

‘The Lecture From Hell: Changing Places with Students with Disabilities to Design Spaces that do more than Tick Boxes’

This project began initially set out to create and deliver an immersive training experience to assist staff in understanding and implementing reasonable adjustments in teaching. The Covid 19 outbreak meant that we were unable to hold the proposed face to face sessions and instead held them online.

The idea was born out of an established literature that staff often have difficulty translating legal and institutional guidance around reasonable adjustments in practice. In response the project team set out to identify particular barriers and how these might be translated into concrete representations for staff to experience in a training session. In consultation with students with disabilities, we identified key barriers including: inaccessible and inappropriately format texts, particularly for learners with visual and text impairments such as dyslexia, lighting and background noise, excessive movement in teaching staff and physical barriers such as heavy furniture and inaccessible rooms. We created ‘shaky text’ to be used on PowerPoint slides for the immersive lecture, we created a ‘background noise’ soundtrack to be played at various points in the lecture, we created inaccessible handouts and a ‘weighted chair’ as well as instructing the session lead to exhibit the ‘bad practice’ highlighted by student consultants; such as excess movement, having the face in shadow and failing to signal changes in context adequately. In preparation for the proposed sessions, we created an online questionnaire to enable us to gauge staff feeling and understanding around reasonable adjustment provision and training. We received over 40 individual responses across various faculties at our institution. The data indicated similar themes to those highlighted in existing literature and stated that staff would find person led rather than online or policy focused training on reasonable adjustment more useful in fulfilling their obligations to students.