



Trinity College Dublin  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

# Universal Access (UA) Design Guidelines

## Trinity College Dublin

A photograph of the Trinity College Dublin courtyard, featuring a central tower with a dome and a cross, flanked by classical buildings with columns. The scene is bathed in a purple and blue light, suggesting dusk or dawn. A path leads from the foreground towards the tower.

# Universal Access

Designing an inclusive Trinity for all

# Universal Access Design Guidelines

## Trinity College Dublin



### Version 1.0 – Draft for Estates Policy Committee

Document reference:	UA Design Guidelines V1
Version/Draft:	1
Next review date:	March 2027
Distribution:	Estates Policy Committee
Document owner:	Declan Treanor, Trinity disAbility Service Director

Version history:	Previously approved by:	Date:
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# Universal Access Design Guidelines

Trinity College Dublin



## Colour Coding and Visual Structure

To support clarity, consistency, and accessibility, a structured colour-coding system is used throughout these guidelines. The selected colours have been chosen to provide strong visual contrast, improve readability, and create a calm, intuitive user experience.

<p><b>Good Practice</b> (Background: Green #08b285) (Text: Black #000000)</p>	<p>Indicates recommended approaches that support inclusive design and positive user outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Avoid</b> (Background: Orange #e67e22) (Text: Black #000000)</p>	<p>Highlights design approaches or conditions that create barriers or reduce accessibility.</p>
<p><b>Outcome</b> (Background: Purple #81358a) (Text: White #FFFFFF)</p>	<p>Describes the intended result when good practice is applied, focusing on inclusive and effective environments.</p>
<p><b>Impact</b> (Background: Yellow #fdbf00) (Text: Black #000000)</p>	<p>Illustrates the consequences of poor design decisions, helping to highlight potential risks or barriers.</p>

This colour system is designed to be clear and easily distinguishable, supporting users to quickly understand key messages. Softer, balanced tones have been selected to reduce visual strain while maintaining sufficient contrast for accessibility.

Text colours have been selected to ensure strong contrast with each background:

- black (#000000) is used for Good Practice, Avoid, and Impact
- white (#FFFFFF) is used for Outcome to maintain readability and meet accessibility contrast requirements.

All colour combinations have been checked against WCAG colour contrast requirements to ensure accessibility and readability.

# Universal Access Design Guidelines

## Trinity College Dublin



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# Universal Access Design Guidelines

## Trinity College Dublin



## How Universal Access is Delivered at Trinity

Universal Access at Trinity College Dublin is delivered through a structured and integrated approach.

This approach is organised around five key elements: **Principles, Evidence, Governance, Process, and Tools.**

1. Principles (Universal Design)
2. Evidence (ULAA)
3. Governance (Panel + Roles)
4. Process (Project Review)
5. Tools (Appendices)

The Seven Principles of Universal Design provide the foundation for inclusive design, supported by evidence from the Trinity User-Led Accessibility Audit (ULAA), which brings lived experience into decision-making.

These elements are supported by clear governance arrangements and defined review processes that promote accountability across all projects. Practical tools, including checklists and review templates, enable consistent application.

Together, this approach ensures that accessibility is integrated from the earliest stages of planning through to delivery, operation, and ongoing improvement.

# Universal Access Design Guidelines

## Trinity College Dublin



## Forward

It is a privilege to introduce the Trinity College Dublin Universal Access - Design Guidelines, which reflect the University's ongoing commitment to creating an inclusive, welcoming, and accessible environment for all.

Trinity is a place of learning, research, and community, shaped by a diverse population of students, staff, and visitors. As our community continues to grow and evolve, so too must the spaces in which we learn, work, and connect. These guidelines represent an important step in ensuring that accessibility is not treated as an afterthought, but as a fundamental part of how we design and develop our campus.

Set within a historic campus, Trinity presents both challenges and opportunities in delivering accessible environments. While some buildings and spaces reflect earlier approaches to design, these guidelines aim to support a consistent and forward-looking approach across all future developments, ensuring that universal design principles are embedded from the outset.

At its core, universal design is about people. It is about enabling independence, dignity, and full participation in all aspects of university life. When accessibility is thoughtfully integrated, it enhances the experience for everyone. Through continued collaboration, reflection, and improvement, Trinity aims to create an environment that is not only accessible, but truly inclusive.

**Declan Treanor**

**disAbility Service Director**

# Introduction

Trinity College Dublin is committed to ensuring that its physical environment supports equality of access and participation for all members of the University community, including students, staff and visitors. These Universal Access (UA) Guidelines provide detailed design and operational guidance to support the implementation of the Trinity Universal Access Policy and ensure that the University's buildings and spaces are accessible, inclusive and usable by the widest possible range of people.

These guidelines are informed by the Trinity User-Led Accessibility Audit (ULAA), which places disabled students at the centre of evaluating campus accessibility. This approach ensures that recommendations are grounded in lived experience and reflect real barriers encountered across the university estate. This user-led approach highlights that accessibility challenges are often not visible through compliance checks alone, reinforcing the need to prioritise real-world usability and lived experience in all design decisions. These Guidelines establish Trinity College Dublin's required standard for Universal Access and must be applied across all relevant projects.

## The guidelines apply to:

- New buildings
- Major refurbishments
- Minor works and maintenance projects
- External campus environments
- Teaching, research and social spaces

## The purpose of this document is to:

- Provide clear design guidance for architects, consultants and contractors
- Ensure consistent accessibility standards across the Trinity estate
- Support compliance with national legislation and regulatory requirements
- Embed universal design principles across all campus development

## These guidelines should be read alongside:

- Trinity Universal Access Policy
- Trinity Strategic Plan
- Trinity Equality Policy
- Trinity Reasonable Accommodation Policy

## Historic and Constrained Buildings

Trinity's historic estate presents unique challenges; however, heritage or structural constraints shall not be used to avoid accessibility. Where full equivalence cannot be achieved, project teams must demonstrate that all feasible options have been explored, identify the least exclusionary solution, and document any remaining barriers with a plan for future improvement.




Front Square and the Campanile, with the accessible pathway that supports legibility, orientation, and independent access.

# Legislative and Policy Framework

Design and management of the Trinity estate must comply with Irish legislation and relevant international standards. Key legislation includes the Disability Act 2005, which requires public buildings to be accessible as far as practicable; the Building Regulations (Part M), which establish minimum standards for access and use; and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014, which places a duty on public bodies to promote equality and protect human rights. Additional legislation, including the Equal Status Acts and Employment Equality Acts, further supports inclusive access and participation.

These Guidelines aim to ensure that Trinity goes beyond minimum regulatory compliance to deliver environments that reflect best practice in universal design. While Part M provides a baseline, Trinity's objective is to create inclusive, usable and high-quality environments. Relevant guidance includes BS 8300, the Universal Design Guidelines published by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, and other applicable international standards.



**Legislation** (e.g. the Universities Act (1997), Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Data Protection Act 2018, Disability Act (2005), QQI Act 2012 etc.). All university policy must comply with relevant legislation.

**Policies** represent the official position of the University on any aspect of the institution's activities. They are formally approved by the Council or Board and have broad application across the University.

Relationship between legislation and university policy, showing how policy is informed by and must comply with statutory requirements.

## Avoid

- Treating legislation as a checklist exercise
- Designing to minimum Part M compliance only
- Applying accessibility late in the project (retrofit approach)
- Relying on outdated or inconsistent standards
- Ignoring user experience in favour of technical compliance
- Assuming compliance = accessibility
- Failing to reference recognised design guidance.

## Good Practice

- Design to exceed minimum requirements of the Disability Act 2005 (Part M) wherever feasible
- Embed Universal Design principles from the earliest stages of project planning and design
- Use recognised best practice guidance (e.g. BS 8300, CEUD guidelines)
- Ensure consistency across projects by referencing the same standards
- Consider real user needs, not just regulatory compliance
- Keep up to date with current legislation and evolving best practice
- Incorporate findings from user-led audits to ensure compliance is informed by real user experience rather than theoretical standards.

## Impact

Results in environments that technically comply but still create barriers for users.

## Outcome

Designs are inclusive, future-proof, and aligned with best practice rather than minimal compliance.

## Compliance and Derogation

These Guidelines represent Trinity College Dublin's required standard for Universal Access across all relevant projects and are not optional guidance.

Any departure from these Guidelines must be formally documented, justified, and approved through the appropriate project governance route. Accessibility derogations shall not be agreed informally.

Project teams must demonstrate why a proposed solution cannot meet Trinity's stated requirements, assess the impact on users, identify mitigation measures, and outline a clear plan and timeline for resolution.

Compliance with legislation is the minimum standard – the objective is to achieve inclusive, accessible environments through best practice in universal design.

# Principles of Universal Design

Universal Design provides a framework for creating environments that are usable by the widest possible range of people, regardless of age, ability, or background. It moves beyond minimum compliance to promote inclusive, flexible, and intuitive design that supports independence, dignity, and equal participation. By applying these principles from the outset, Trinity College Dublin can ensure that buildings, spaces, and services are designed to be accessible, understandable, and usable for all members of its community.

## What is Universal Access?

Universal access refers to the design of environments that can be accessed, understood, and used by all people, regardless of age, ability, or circumstance, without the need for adaptation or specialised solutions. Universal Access within Trinity is guided by the internationally recognised Seven Principles of Universal Design.

### 1. Equitable Use

Buildings must provide the same means of use for all users wherever possible.

### 2. Flexibility in Use

Spaces should accommodate a wide range of preferences and abilities.

### 3. Simple and Intuitive Use

Buildings and facilities must be easy to understand and navigate.

### 4. Perceptible Information

Essential information must be communicated through multiple sensory channels.

### 5. Tolerance for Error

Design must minimise hazards and unintended actions.

### 6. Low Physical Effort

Facilities should be usable efficiently with minimal fatigue.

### 7. Size and Space for Approach and Use

Spaces must accommodate mobility aids, assistive devices and support persons.

## The Seven Principles of Universal Design

Universal Access within Trinity is guided by the internationally recognised Seven Principles of Universal Design. These principles provide a framework for evaluating existing environments and informing inclusive design processes that aim to accommodate the widest possible range of users.

