, as opposed to all lowercase or uppercase. It's more legible and allows screen readers to read each word in the hashtag correctly, for example #CanYouReadThis.
- If needed, include an appropriate amount of emojis, as most text-to-speech software reads a description for every emoji used. Avoid the use of repeated emojis.

Adding image descriptions on social media:

- Facebook - Simply add image description at the end of your post in square brackets.
- Instagram - click on "Advance settings" and then select "Accessibility". There will be an option to "Write alt text".
- Twitter - after attaching the image to your tweet, there will be an option to edit the image to include an alt-text.



Subtitled videos

Video posts should include subtitles where possible. If this is not possible, a transcript or description of the video can be included in a follow up post, or in the caption. Transcripts can be generated in Microsoft Teams.

Diversity in Posts

When posting about people in the space sector, make sure you are spotlighting a diverse group of people. There is a clear lack of diversity and under-representation of most minority groups, but there are still many of those people available to spotlight, so do some research. Ensure that posts focus on their achievements regardless of identity.

Raising awareness for visibility days allows for the inclusion of existing members and potential members:

- Post to highlight the day and its significance
- Share educational/helpful resources
- Spotlight notable people within that group
- Share intersectional events

Some standard awareness dates to consider:

- October: Black History Month
- 18th November - 18th December: UK Disability History Month
- February: LGBT History Month
- March: Women's History Month



EVENTS


Careful consideration into accessibility must be taken when planning events. This is particularly important for large-scale events such as conferences, competitions, speaker events, etc. If venues/resources are limited it can be difficult to have a fully accessible event, but where possible measures should be taken to make the event as accessible and inclusive as possible. As a general guide, please see the attached [checklist](#).

Diverse range of speakers

For events involving speakers or panelists, try to consider the diversity of those involved. Are you representing a broad scope of people? Aspects to consider are:

- Range of professions
- Gender balance
- Representation of Black people
- Representation of people of colour and ethnic minorities
- LGBTQ+ representation
- Mix of socioeconomic backgrounds
- People with disabilities
- Route into field (for example progression through non-STEM backgrounds, apprenticeships, University, technical college etc.)

Make sure the main focus is still on their career and achievements, unless it's specifically a diversity and inclusion event. A diverse range of backgrounds should be represented regardless of the event.



Collaborations with diversity-focused groups/organisations

In most universities there will be associations and societies dedicated to representing minority groups, either in STEM or general university life. Collaborating with these groups may bring in a more diverse member base into your branch, as well as support the existing members.

Examples of societies that may exist at your university/college:

- LGBTQ+ society/student network
- BAME society/student network
- Students with Disabilities society/network
- Women's and Non-Binary Group
- Women in STEM group
- LGBTQ+ in STEM group



ACCESSIBILITY

Toilet facilities

In most venues male and female toilets are standard. However, it should also be considered if disabled toilets are available. These should be easily accessible and if possible, include separate gender-neutral facilities. This may be limited by university buildings, but should be considered where possible, particularly for external venues. Toilets available and their location should be signposted in any introductory talks at the start event. Organisers/attendees need to be respectful of everyone and never assume which bathroom someone should use.

Breakout zones

Although networking and social events are a great opportunity to network and learn from others, it is important to recognise that a busy setting can cause individuals to experience heightened stress levels and anxiety. Consider providing a separate quiet room or suggesting possible areas to go if someone needs space - these should be signposted at the start of the event. Breakout zones help to support the wellbeing of all event attendees, giving them a place to temporarily disengage from the rest of the event, until they feel ready to join in again.

Pronoun stickers/badges

By indicating pronouns through badges/stickers it easily communicates among attendees which pronouns they use. All attendees should be encouraged to use these indicators, regardless of whether or not they think their gender “should be obvious”. Pronoun badges normalise not assuming someone’s gender and create an inclusive environment for trans and non-gender conforming individuals [\[4\]](#).

