



## **Checklist to Assist Schools in Conducting a Review of Accessibility and Equality and Diversity Information on their Websites**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In May 2009, the Conservatoire published guidance for affiliate schools who wished to conduct an equalities review of the marketing and recruitment information they provided for prospective students and other interested readers. This included the prospectus, application forms and other marketing leaflets and information packs. This new version of the checklist has been developed as an extension of this previous guidance in response to the shift to digital platforms as the primary source of information for prospective students and others interested in the work of Conservatoire schools.

It is with this in mind that the Conservatoire Leadership Board agreed that it would be useful to have some kind of self-assessment 'checklist' that schools can use to review whether their website includes up to date, easy to find information and reflects their wish to welcome and encourage applications from a wide range of talented young people from all sections of the community.

The principles of good quality information remain much the same whether they are being read in print or electronically. This is to ensure that the information we provide:

- promotes an approach to student recruitment that reflects our desire to encourage a wide range of talented applicants from all sectors of the community;
- is non-discriminatory;
- presents a realistic picture of what students can expect on their course;
- is clearly written and presented so that it is easy for applicants to locate the information they need;
- is presented in a format that is both welcoming and accessible for disabled students.

Re-reading the original guidance might be a helpful way to begin an evaluation of equality and diversity information on your website. The 2009 document can be found on the Conservatoire website at: <http://www.cdd.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/CDD-equalities-review-July-09.pdf>.

This checklist is organised into two sections:

**Section A covers the general principles that inform inclusive web design and function.**

**Section B looks at the equality and diversity information that needs to be included in your school's website; either embedded or via a link to the information on the Conservatoire's website.**

## SECTION A: INCLUSIVE WEB DESIGN AND FUNCTION

### The principles of inclusive design

A web designer charged with considering the needs of a particular group of web users, for example disabled people with a specific condition such as a visual impairment, or web users where English is not their first language, might turn to specific areas of advice. But what constitutes good web design and easy navigation for one group of users is likely to be effective design for all.

All web users will benefit from clear links to different parts of the website, relevant and interesting content, efficient navigation, clear font size, good use of colour and clearly marked, flexible routes to find both the information they know they need (for example how to apply for a course) and information they discover whilst browsing (for example, the support schools have in place for dyslexic students or bursaries).

People use a variety of technologies to access the web: some users prefer to use a speech output system that reads text aloud, or navigate using the keyboard rather than a mouse. To create websites that can be used by the widest spectrum of potential visitors, we need to apply universal design principles when creating and maintaining websites. The following checklist covers some of the essentials of accessible and easy to use websites and the basic principles of good design. For a more in-depth look at the functionality of your website, you could make use of accessibility testing software such as A-Prompt or WAVE, or a Google Chrome accessibility plugin or Mozilla Firefox accessibility add-on.

<b>CLEAR NAVIGATION</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>Navigation on web pages should be clear, direct and easy to use. A web browser shouldn't have to scramble around to find information.</b>	<b>For school use</b>
There should be a contents page which gives readers speedy access to information but provides enough detail for those who need more informed advice.	
Pages have clear titles and are organised using descriptive section headings that help readers navigate around a page.	
The links work and are easy to find.	
Users are informed about their current location within a set of relevant pages e.g.: 'Name of school – BA in Performing Arts – Fees and Funding'	