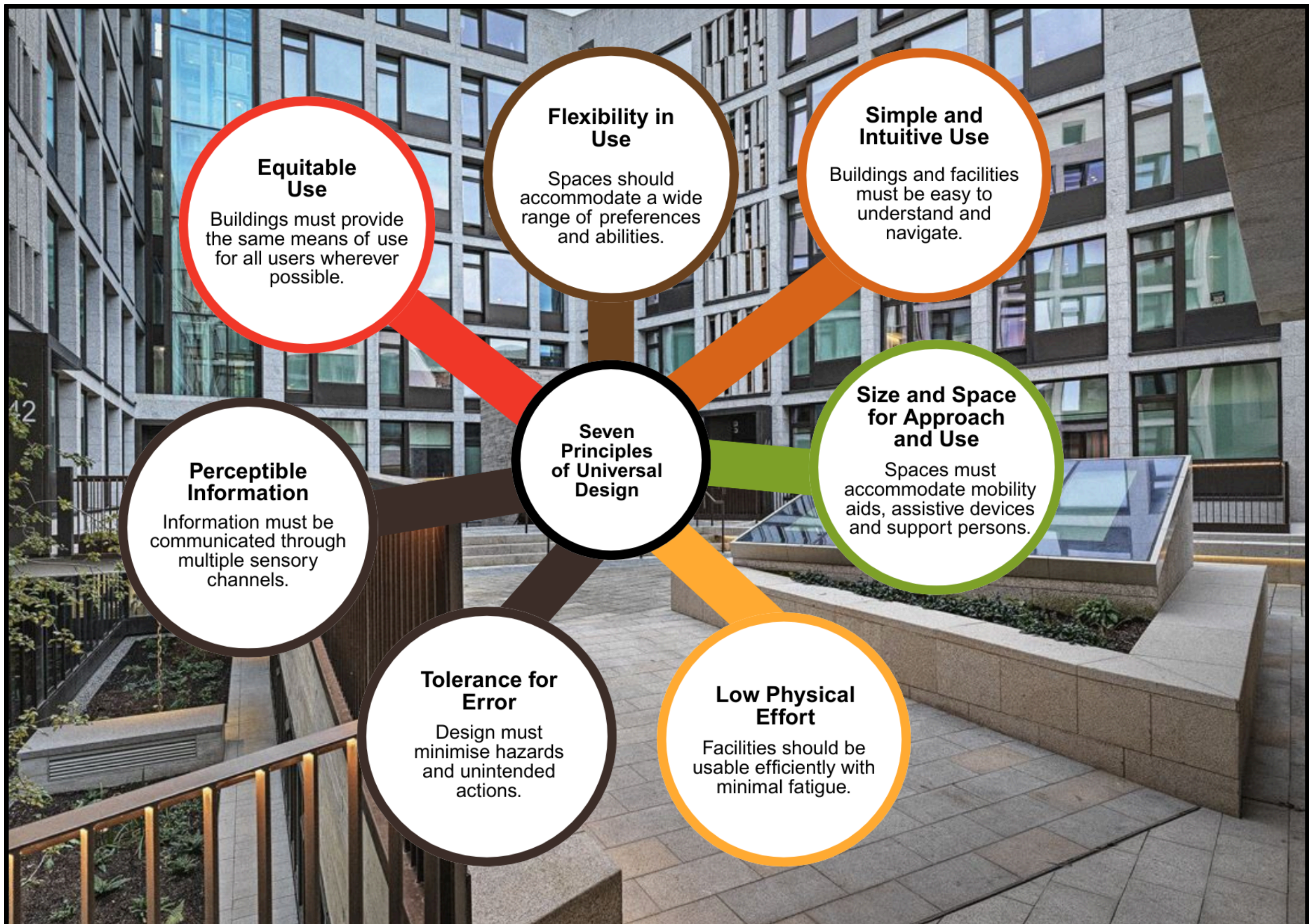


Figure 1 - The Seven Principles of Universal Design.

The Seven Principles of Universal Design illustrated above demonstrating how inclusive design supports accessible, flexible, and intuitive use of campus spaces for all users (Figure 1).

Universal design benefits everyone – not just people with disabilities.

## How it all fits in

How Universal Design (method) and user-led evidence (ULAA) combine to deliver Universal Access as an outcome across the Trinity campus (Figure 2).

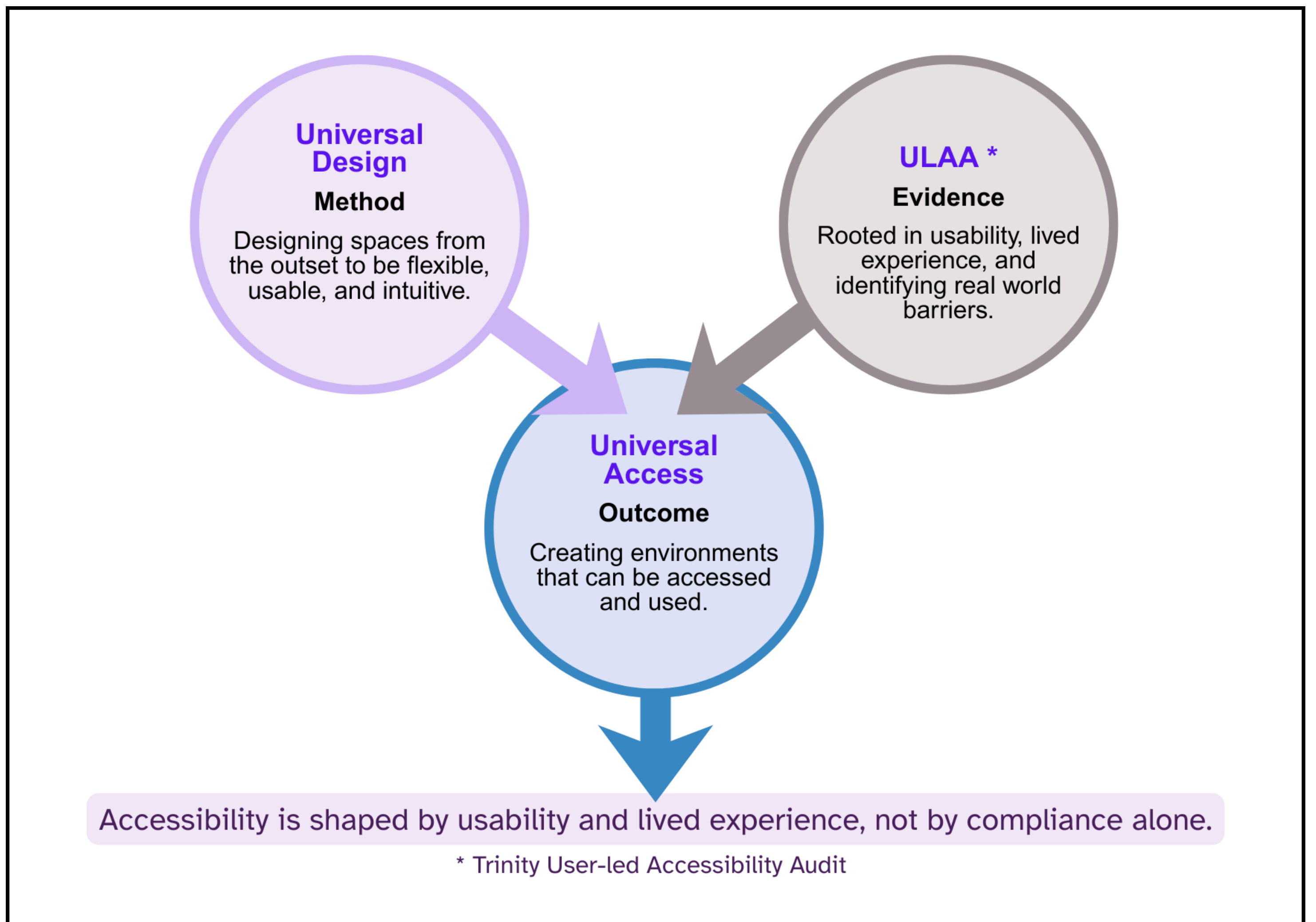


Figure 2 - How it all fits in. Universal Design, ULAA, and Universal Access.

Accessibility across the Trinity estate varies due to the historic nature of the campus, reinforcing the need to embed universal design principles in all future developments.

## Avoid

- Providing separate or alternative solutions for disabled users where a shared solution is possible
- Designing for a 'typical' user rather than a diverse range of users
- Creating environments that are complex, confusing, or difficult to navigate
- Relying on a single method of communication (e.g. visual only signage)
- Designing spaces that increase risk of error or accidental misuse
- Requiring excessive physical effort to use facilities
- Providing insufficient space for wheelchair users or assistive devices
- Treating accessibility as a special provision rather than a fundamental design requirement.

## Good Practice

- Provide the same means of access and use for all users wherever possible
- Design spaces to support a wide range of abilities and preferences
- Ensure environments are simple, intuitive, and easy to navigate
- Communicate information through multiple formats (visual, tactile, auditory)
- Design to minimise hazards and reduce the risk of error
- Ensure spaces can be used with low physical effort and minimal fatigue
- Provide adequate space and clearances for mobility aids, assistive devices, and support persons
- Integrate accessibility as a core design principle from the outset, not as an add-on.

## Impact

Results in environments that exclude users, reduce independence, and create unnecessary barriers.

## Outcome

Environments are inclusive, easy to use, and support independence for the widest possible range of users.

Universal access is fundamental to good design - creating environments that can be accessed, understood, and used by all, supporting independence, dignity, and full participation.

# Neurodiversity, Sensory Accessibility and Cognitive Access

Trinity College Dublin is committed to ensuring that its buildings, external spaces and campus environments support neurodiversity and reduce unnecessary sensory and cognitive barriers. Universal Access must therefore consider how people perceive, process and respond to sound, light, movement, smell, texture, layout, information and social proximity within the built environment.

This is relevant to a wide range of users, including neurodivergent people, people with mental health conditions, and individuals experiencing fatigue, stress or sensory sensitivities. Universal access shall not be understood solely in physical or regulatory terms. A space may be technically compliant yet remain inaccessible if it is acoustically harsh, visually cluttered, overly bright, difficult to understand, or lacks opportunities for respite.

Design and management of the Trinity estate shall seek to reduce sensory overload, support orientation and predictability, and provide appropriate levels of choice, control and recovery. Sensory accessibility and cognitive access are therefore fundamental components of good design and estate management.