Main options to include:

- He/him
- She/her
- They/them
- Ask me

Ways to indicate pronouns:

- Badges
- Stickers
- Blank sticky labels
- Name card in lanyard



Communication Indicators

Colour communication badges allow people to express their communication preference, which supports people who may have anxiety regarding communication at networking-focussed events. This system has been adopted in several UKSEDS events, and has been described in detail by The Autistic Self Advocacy Network [\[5\]](#).

Supporting People with Disabilities

Some people with disabilities need some adjustments to be made to help them get the most out of an event. Should someone request a reasonable adjustment to be made, don't attempt to find out the exact nature of their impairment/disability. Some people are comfortable talking about it, while others would prefer to keep it private and to only communicate their accessibility needs.

If possible, try to implement the following accessibility guidelines regardless of any requests being made, this will help the event feel more comfortable and inclusive for everyone.

Mobility

There are a wide range of mobility issues and it is important to ensure that any venue hosting an event is capable of accommodating any of these mobility requirements.

- Obstacles blocking walking areas should be kept to a minimum, or avoided entirely.
- If the venue has multiple floors, there should be easy access to working elevators or ramps.
- Venues should have at least one entrance/exit with automatic doors.
- If an event is taking place which requires a seated audience, there should be space allocated to people with mobility issues.
- Seating should be easily accessible regardless of the type of event, as people with mobility issues may find it difficult to stand for a long duration of time.



Deafness

People identifying as d/Deaf could range from those who have mild hearing loss to those who have no hearing at all. In general, 'Deaf' is used by people who were born deaf and for whom being deaf is a core part of their identity, while 'deaf' is used more often by people whose hearing has deteriorated over time. Not all d/Deaf people use assistive technology to hear, and those that do, may not be comfortable communicating in oral English. Assistive technology such as hearing aids or cochlear implants are not a perfect replacement for hearing, many d/Deaf people still have trouble talking to other people, especially in a noisy environment.

- d/Deaf people may need to sit at the front to be able to understand a speaker better, as hearing aids and cochlear implants often have very limited range and sensitivity.
- All speakers should have captioning where possible. This can be done with the use of text-to-speech software, or a live captionist where possible.
- Not all d/Deaf people use sign language or English. They may prefer to communicate in English, either spoken or written down, or through sign language. This may include BSL (British Sign Language) or ASL (American Sign Language).

Visually Impaired

People who are visually impaired range from people who are colourblind to people who have completely lost sight.

- Avoid relying solely on colour to make a distinction between different objects. Note that there are many different types of colour blindness, try to use text/symbols as well as colours.
- Check any images are high quality and clearly presented.
- Encourage speakers to describe any images on slides whilst giving their talk.
- Avoid having obstructions on main walking areas.
- Be conscious that not all visually impaired people wear sunglasses or use a white cane to navigate.



INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Diversity/Welfare Officer

Including a Diversity/Welfare Officer into your committee may help improve the diversity and inclusion of your branch. Advantages and roles of a diversity/welfare officer may include:

- A clear point of contact in the case of any instance of discrimination of any form - the officer should be comfortable standing up for the person/group being discriminated against and should address the event within committee so that preventative measures can be taken for future occurrences.
- Someone that can pay close attention to the diversity, inclusion, and accessibility of the society, and flag areas to improve.
- A contact for people struggling with mental health to direct them to people within the university who are able to support them.
- Someone that can ensure that new members feel welcome and are well integrated into the society.

Supporting your Committee

As well as creating an inclusive environment for your members, it's also important to make sure you're supporting each other as a committee:

- All committee meetings should be accessible to all committee members, with any required accommodations put into place.
- Avoid cliques within your committee.
- Make it clear that mental health and wellbeing come before anything. If people need to take a step back from their role, try to delegate to other committee members to take some of the pressure off.
- Regularly check-in with everyone to make sure they're okay with any role/assignments, offer support and guidance if needed.
- Make sure someone is looking out for your Chair/President too!

Appreciating the Importance of Diversity and Inclusion

For many, the guidance outlined in this document may make very little difference to their overall experience of your society. However, for some people, actions towards improving diversity and inclusion at a branch-level may be the difference between them getting involved and attending events, versus them ignoring all future society activities. Putting accommodations into place helps to support your members and show them that you care about making their experience as good as possible; failure to do so risks alienating them.