Links should explain where the reader is going to and what they are going to find there. Adding a directive (but not necessarily 'click here') right before a link can help some readers understand that the underlined, different coloured text is intended to be opened by a click.	
Information can be found via hierarchical navigation structures such as menu bars, as well as through a search function	
<b>FINDING INFORMATION YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED</b>  <b>Few prospective applicants will know what the term 'equality and diversity means or be familiar with the language of 'reasonable adjustments', 'DSA', 'ethnic diversity', 'fee waivers' or 'specific learning difficulties', although they might find it very helpful to discover the range of support on offer at audition and to our students.</b>	<b>NOTES</b>  <b>For school use</b>
The website is also designed to inform browsers who are not sure what they're looking for but will discover helpful and informative information whilst browsing, e.g. information on audition fee waivers or the video that shows disabled students performing and talking about their training.	
There is more than one way to find key pages so, for example, information (or links to it) on bursaries or support for dyslexic students or those with mental health difficulties can be found in a variety of sections e.g. in the Equality and Diversity pages, Finance pages and in the Student Support section.	
Through photographs, text information, good links to the Conservatoire's website and a high standard of inclusive design, web users will get a sense of the inclusive and welcoming culture of affiliate schools.	
<b>COLOURS AND READABILITY</b>  <b>Colours are critical to web pages but so is readability. Make sure that your web designer has not used colour at the expense of readability. A dark font on a contrasting light background might be traditional but it is a winner in terms of readability. A pale font on a pale background or a pale font on a darker background may look stylish but text presented in this way is very hard to read.</b>	<b>NOTES</b>  <b>For school use</b>
Colour should not be used as the only way of conveying information	

or identifying content; font size and style are also important and need to be clear and easy to read. Sans Serif fonts such as Ariel and Helvetica are considered to be easier to read, particularly for dyslexic readers.	
Underlining or using bold/italicised text is another way to ensure readability.	
Default foreground and background colour combinations need to provide sufficient contrast. It is better to avoid light text on a white background and dark/busy backgrounds in general.	
Text should be resizable up to at least 200% without losing information.	
Flashing content is avoided: flashing at certain rates/patterns can cause photo-sensitive reactions, including seizures and is in general, much harder to read.	
<b>ONLINE FORMS</b>  <b>Not all web users work at the same speed. People should be given sufficient time to read and respond to questions before the computer 'times out'</b>	<b>NOTES</b>  <b>For school use</b>
Users need to be given enough time to complete online forms so that forms do not 'time-out' before all the information is entered.	
Web users need space and time to review and edit their responses both during the process of entering information and before having to press the 'send' link.	
<b>CAPTIONS AND OTHER ALTERNATIVES FOR MULTIMEDIA</b>  <b>Alternative ways of accessing text, sound and visual information are essential for web users with different access needs. Because of the multimedia nature of the web, some users will need an alternative way of 'seeing' graphics, film and photographs; 'hearing' audio content and navigating sites that are poorly organised or have unclear directions. We need to think about this in terms of good inclusive design as well as our legal requirement to make reasonable adjustments.</b>	<b>NOTES</b>  <b>For school use</b>
Text transcripts and captions are provided as an alternative to video clips and other recordings where people are speaking.	

Web information is compatible with text to speech software.	
Audio descriptions are provided to describe important visual details such as photographs or drawings.	
Short text equivalents should also be provided for other visual images, including icons, buttons and graphics.	
Labels are provided for form controls, input, and other user interface components and text alternatives convey the purpose of an image or function to give an equivalent user experience. For example, an appropriate text alternative to a search button would be 'search' not 'magnifying glass'	
<b>KEEPING THE INFORMATION ON YOUR WEBSITE RELEVANT AND UP TO DATE</b>	<b>NOTES</b> <b>For school use</b>
Members of staff in different departments, e.g. student support, marketing and comms. staff, senior managers and other individuals with knowledge of the work of the school all take responsibility for updating equality and diversity information. This includes information generated by the CDD and new or adapted information generated by the school. A senior or executive member of staff needs to take overall responsibility for co-ordinating this process.	
A school employs a member of staff, either in house or external, with knowledge of inclusive design and the ability to receive new information, make changes to existing info and add, alter or remove web information on a regular basis.	

## SECTION B: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN THE WEBSITE

The following self- assessment checklist is is not intended as a definitive list, but rather a starting point for schools to think about what equality and diversity information is important for them to include on their website, either as embedded information on their own website or with clear links to relevant pages on the CDD website. Apart from school specific information such as advice on building access, school based scholarships or contact details for student support staff, all the information below can be found on the Conservatoire’s website.