## Key Areas of Sensory and Cognitive Access

- Acoustics and noise management
- Light, glare and reflection
- Visual environment, materials and finishes
- Quiet, restorative and recovery spaces
- Wayfinding, predictability and preview information
- Maintenance, cleaning and operational management

Universal access is not only physical – sensory and cognitive experience shape whether a space can truly be used.

## Avoid

- Environments with excessive noise, glare, flicker, clutter or unpredictable sensory conditions
- Reliance on minimum compliance where usability is not achieved in practice
- One-size-fits-all solutions that do not reflect diverse sensory needs
- Introducing sensory considerations only after key design decisions are fixed
- Maintenance and cleaning practices that introduce sensory barriers (e.g. strong scents, flickering lights, noisy equipment).

## Good Practice

- Consider sensory and cognitive access from project inception and briefing stages
- Engage users with lived experience early and throughout the design process
- Adopt a multisensory approach, recognising the cumulative impact of sound, light, layout, materials and environment
- Reduce avoidable sensory stressors through design rather than relying on individual coping strategies
- Provide flexibility, adjustability and user choice where possible
- Provide quiet, low-stimulation and restorative spaces
- Ensure environments are legible, predictable and easy to understand
- Embed sensory accessibility within maintenance, cleaning, procurement and operational management.

## Impact

Poor sensory and cognitive design can create invisible barriers, leading to stress, fatigue, disorientation and reduced participation, even where spaces are physically accessible.

## Outcome

Buildings and spaces are more usable, predictable, calming and inclusive, supporting participation, concentration, wellbeing and independence for the widest possible range of users.

## ✓ Good practice



Figure 3 - ATIC Space Ussher. Sensory-friendly study space designed to support comfort, focus, and choice.

The ATIC (Assistive Technology and Information Centre) Space, located within the Ussher Library, demonstrates good practice in neurodiversity, sensory accessibility, and cognitive access by providing a calm, structured, and flexible environment. The layout includes a variety of seating options, allowing users to choose levels of privacy and social interaction. Soft finishes, muted colours, and controlled lighting help reduce sensory overload, while clear zoning supports orientation and predictability (Figure 3).

The provision of quieter individual workstations alongside more open seating areas enables users to regulate their sensory environment and select spaces that best meet their needs. This approach supports concentration, wellbeing, and independent use for a wide range of users, including those with sensory sensitivities or cognitive differences.

This space can be located using the TCD Sense Map, which provides information on sensory environments and accessible spaces across the campus:

<https://tcdsensemap.ie/>

# Challenging Sensory Environment

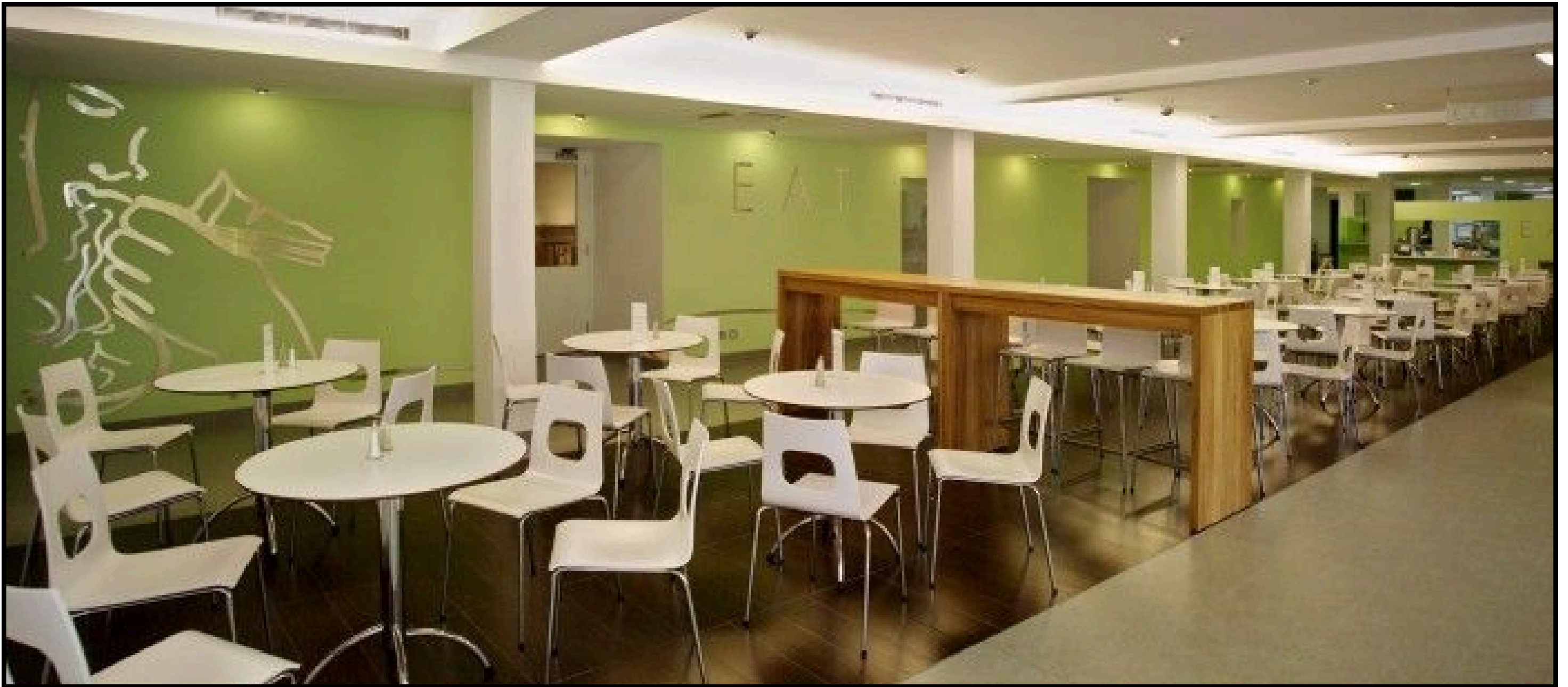


Figure 4 - The Buttery seating area. Busy dining environment with multiple competing sensory inputs, which may be challenging for some users.

This space illustrates how busy, multi-functional environments can create complex sensory conditions. High levels of background noise, strong food-related smells, bright lighting, and movement within queuing areas can contribute to sensory overload for some users (Figure 4). While the space includes quieter zones and varied seating options, the overall environment may still be difficult to navigate or tolerate, particularly at peak times.

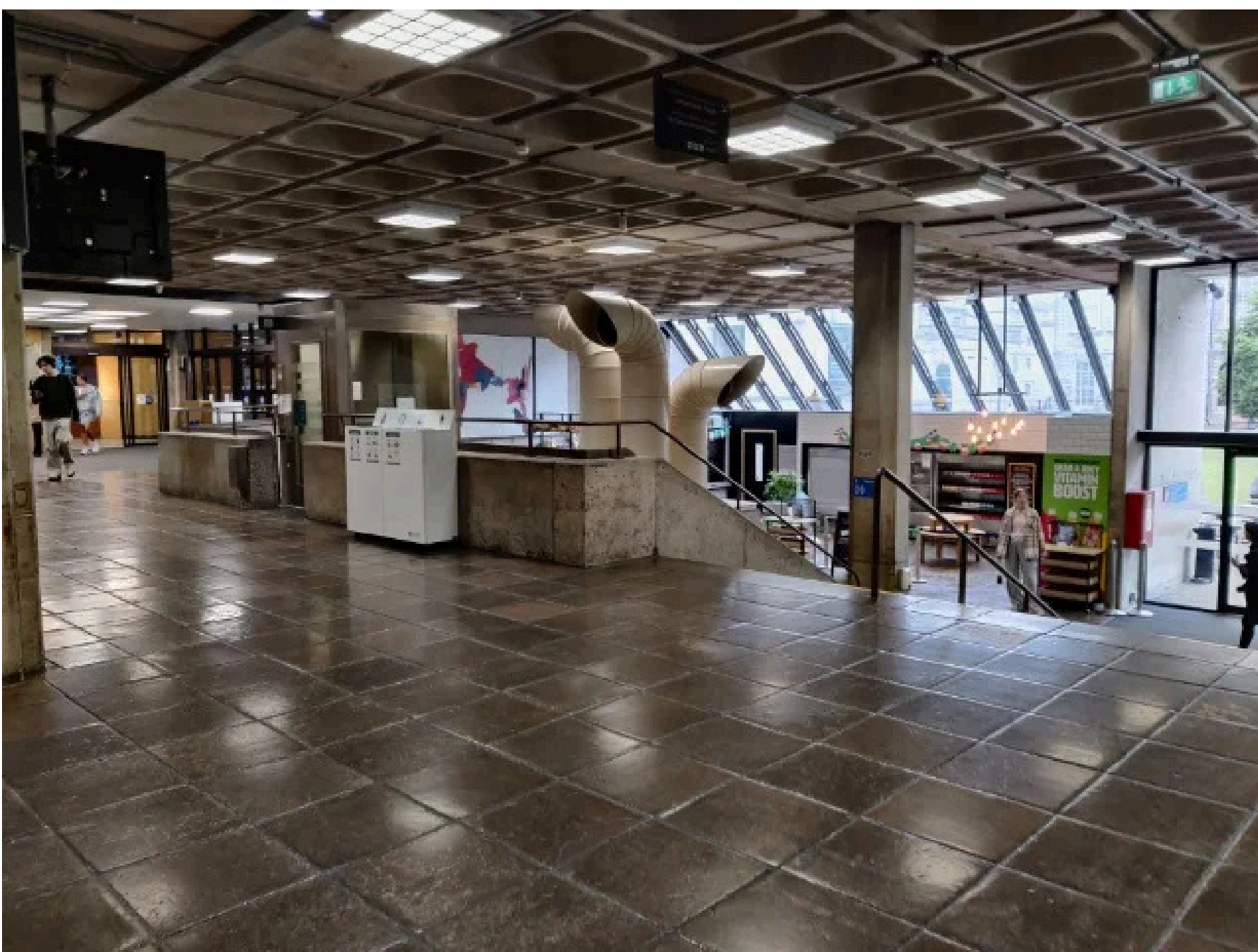


Figure 5 - The Arts Building. Busy internal environment with varying sensory conditions, highlighting the need for access to quieter, low-stimulation spaces.