- *Doing anything is better than nothing*
Limitations in budget, venues, resources etc. may prevent you from following some aspects outlined in this handbook. However, it's important to do as much as you can.
- *Research any areas you're unsure about*
Diversity and inclusion is becoming a more prominent consideration within many organisations. However, it's still growing and there are many aspects that are constantly evolving to be as accessible as possible - keep educating yourself on how to support your members.
- *If in doubt, ask*
If after researching, you're still unsure about how to go about something, just ask someone who it would affect. However, always be respectful and conscious that they may be tired of constantly being the spokesperson and advice-giver.

RESOURCES

1. [UKSEDS Paper for Lunar and Planetary Science Conference 2019:](https://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/lpsc2019/pdf/2380.pdf)
<https://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/lpsc2019/pdf/2380.pdf>
2. [Using HTML for accessible documents:](https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Learn/Accessibility/HTML)
<https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Learn/Accessibility/HTML>
3. [Making your social media more accessible:](https://www.rnib.org.uk/rnibconnect/technology/making-your-social-media-accessible)
<https://www.rnib.org.uk/rnibconnect/technology/making-your-social-media-accessible>
4. [Learning more about pronouns:](https://pronounsday.org/resources)
<https://pronounsday.org/resources>
5. [Using Colour Communication Indicators:](https://autisticadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ColorCommunicationBadges.pdf)
<https://autisticadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ColorCommunicationBadges.pdf>

If you have any questions about the advice contained in this handbook, or have suggestions on how it can be improved, please contact us at diversity@ukseds.org .

INCLUSIVE EVENTS CHECKLIST

Where possible, try to consider the following aspects during event planning. This will mostly apply to larger/external events, but measures should be taken to make events as accessible as possible if accommodations are available.

In-Person Events

Venue & Tech

- Physically accessible ie. step-free-access and ease of motion throughout venue
- Speaker/microphone systems compatible with assistive hearing technology
- British sign-language interpreter and/or live captions
- Disabled toilets
- Gender inclusive toilets
- Available breakout zones

Logistics

- At welcome talk (or on handouts) signpost the location of all available toilets/facilities
- Registration desk accessible from seated position (if applicable)
- Encourage use of pronoun badges and communication stickers
- Event organisers/volunteers aware of all accommodations
- Event organisers/volunteers identifiable and available to help throughout the event
- Option for attendees to provide feedback
- If interactive, ensure accessible to people with disabilities
- For trips ensure transport is physically accessible
- For talk/conference events invite a diverse range of speakers



Pre-event Registration/Information

- Description of the event and venue, including accessibility statement
- Option to request any additional accommodations in advance
- Ask for chosen name and pronouns
- Offer travel bursaries for attendees (if applicable/possible)
- Ask for dietary requirements in advance (if applicable)

Food

- Cover main dietary requirements and any others specified in registration (if applicable). This may include: vegetarian, vegan, gluten free, halal, kosher, etc
- Keep food separate and clearly labelled
- Food tables accessible to people using wheelchairs
- Non-alcoholic options available

Communication

- Avoid gendered language in all communication
- Provide content warnings if any sensitive topics are covered
- Make additional resources available for people who are visually impaired. ie. handouts with larger font, or digital documents accessible to screen reader technology
- When advertising make sure publicity is accessible, easy to read, and have text to speech capabilities



Other

- Be prepared to address any members acting inappropriately
- Avoid cliques amongst regulars and committee members
- Run a range of different event types (include sober options)

Online events

- Speakers/event organisers should be conscious of the speed and clarity of speech
- Use a platform with built-in captions. These should be easily accessible and reliable
- Include the option to request digital resources/documents in advance
- Make accessible versions of any event documents/resources
- Encourage people to introduce themselves with name and pronouns before speaking
- Include audio descriptions of any transitions/imagery as necessary
- For questions asked through text, read them out before answers are given
- Provide availability to watch recording after the event