When making links to equality and diversity information, reports, student interviews and videos, schools may like to use the following wording: **‘If you would like to find out more about (e.g. student support or our approach to promoting good mental health and wellbeing), please visit the Conservatoire’s website (followed by either a specific link to the appropriate page of the CDD website or a general link to the Equality and Diversity page)\*.**

We recommend that users start by familiarising themselves with the recommendations in Section A and our 2009 Guidance. The latter can be found on the CDD website here: <http://www.cdd.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/CDD-equalities-review-July-09.pdf>

Information	Is this information available to find in your own website, either embedded or with links to the Conservatoire website? *		Self- assessment: how easy is to navigate your way to this information; how would you rate the quality of the information and the general look and feel of your website?	Plans for change and/or improvements
<b>Equality and Diversity: General Issues</b>				
	<b>On school website OR</b>	<b>Via a link to CDD</b>		
Photographs and positive images that reflect the cultural diversity of your school/Academy.		School’s own images		

A general, welcoming equality and diversity statement		School to develop or use information on the Conservatoire website		
Access information about school buildings and performance venues		School specific information		
The most recent version of the Conservatoire's Equality and Diversity Action Plan (currently 2012-15)		<a href="http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/">http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/</a>		
The most recent version of the Conservatoire's <i>Review of Progress in Equality and Diversity</i> .		<a href="http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/">http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/</a>		
<b>Religion and Belief and Sexual Preference</b>				
An adapted version of the Conservatoire Policy on Religion and Belief		<a href="http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/">http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/</a>		
<i>Respecting Difference: Guidance on Challenging Homophobia and Promoting Fair Treatment</i>		<a href="http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/">http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/</a>		
<b>Financial Assistance for Students from Low Income Backgrounds and other Information on Widening Participation Support</b>				
Free or low cost ways to get involved, e.g. youth companies, subsidised		<a href="http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/widening-participation/">http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/widening-participation/</a>		

classes or performances.				
Information leaflet on the Conservatoire bursaries available for care leavers and estranged students.		<a href="http://www.cdd.ac.uk/student-info/care-leaver-support/">http://www.cdd.ac.uk/student-info/care-leaver-support/</a>		
Financial assistance for Conservatoire students from low income backgrounds: audition fee waivers and scholarships		<a href="http://www.cdd.ac.uk/student-info/">http://www.cdd.ac.uk/student-info/</a>		
Scholarships and bursary schemes awarded by individual schools				
How to apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)		<a href="http://www.cdd.ac.uk/student-info/disability-support/">http://www.cdd.ac.uk/student-info/disability-support/</a>		
<b>Information on Support for Disabled Students including Staff Guidelines</b>				
A general welcoming statement on the support we offer disabled applicants and students				
The name and contact details of a staff member who disabled applicants can contact to discuss access and support at audition and/or during the course		School specific information		
<b>Support for Disabled</b>		<a href="http://www.cdd.ac.uk/student-">http://www.cdd.ac.uk/student-</a>		



<b>Students</b> booklet		info/disability-support/		
<b>You Will Always Surprise Someone By Just Being Who You Are:</b> Videos of disabled students talking and performing.		<a href="https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMFYwORS0g4u7Ch_jVSfMLuRc6l__Hxau">https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMFYwORS0g4u7Ch_jVSfMLuRc6l__Hxau</a>		
Leaflets for staff and students:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Do you know someone who is experiencing mental health difficulties? guidance for students</i></li> <li>- <i>Staff guidance on supporting students showing signs of mental distress</i></li> </ul>		<a href="http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/">http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/</a>		
Guidelines on mental health and wellbeing		<a href="http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/">http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/</a>		
Guidelines on Responding to Students with Disordered Eating		<a href="http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/">http://www.cdd.ac.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/</a>		