This example shows a large, open space that can become crowded and acoustically busy, with multiple sensory stimuli. Access to clearly identified quiet and respite spaces is essential to support users who may experience sensory overload (Figure 5). At busy times, the building can become crowded, especially near stairwells. Quiet and respite areas provide space to step away from these conditions.

# Acoustics and Noise Management

Acoustic design shall minimise unnecessary background noise, excessive reverberation and competing sound sources. Spaces should support clear communication and reduce sensory overload.

## Avoid

- Noisy hand dryers or intrusive mechanical systems
- Background music or announcements without clear purpose
- Equipment that introduces avoidable sound disruption.

## Good Practice

- Low-noise building services and equipment
- Control of reverberation and echo
- Acoustic separation between quiet and noisy functions
- Protection of quiet and restorative spaces from noise ingress.

# Light, Glare and Reflection

Lighting shall support comfort, orientation and wellbeing while reducing glare, flicker and visual stress.

## Avoid

- Harsh or overly bright lighting
- Highly reflective finishes
- Flickering or poorly maintained lighting.

## Good Practice

- Balanced natural and artificial lighting
- User control over lighting where feasible
- Reduction of reflected glare from surfaces
- Prompt replacement of flickering luminaires.

# Visual Environment, Materials and Finishes

Acoustic design shall minimise unnecessary background noise, excessive reverberation and competing sound sources. Spaces should support clear communication and reduce sensory overload.

## Avoid

- Visually busy patterns or excessive signage
- Cluttered environments
- Confusing material or colour transitions.

## Good Practice

- Orderly layouts and clear spatial organisation
- Restrained use of pattern and colour
- Meaningful contrast to support navigation
- Minimisation of clutter in key spaces.

# Quiet, Restorative and Recovery Spaces

Quiet and restorative spaces shall support regulation, retreat and recovery within the campus environment.

## Avoid

- Treating quiet spaces as leftover or multi-use rooms
- Use of these spaces for storage or overflow
- Environments that are noisy, cluttered or unpredictable.

## Good Practice

- Easily located, low-stimulation environments
- Simple, clear instructions for use
- Appropriate seating and layout
- Controlled lighting and minimal noise.

# Wayfinding, Predictability and Preview Information

Wayfinding shall support cognitive access by helping users understand, anticipate and navigate environments.

## Avoid

- Confusing or inconsistent signage systems
- Overly complex layouts
- Providing only physical access information without sensory context.

## Good Practice

- Clear, consistent naming and numbering
- Logical zoning and concise signage
- Visual preview information where appropriate
- Access information including sensory characteristics.

# Maintenance, Cleaning and Operational Management

Quiet and restorative spaces shall support regulation, retreat and recovery within the campus environment.

## Avoid

- Strong perfumed cleaning products
- Poorly maintained lighting or equipment
- Cluttered environments
- Operational decisions that undermine accessibility.

## Good Practice

- Prompt repair of lighting, noise and environmental issues
- Use of low-noise equipment
- Minimisation of strong artificial scents
- Keeping spaces orderly and predictable
- Staff awareness of sensory impacts.

# Governance and Implementation

Universal access must be incorporated within project governance to ensure it is consistently delivered across the Trinity estate. Clear roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes are essential to ensure accessibility is addressed across all stages of project development, from initial briefing through to delivery and operation (see Appendix C - Universal Access Panel Terms of Reference).

For each project, a named Accessibility Lead shall be identified at project inception.

Sensory and cognitive accessibility must be considered alongside physical accessibility. Project briefing, design review, and post-occupancy evaluation shall include consideration of acoustics, lighting, visual complexity, wayfinding, and overall sensory experience. Responsibility for delivery is shared across the Project Sponsor, Project Manager, Design Team, Contractor, Estates and Facilities, and other relevant University functions.

Where accessibility concerns remain unresolved, they must be escalated through the governance process and, where appropriate, referred to the Universal Access Panel. Accessibility considerations must be maintained across planning, design, and operational management.

## Responsibility for implementation lies with:

- Estates and Facilities
- Programme Management Office
- Project Design Teams
- Contractors
- College departments commissioning building works.

Accessibility is a core responsibility within Trinity's governance structures and must inform all decision-making related to the built environment. Defined roles, clear accountability, and regular review support effective delivery across projects.

Early engagement with accessibility stakeholders is essential to achieving inclusive outcomes.

## Avoid

- Treating accessibility as a late-stage consideration or retrofit solution
- Assuming responsibility for accessibility lies with a single individual or team only
- Failing to define clear roles and accountability for accessibility across project stakeholders
- Proceeding with design decisions without input from accessibility experts or users with lived experience
- Overlooking accessibility during early project stages, leading to costly or ineffective retrofits
- Treating accessibility as a compliance requirement rather than a core design principle
- Lack of coordination between Estates, design teams, and contractors on accessibility requirements
- Failing to review or validate accessibility throughout the project lifecycle.

## Good Practice

- Embed universal access requirements at every stage of the project lifecycle, from initial concept through to delivery and operation
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities for accessibility across all stakeholders, including Estates, project teams, and contractors
- Integrate accessibility into early planning and briefing stages to ensure inclusive design is part of the core project vision
- Engage with accessibility stakeholders, including the Built Environment Access Panel and users with lived experience, from the outset
- Ensure accessibility is reviewed and validated at key project stages (concept, design, construction, completion)
- Promote collaboration between departments to ensure consistency and shared responsibility for accessibility outcomes
- Document accessibility decisions and ensure accountability throughout the project process
- Align all projects with Trinity's Universal Access Policy and relevant best practice guidance.

## Impact

When accessibility is not considered early or clearly assigned, barriers are introduced into the built environment, leading to reduced usability, increased retrofit costs, and exclusion of users.

## Outcome

Accessibility is embedded as a shared responsibility across all stages of project development, resulting in environments that are inclusive, well-integrated, and usable by all members of the Trinity community.

User-led accessibility audits highlight that many barriers arise not from a lack of standards, but from decisions made early in the design process without input from users with lived experience. Early engagement leads to more effective, inclusive outcomes.

# Accessibility for *All*.



Accessibility for All and disAbleD-Led Accessibility Audits. An innovative approach to improving Trinity's campus's accessibility.

Trinity is committed to embedding lived experience at the heart of accessibility through disAbleD-Led Accessibility Audits.

This approach strengthens the inclusivity of the campus by ensuring buildings and spaces are evaluated by those who use them in diverse ways.

By involving disabled students and staff in assessing physical and sensory environments, Trinity can better identify barriers, inform design decisions, and create spaces that are more usable, welcoming, and inclusive for all.

All major projects shall undergo a post-occupancy accessibility review following completion.

This review should include user feedback, evaluation of accessibility features in real use, identification of barriers, and an action plan with named responsibilities and timelines.

This can lead to missed opportunities, inconsistent design, and environments that may meet requirements on paper but fail in practice. Projects may overlook critical barriers that only become apparent during use, leading to costly retrofits and reduced accessibility.

### Common Accessibility Design Mistakes to Avoid

The following examples reflect recurring accessibility failures identified through user experience, project review, and user-led audits. These issues frequently result in exclusion, reduced usability, and costly retrofits, and must be actively avoided in all projects.

Entrances *	Lifts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revolving doors used as the only entrance</li><li>• Accessible entrance via side/rear/service door</li><li>• Heavy manual doors without automation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• External platform lifts used instead of proper solutions</li><li>• Lifts exposed to weather → frequent breakdowns</li><li>• Manual hold-button lifts.</li></ul>

\* An entrance is not accessible if users must request assistance or use an alternative route.

## Toilets

- Emergency cords tied up
- Incorrect grab rail positions
- Insufficient turning space.

## Circulation

- Heavy internal doors
- Glass doors with no contrast
- Corridors used for storage.

Accessibility is most effective when informed by lived experience. The Trinity User-Led Accessibility Audit demonstrates that barriers often arise not from lack of compliance, but from how spaces are experienced in practice.

# Project Approval and Review Process

Universal access must be fully integrated into Trinity’s project approval and review processes to ensure accessibility is consistently considered, implemented, and verified across the project lifecycle.

Accessibility is formally assessed at defined project stages, including concept design, developed design, technical design, and post-completion. At each stage, proposals must be assessed against Universal Design principles, user-led evidence, and relevant accessibility standards. Major projects should be reviewed by the Built Environment Access Panel, with engagement from students and staff with disabilities to ensure proposals reflect lived experience and practical usability.

Project teams must apply the Universal Access Project Checklist (Appendix A) and document all reviews using the Accessibility Review Template (Appendix D), ensuring that actions are clearly recorded, tracked, and resolved.

## User-Led Audit Insight \*

User-led audits highlight that accessibility issues often arise where review processes are inconsistent or where user input is not included. Early and continuous review is critical to achieving inclusive outcomes.

Accessibility must be reviewed at every stage – not added at the end.

## Avoid

- Treating accessibility as a final-stage check or sign-off item
- Proceeding through project stages without demonstrating accessibility compliance
- Lack of engagement with users or accessibility stakeholders
- Ignoring feedback or unresolved accessibility issues
- Making late design changes that compromise accessibility
- Relying solely on minimum compliance without reviewing usability.

## Good Practice

- Integrate universal access requirements into all stages of the project lifecycle
- Include accessibility as a standing item in project reviews and approvals
- Demonstrate how accessibility requirements have been addressed at each stage
- Engage with users with lived experience throughout design and review
- Seek input from the Built Environment Access Panel for major projects
- Document decisions, challenges, and resolutions relating to accessibility
- Use post-occupancy evaluation to inform future projects and improvements.

## Impact

Failure to integrate accessibility into the project review process can lead to missed issues, costly redesigns, and environments that do not meet user needs in practice, even where minimum compliance is achieved.

## Outcome

Accessibility is consistently considered, reviewed, and delivered across all project stages, resulting in environments that are inclusive, usable, and aligned with Trinity's Universal Access standards.

# Access to Campus and External Environment

Accessible design must extend beyond individual buildings to include the wider campus environment. Uneven surfaces and loose materials can create barriers for wheelchair users and individuals with mobility impairments. Dropped kerbs and tactile paving must be provided where routes intersect with vehicular areas. Outdoor seating areas should include accessible seating options with armrests and back supports.

## Avoid

- Uneven or unstable surfaces such as cobbles, loose gravel, or damaged paving
- Routes that are technically step-free but difficult or uncomfortable to use in practice
- Inconsistent or poorly maintained pathways that create trip hazards or barriers
- Lack of tactile paving or safe crossing points Insufficient or uneven lighting along routes
- Narrow or obstructed pathways that restrict movement
- Outdoor seating that is inaccessible or lacks support features
- Designing routes that require users to take indirect or alternative paths
- Surfaces that create vibration, instability, or resistance for mobility aids, even where routes are technically accessible.

## Good Practice

- Provide step-free routes across the campus wherever possible
- Use smooth, stable, and non-slip surfaces suitable for wheelchairs and mobility aids
- Ensure routes are continuous, legible, and easy to navigate
- Provide adequate and consistent lighting along pathways
- Install dropped kerbs and tactile paving at crossings and transitions between pedestrian and vehicular areas
- Design routes that are wide and free from obstruction
- Include resting points and accessible seating with armrests and back support
- Maintain routes regularly to ensure surfaces remain safe and usable.

## Impact

Creates barriers to movement, reduces independence, and increases risk for users with mobility, visual, or balance impairments. User-led audits identified uneven surfaces and poorly designed ramps as significant barriers to independent movement across campus routes.

## Outcome

Users can move independently, safely, and confidently throughout the campus environment.

### ✓ Good practice

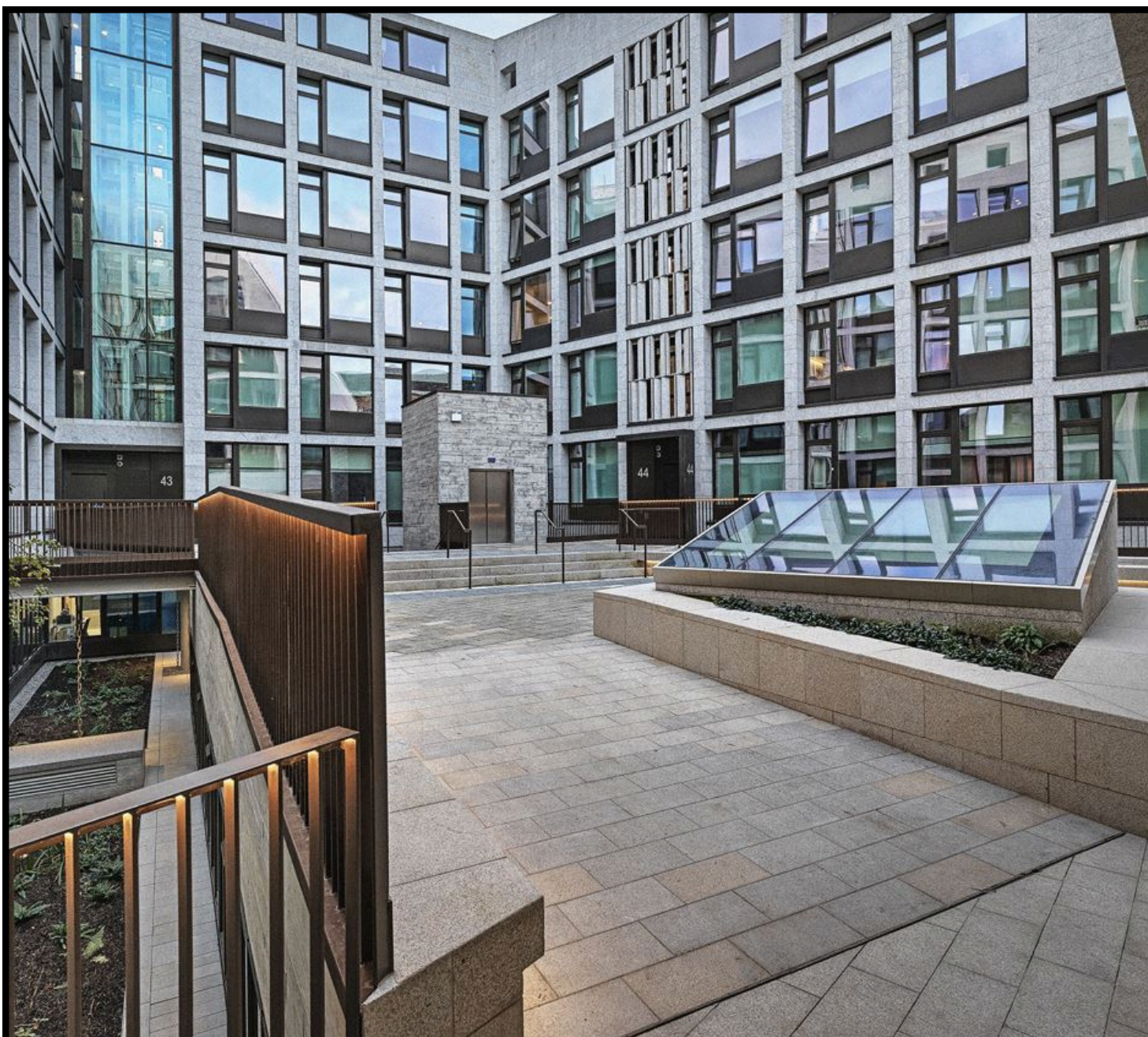


Figure 6 - Printing House Square step-free ramped access.

Printing House Square demonstrates how smooth, step-free ramped access can be integrated into the campus environment, providing a continuous and accessible route that supports independent movement for all users (Figure 6).

### ✗ Avoid



Figure 7 - Step-only entrance to the 1937 Reading Room, preventing access for wheelchair users.

This example shows a primary entrance that is only accessible via steps, with no step-free route provided. As a result, wheelchair users and others with mobility needs are unable to independently access the building, highlighting the importance of inclusive design at all entry points. (Figure 7).

✓ **Good practice**

✗ **Avoid**



Figure 8 - Step-free entrance to Áras an Phiarsaigh with a clear, accessible route and automated door entry supporting independent access.

This example shows a building entrance designed with step-free access and a clear, unobstructed approach route. The inclusion of an accessible entry button supports independent use, ensuring the entrance is usable by a wide range of users (Figure 8).

Figure 9 - Step-only entrance at House 6 with no step-free access, creating a barrier for wheelchair users.

This example shows an entrance that relies entirely on steps, with no ramp or lift provided. While visual contrast has been added to the stair edges, the absence of step-free access prevents independent entry for wheelchair users and others with mobility needs (Figure 9).

Access begins at the campus edge—step-free, safe, and continuous routes are essential for independent movement.

# Accessible Parking and Drop-off Areas

Accessible parking and drop-off areas are essential in supporting independent access to buildings and campus facilities. Their location, design, and usability have a direct impact on how easily individuals can arrive at and enter buildings. Poorly located or designed parking can create unnecessary barriers before users even reach the entrance.

Accessible parking and drop-off areas must therefore be safe, clearly identifiable, and seamlessly connected to accessible routes.

## User-Led Audit Insight \*

User-led audits highlight that even where accessible parking is provided, poor location, unclear routes, or inadequate transfer space can significantly reduce usability. Ensuring a clear, direct, and accessible route from arrival to entrance is critical to achieving true accessibility.

Access begins at arrival — poorly designed parking and drop-off areas can create barriers before a building is even reached.

## Avoid

- Locating accessible parking spaces far from entrances or along indirect routes
- Providing insufficient space for transfers or manoeuvring mobility aids
- Poor or faded markings that make spaces difficult to identify
- Step-free parking areas that lead to inaccessible or uneven routes
- Drop-off points located at a distance from accessible entrances
- Poor lighting or unclear wayfinding between parking and building access points
- Obstructions within parking bays or access routes
- Treating accessible parking as an afterthought rather than an integral part of site design.

## Good Practice

- Locate accessible parking spaces as close as possible to building entrances
- Provide sufficient transfer space alongside parking bays to support safe entry and exit
- Ensure parking spaces are clearly marked with high-contrast symbols and signage
- Provide level, step-free routes from parking and drop-off points to building entrances
- Design drop-off areas that are safe, sheltered where possible, and close to accessible entrances
- Ensure clear, high-contrast road markings and signage to support visibility and navigation
- Maintain parking areas regularly to ensure surfaces remain even, well-marked, and unobstructed
- Ensure routes from parking areas are well-lit and easy to navigate.

## Impact

Poorly designed or located parking and drop-off areas create immediate barriers to access, reducing independence, increasing physical effort, and limiting the ability of users to safely and confidently reach building entrances.

## Outcome

Users can access buildings independently and safely from arrival, with clear, direct, and accessible routes from parking and drop-off areas to entrances.

## ✓ Good practice



Figure 10 - Accessible cycle parking located adjacent to a step-free entrance, supporting inclusive and independent access to the building.

This example demonstrates the provision of accessible cycle parking in close proximity to a step-free entrance. Clear marking, level access, and integration with the building entrance support independent use and promote inclusive and sustainable travel options for people with disabilities (Figure 10).

# Access into Buildings

Access into buildings is a critical point in the user journey and often forms the first direct interaction with the built environment. Entrances must be easy to locate, simple to use, and accessible to all users without the need for assistance. Barriers at entrances, such as steps, heavy doors, or unclear routes, can prevent independent access and undermine the usability of otherwise accessible buildings. Entrances must therefore be designed to be welcoming, inclusive, and seamlessly connected to external accessible routes.

## Avoid

- Providing only stepped access at main entrances
- Locating accessible entrances at secondary or less visible points
- Heavy manual doors that are difficult to open
- Narrow doorways or restricted clear opening widths
- Changes in level or thresholds that create trip or access hazards
- Poor lighting or unclear entrance locations
- Relying on assistance or staff intervention for access
- Obstructions near entrances that restrict movement.

## Good Practice

- Provide step-free access at all main entrances wherever possible
- Ensure entrances are clearly identifiable and easy to locate from approach routes
- Use automatic or power-assisted doors to support independent access
- Ensure door opening forces are low and manageable where manual doors are used
- Provide level thresholds with no abrupt changes in level
- Ensure sufficient clear width for wheelchair users and mobility aids
- Incorporate visual contrast around door frames and entrances to support wayfinding
- Provide adequate lighting at entrances to improve visibility and safety
- Ensure accessible entrances are part of the main route and not segregated
- Protect entrances from weather where possible to improve usability.

## Impact

Poorly designed entrances create immediate barriers to access, reducing independence, increasing physical effort, and potentially preventing users from entering buildings altogether.

## Outcome

Entrances are easy to find, navigate, and use independently, enabling all users to access buildings safely, confidently, and without assistance.

### ✓ Good practice



Figure 11 - Clearly visible and accessible push-button control supporting independent entry.

Door controls are positioned at an appropriate height, clearly marked, and easy to use (Figure 11).

### ✗ Avoid



Figure 12 - Door access button obstructed by grab rail, preventing easy and intuitive use.

The door activation button is positioned behind a grab rail, making it difficult or impossible to access, particularly for wheelchair users or those with limited reach. Controls must be clearly visible, unobstructed, and easy to operate (Figure 12).



Figure 13 - Clear signage indicating availability of power-assisted door.

Signage improves usability by informing users of accessible features before use (Figure 13).

Figure 14 - Entrance without automatic door, limiting independent access for some users.

Heavy manual doors without automated opening systems can create barriers for users with mobility impairments. Entrances should support independent access wherever possible (Figure 14).

An accessible building begins at the entrance — if users cannot enter independently, the building is not truly accessible.

# Design Principles

Building entrances are a critical point of access and set the tone for how users experience a space. They must be designed to be welcoming, easy to locate, and usable by all, ensuring that access is equitable, intuitive, and supports independent movement from arrival.

Entrances must be designed to provide equitable access for all users, ensuring that everyone can enter buildings independently, safely, and with dignity. The preferred approach is a single, clearly identifiable main entrance that can be used by all, avoiding the need for separate or alternative routes. Requiring users to use secondary or service entrances can create unnecessary barriers and undermine inclusive design. Entrances should therefore be intuitive, step-free, and designed to support independent access without the need for assistance.

## Avoid

- Providing separate entrances for disabled users where this can be avoided
- Requiring users to access buildings via service or rear entrances
- Installing revolving doors without adjacent accessible powered doors
- Designing entrances that require assistance to operate
- Creating routes that are indirect, confusing, or difficult to navigate
- Providing insufficient space for manoeuvring mobility aids.
- Introducing steps or level changes at primary entrances.

## Good Practice

- Provide a single principal entrance that can be used by all users
- Ensure all users can enter through the same main entrance independently
- Design entrances to be step-free and easy to navigate
- Incorporate automatic or powered doors where feasible
- Provide adequate manoeuvring space for wheelchair users and mobility aids
- Ensure entry routes are direct, clear, and connected to accessible external paths
- Provide level thresholds with no abrupt changes in level
- Ensure entrances are safe, visible, and easy to use without assistance.

## Impact

Separate or inaccessible entrances create exclusion, reduce independence, and reinforce inequality in how users experience the built environment.

## Outcome

All users can access buildings through the same entrance independently and with dignity, supporting inclusive, equitable, and intuitive access.

### ✓ Good practice



Figure 15 - Seomra 4017, Arts Building, Student Zone (Zón Mac Léinn): flexible seating arrangements with varied options, including high-backed seating, supporting a range of user needs.

This space demonstrates inclusive design through a variety of seating types and layouts, allowing users to choose how they engage with the environment. Clear circulation routes support ease of movement, while high-backed seating offers more private and low-stimulation options (Figure 15).

### ✗ Avoid



Figure 16 - Entrance to Seomra na Gaeilge with step-only access and no step-free alternative, creating an exclusionary design.

This example shows an entrance that relies entirely on steps, with no accessible route provided. Although handrails and level changes are defined, the absence of a step-free option means the space cannot be used by all users, demonstrating a failure to apply inclusive design principles (Figure 16).

✓ Good practice

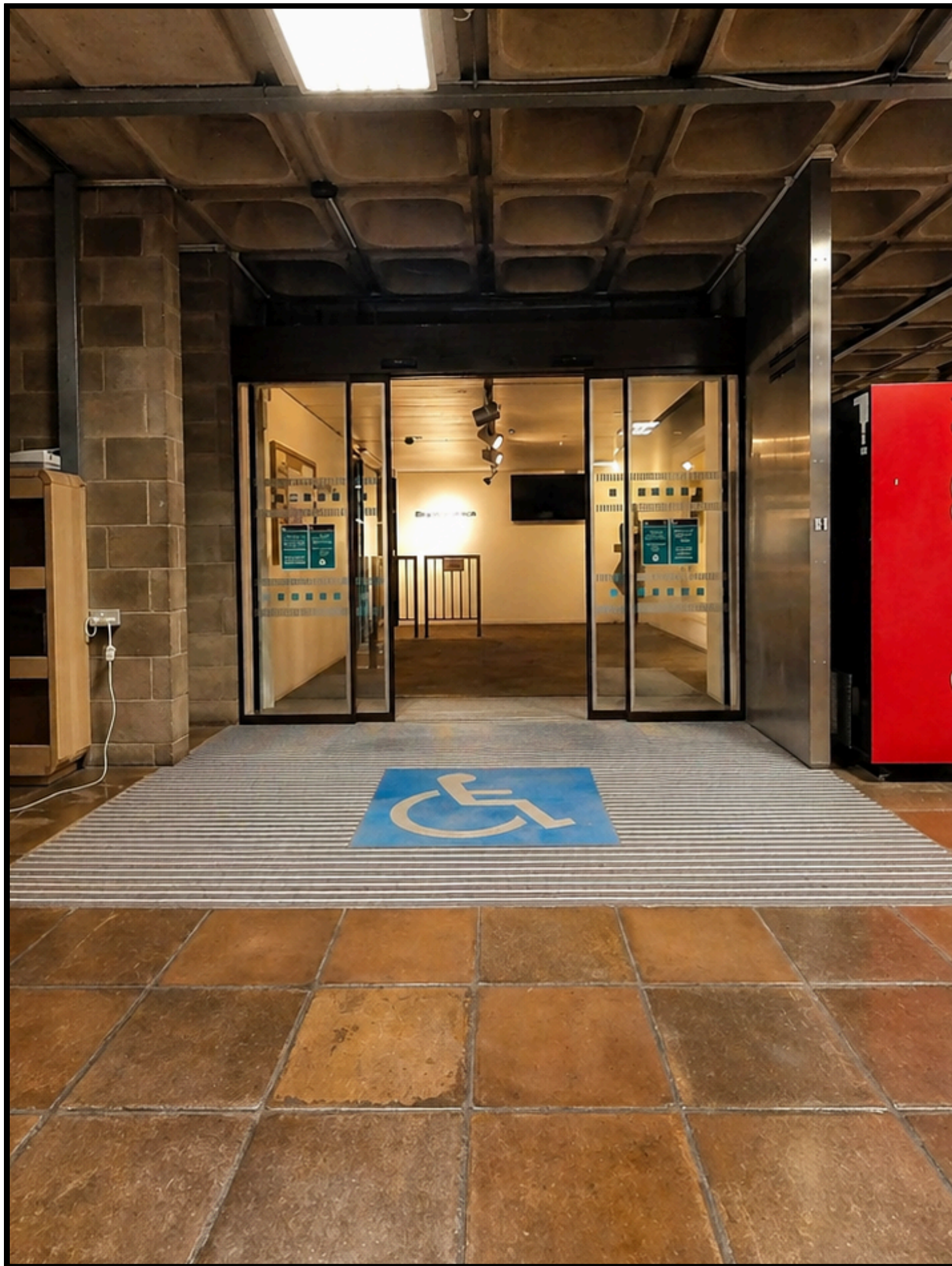


Figure 17 - Lecky Library entrance, Arts Building, showing step-free access, clear approach, and accessible entry design.

This entrance demonstrates inclusive design through a level, step-free approach and clearly defined accessible entry point. The wide doorway and direct circulation route support ease of access for a wide range of users, ensuring the building can be entered independently and without barriers (Figure 17).

✗ Avoid



Figure 18 - Oscar Wilde Centre Entrance, located in the Hamilton Building, with steps and a separate access route, demonstrating a lack of integrated, inclusive design.

This example shows an entrance where access is not fully integrated. The presence of steps and a separate route for step-free access requires some users to take an alternative path, reducing equality of experience and ease of use. Good design should provide a single, clearly accessible route for all users (Figure 18).

A building is only truly accessible when everyone can enter through the same door.

# Horizontal Circulation

Horizontal circulation is fundamental to how users experience and navigate a building.

Internal routes must be designed to support safe, clear, and independent movement for all users, ensuring spaces are easy to understand, unobstructed, and accessible throughout.

Internal circulation must allow users to move independently throughout the building.

## Corridors

Corridors must provide adequate width for wheelchair users and should allow two wheelchair users to pass comfortably. Storage and equipment should not obstruct circulation routes. Clear visual contrast between walls, floors and doors improves orientation for users with visual impairments.

## Reception Areas

Reception desks should include:

- Accessible counter height
- Knee clearance space
- Hearing loop systems.

Waiting areas should include accessible seating and space for wheelchair users.

Clear, unobstructed circulation is fundamental to accessibility, enabling users to move independently and engage fully with building spaces.

## Avoid

- Narrow corridors that restrict movement or prevent wheelchair users from passing
- Obstructions such as storage, furniture, or equipment within circulation routes
- Poor or insufficient visual contrast, making navigation difficult
- Reception desks that are too high or inaccessible
- Lack of hearing support systems at reception points
- Waiting areas that exclude wheelchair users or lack
- Layouts that are confusing or difficult to navigate.

## Good Practice

- Design circulation routes that allow independent movement throughout the building
- Provide adequate corridor widths to accommodate wheelchair users and allow passing space
- Keep corridors clear and unobstructed at all times
- Ensure strong visual contrast between walls, floors, and doors to support wayfinding
- Design reception areas with:
  - Accessible counter heights
  - Knee clearance for wheelchair users
  - Hearing loop systems
- Provide waiting areas with:
  - Accessible seating with armrests and back support
  - Space for wheelchair users alongside seating areas
- Ensure doors along circulation routes are easy to open or automated, reducing physical effort and supporting independent movement.

## Impact

Creates barriers to independent movement, particularly where door weight, layout, or obstructions prevent users from navigating spaces without assistance.

## Outcome

Users can move independently, safely, and confidently throughout the campus environment.

✓ **Good practice**



Figure 19 - Hamilton Building. Wide, unobstructed internal circulation route supporting clear and independent movement throughout the building.

The Hamilton Building demonstrates a generous and unobstructed internal circulation route that supports independent movement. Clear sightlines, consistent finishes, and the absence of obstacles enable users to navigate the space easily and safely, including wheelchair users and those with visual or cognitive impairments (Figure 19).

✗ **Avoid**



Figure 20 - 5th Floor Garden, Arts Building: narrow circulation routes between seating and planting areas.

**Horizontal Circulation – Avoid (Restricted Movement / Tight Layout)**

While this space is accessible via the main entrance, the layout creates tight circulation routes between planters and seating areas. These narrow paths can make manoeuvring more difficult, particularly for wheelchair users or those requiring additional space, highlighting the importance of maintaining clear and generous circulation routes in shared environments (Figure 20).

# Vertical Circulation

Vertical circulation is essential to ensuring that all users can move safely and independently between floors. Buildings must provide clear, reliable and accessible routes, offering step-free options alongside well-designed stairs to support a wide range of user needs.

Buildings must provide step-free access between floors.

## Passenger lifts

Where lifts are provided they must include:

- Accessible control panels
- Audible and visual floor announcements
- Sufficient internal dimensions for wheelchair users.

Evacuation lifts should be considered in large buildings.

## Stairs

Stair design should include:

- Handrails on both sides
- Visual contrast on step edges
- Adequate lighting.

### User-Led Audit Insight \*

- Steep ramps, heavy doors, and poorly designed vertical routes in buildings such as Goldsmith Hall significantly limit independent access for wheelchair users. Lack of automation and excessive gradients create barriers even where step free access is provided.
- Lack of automation across doors creates major barriers to independent movement

\* User-Led Audit Insight (ULAA): <https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/disability/docs/ULAA-Grand-Report.pdf>

## Avoid

- Providing no step-free access between floors
- Relying on stairs as the only means of vertical circulation
- Installing lifts that are difficult to locate or access
- Lift control panels positioned too high or without tactile/visual clarity
- Lack of audible or visual floor announcements
- Lifts with insufficient internal space for wheelchair users or companions
- Locating lifts behind restricted or unclear routes
- Treating platform lifts as equivalent to passenger lifts in primary circulation routes
- Installing lifts that require assistance to operate
- Poorly designed stairs lacking handrails, contrast, or consistent dimensions
- Inadequate lighting on stairs or in lift lobbies
- Vertical circulation routes that are poorly signed or difficult to navigate.

## Good Practice

- Provide step-free access between all floors wherever possible
- Install passenger lifts that:
  - Are easy to locate and access
  - Include accessible control panels at appropriate heights
  - Provide audible and visual floor announcements
  - Offer sufficient internal space for wheelchair users and companions
  - Consider evacuation lifts in larger or more complex buildings
- Design stairs with:
  - Handrails on both sides
  - Visual contrast on step edges to aid visibility
  - Consistent risers and treads
  - Adequate and even lighting
- Ensure vertical circulation routes are clearly signed and easy to navigate.

## Impact

Poorly designed vertical circulation limits independent movement between floors, reduces safety, and can prevent users from accessing key spaces within buildings. User-led audits have shown that inaccessible or unreliable lifts, along with poorly designed stairs, create significant barriers to participation and movement across the campus.

## Outcome

Users can move safely and independently between floors, with clear options that support a wide range of needs.

Step-free access between floors is essential – without reliable vertical circulation, buildings cannot be fully accessible.

✓ Good practice

✗ Avoid



Figure 21- Arts Building. Accessible lift providing step-free vertical circulation, enabling independent movement between floors.

This example shows a lift providing inclusive access between levels. The lift is clearly identifiable, easy to use, and allows users to move independently between floors. Providing reliable lift access is essential to ensure that all users can navigate buildings safely and with dignity (Figure 21).

Figure 22 - Printing House Square. Lift controls and emergency intercom positioned too high, making them difficult to reach for wheelchair users.

This example shows a lift where controls and emergency communication systems are positioned beyond comfortable reach for a wheelchair user. Poor placement of controls can prevent independent use and create barriers in emergency situations. Accessible design requires controls to be positioned within appropriate reach ranges for all users (Figure 22).

✓ Good practice

✗ Avoid

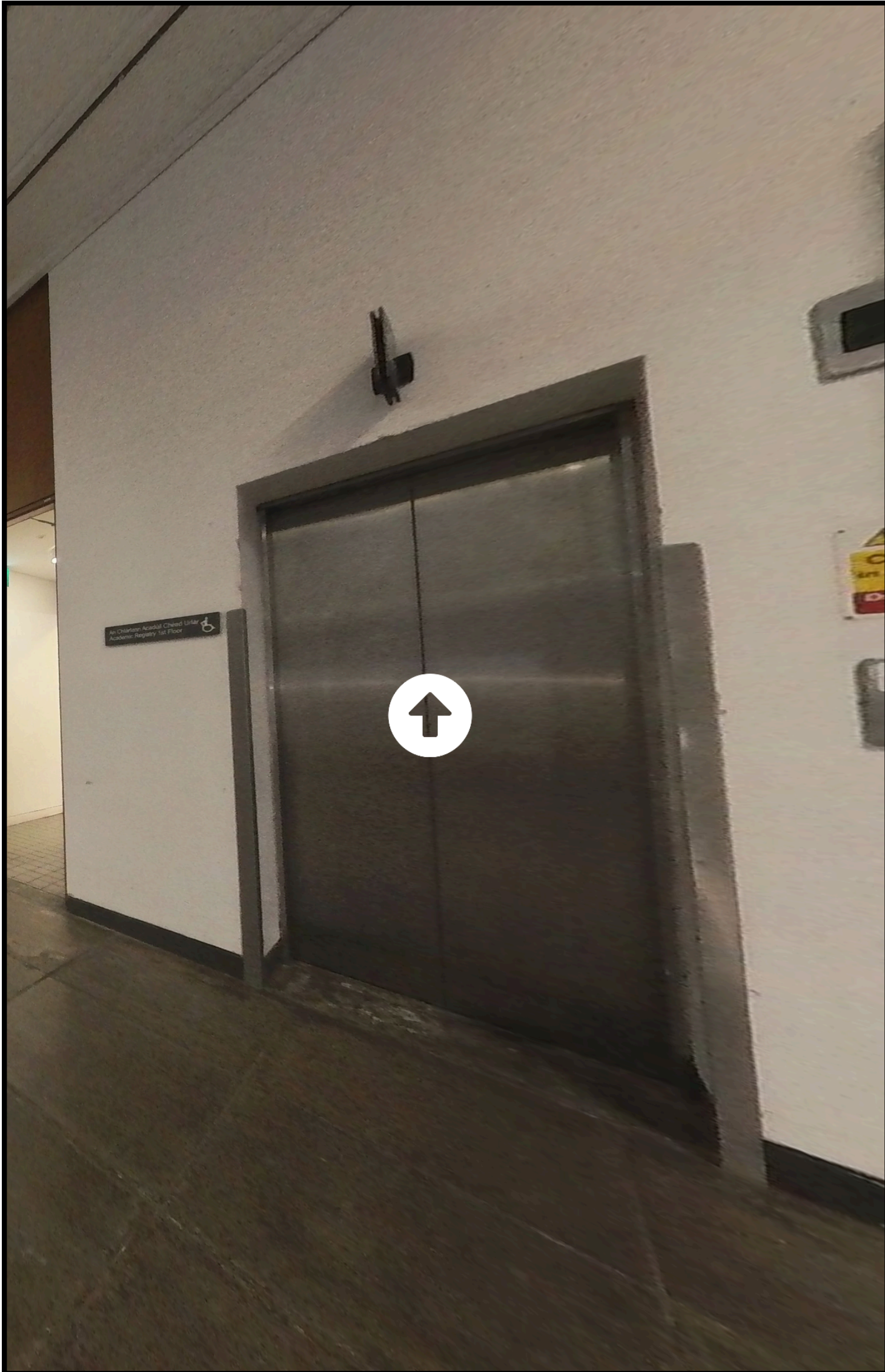


Figure 23 - Hamilton Building lower concourse. Accessible lift located along a clear, wide circulation route, supporting independent and step-free movement between levels.

This example demonstrates a lift that is easy to locate and access, with ample space for manoeuvring and a clear, unobstructed approach. Its integration within the main circulation route supports inclusive and independent movement throughout the building (Figure 23).

Figure 24 - DU Players. Lift with restricted space and limited access, creating barriers for wheelchair users.

This example shows a lift that is difficult to access due to limited manoeuvring space and a confined entrance area. The lift is also typically locked, preventing independent use. Accessible vertical circulation requires lifts to be spacious, easy to approach, and available without restriction (Figure 24).

# Learning and Teaching Spaces

Learning and teaching spaces should be designed to support a diverse range of learning needs, including physical, sensory, and cognitive differences. Environments should enable clear communication, good visibility, and ease of interaction for all users, whether participating as a student or presenting as a member of staff.

Consideration should also be given to acoustics, lighting, and layout to ensure spaces are comfortable, accessible, and inclusive, supporting concentration, engagement, and equal participation for all.

Buildings must provide step-free access between floors.

## Lecture theatres

Lecture theatres should provide:

- Integrated wheelchair seating positions
- Accessible lecterns
- Hearing loop systems.

Seating layouts should allow wheelchair users to sit alongside peers rather than in segregated areas.

## Seminar rooms

Seminar rooms should include flexible furniture arrangements to support varied seating configurations.

Teaching spaces must enable all users to participate equally – not just attend.

## Avoid

- Segregated seating areas that separate wheelchair users from peers
- Fixed layouts that limit flexibility or exclude certain users
- Lecture theatres without:
  - Accessible seating options
  - Accessible lecterns Hearing support systems
  - Poor sightlines or acoustics that limit engagement and participation
  - Furniture arrangements that restrict movement or access
  - Spaces that require users to request assistance to participate fully
- Accessible seating positioned only at the front or back, resulting in poor sightlines or discomfort.

## Good Practice

- Design teaching spaces to support full and equal participation for all students and staff
- Provide lecture theatres with:
  - Integrated wheelchair seating positions throughout the space
  - Seating that allows users to sit alongside peers
  - Accessible lecterns usable by all presenters
  - Hearing loop systems to support users with hearing impairments
- Ensure clear lines of sight and good acoustics for all users
- Design seminar rooms with:
  - Flexible furniture layouts to support different teaching and learning styles
  - Space to accommodate wheelchair users within group settings
- Ensure teaching spaces are easy to access, navigate, and use independently
- Ensure accessible seating positions are distributed throughout the space, not limited to a single location.

## Impact

Creates barriers to participation and inclusion, limiting engagement. User-led audits show poorly positioned accessible seating causes discomfort, reduced engagement, and exclusion from learning.

## Outcome

All users can participate fully, comfortably, and inclusively in teaching and learning activities.

✓ **Good practice**



Figure 25 - The Long Room Hub interior, providing accessible, step-free circulation and a calm, well-lit environment for study and research.

This space provides step-free access, clear circulation routes, and a calm, well-lit environment that supports a range of learning needs across lectures, seminars, symposia, and conferences. Access to all floors via lift ensures inclusivity, while quiet study areas offer options for focused work alongside more open, shared spaces (Figure 25).

✗ **Avoid**

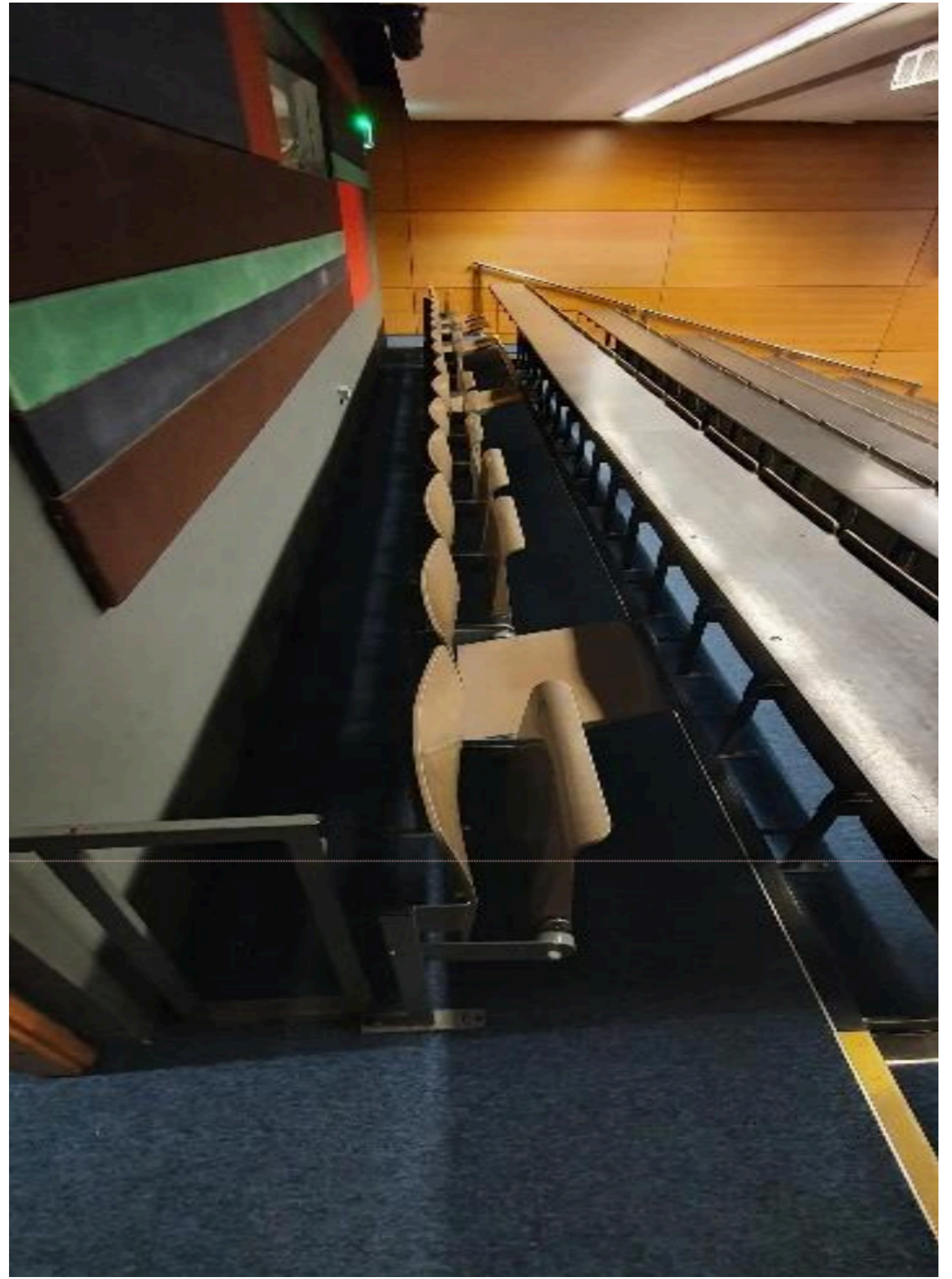


Figure 26 - Maxwell Lecture theatre with stepped seating and no step-free access, preventing inclusive participation.

This lecture theatre relies on stepped access and fixed seating, with no provision for wheelchair users or accessible seating positions. The lack of step-free access prevents inclusive participation and restricts where users can sit (Figure 26).

# Sanitary Facilities

Sanitary facilities should be designed to support safe, dignified, and independent use by all users. Layout, space, and fixture placement must enable ease of movement and clear manoeuvring, while ensuring that all controls and fittings are intuitive and easy to operate. Facilities should be easy to locate through clear signage and positioned on accessible routes. Ongoing maintenance is essential to ensure that all features, particularly emergency assistance alarms, remain functional and accessible at all time

## Facilities should include:

- Wheelchair turning space
- Grab rails with visual contrast
- Lever taps or sensor taps
- Emergency assistance alarms.

Consideration should be given to the provision of Changing Places facilities in larger buildings.

Users can access sanitary facilities safely, independently, and with dignity across the estate.

Accessible showers should be provided in appropriate locations.

Accessible sanitary facilities are essential for dignity, independence, and equal participation.

## Avoid

- Insufficient provision or poor distribution of accessible toilets
- Layouts that restrict movement or wheelchair turning space
- Poorly positioned or low-contrast grab rails
- Taps or controls that require excessive force or dexterity
- Missing or inaccessible emergency assistance alarms
- Lack of Changing Places facilities in large or high-traffic buildings
- Inaccessible or poorly located showers
- Facilities that are difficult to find due to poor signage
- Poor maintenance leading to non-functional or unusable features
- Emergency cords that are obstructed, disconnected, or not functioning.

## Good Practice

- Provide accessible toilets throughout the estate, located on accessible routes
- Ensure facilities include:
  - Adequate wheelchair turning space
  - Grab rails with strong visual contrast
  - Lever or sensor-operated taps
  - Emergency assistance alarms that are easy to reach
- Design layouts that allow independent and safe use
- Provide Changing Places facilities in larger or high-use buildings
- Include accessible showers where appropriate
- Ensure clear signage and wayfinding to sanitary facilities
- Maintain facilities to ensure they remain clean, functional, and usable
- Ensure emergency assistance alarms are regularly tested and clearly reachable from all positions.

## Impact

Limits independence, reduces dignity, and creates significant barriers for users requiring accessible facilities. User-led audits identified non-functioning or inaccessible emergency alarms as a critical safety risk in several facilities.

## Outcome

Users can access sanitary facilities safely, independently, and with dignity across the estate.

✓ **Good practice**



Figure 27 - Inclusive restroom provision supporting a diverse range of users.

Inclusive facilities support dignity and accessibility for all users (Figure 27).

✗ **Avoid**



Figure 28 - Example of sanitary bin obstructing wheelchair manoeuvring space, reducing usability and independent access.

The placement of the sanitary bin within the wheelchair turning space restricts manoeuvrability and reduces the ability of users to position themselves safely and independently. Accessible sanitary facilities must maintain clear floor space at all times; the introduction of movable objects such as bins within this area creates a barrier, even where the facility is otherwise compliant (Figure 28).

✓ **Good practice**

✗ **Avoid**



Figure 29 - Arts Building Changing Places toilet providing accessible facilities and space to support users with complex needs.

This Changing Places facility provides enhanced accessibility through additional space, appropriate layout, and supporting equipment. It enables inclusive use by people with complex needs and their carers, supporting dignity, independence, and equal access (Figure 29).

Figure 30 - Emergency assistance cord tied above floor level, preventing safe use in an emergency.

The emergency assistance cord is tied up and does not reach the floor, making it inaccessible to users who may have fallen or cannot reach higher. This creates a serious safety risk and undermines the purpose of the emergency alarm system, which is intended to be usable from any position (Figure 30).

# Signage and Wayfinding

Signage and wayfinding are essential to supporting independent navigation and orientation within buildings and across the campus. Environments should be designed so that users can easily understand where they are, where they need to go, and how to move through spaces without confusion or reliance on assistance. Effective wayfinding combines clear signage, intuitive layouts, and consistent visual cues to reduce cognitive effort and support a wide range of users, including those with visual, sensory, or cognitive impairments.

Effective signage supports independent navigation of buildings.

## Signage should:

- Use high-contrast colours
- Use clear sans-serif fonts
- Avoid reflective materials.

Symbols and text should be used together where possible.

Colour coding of floors or departments can improve wayfinding.

Effective wayfinding is achieved through clarity, consistency, and simplicity, enabling users to navigate spaces independently and with confidence.

## Avoid

- Low-contrast colour combinations that reduce readability
  - Decorative or complex fonts that are difficult to read
  - Reflective or glossy materials that cause glare
  - Signage that relies on text only without symbols
  - Inconsistent terminology or layout across different areas
  - Poorly positioned signage that is difficult to locate or read
  - Overly complex or cluttered information
  - Lack of visual cues such as colour coding or clear directional indicators
- Signage that lacks contrast, braille, or tactile features.

## Good Practice

- Provide clear, consistent signage throughout buildings to support independent navigation
- Use high-contrast colour combinations to improve readability
- Select clear, legible sans-serif fonts
- Ensure text is appropriately sized and easy to read from a distance
- Use symbols alongside text to support understanding
- Apply consistent terminology and layout across all signage
- Use colour coding for floors, departments, or zones to aid orientation
- Position signage at accessible heights and logical decision points
- Ensure signage is well-lit and free from glare
- Include braille, tactile elements, and consistent directional signage to support users with visual impairments.

## Impact

Creates confusion, reduces independence, and makes navigation difficult for many users, particularly those with visual or cognitive impairments. User-led audits identified gaps in signage, including lack of braille and poor contrast, which significantly reduce independent navigation.

## Outcome

Users can navigate buildings independently, confidently, and without confusion.

✓ Good practice

✗ Avoid

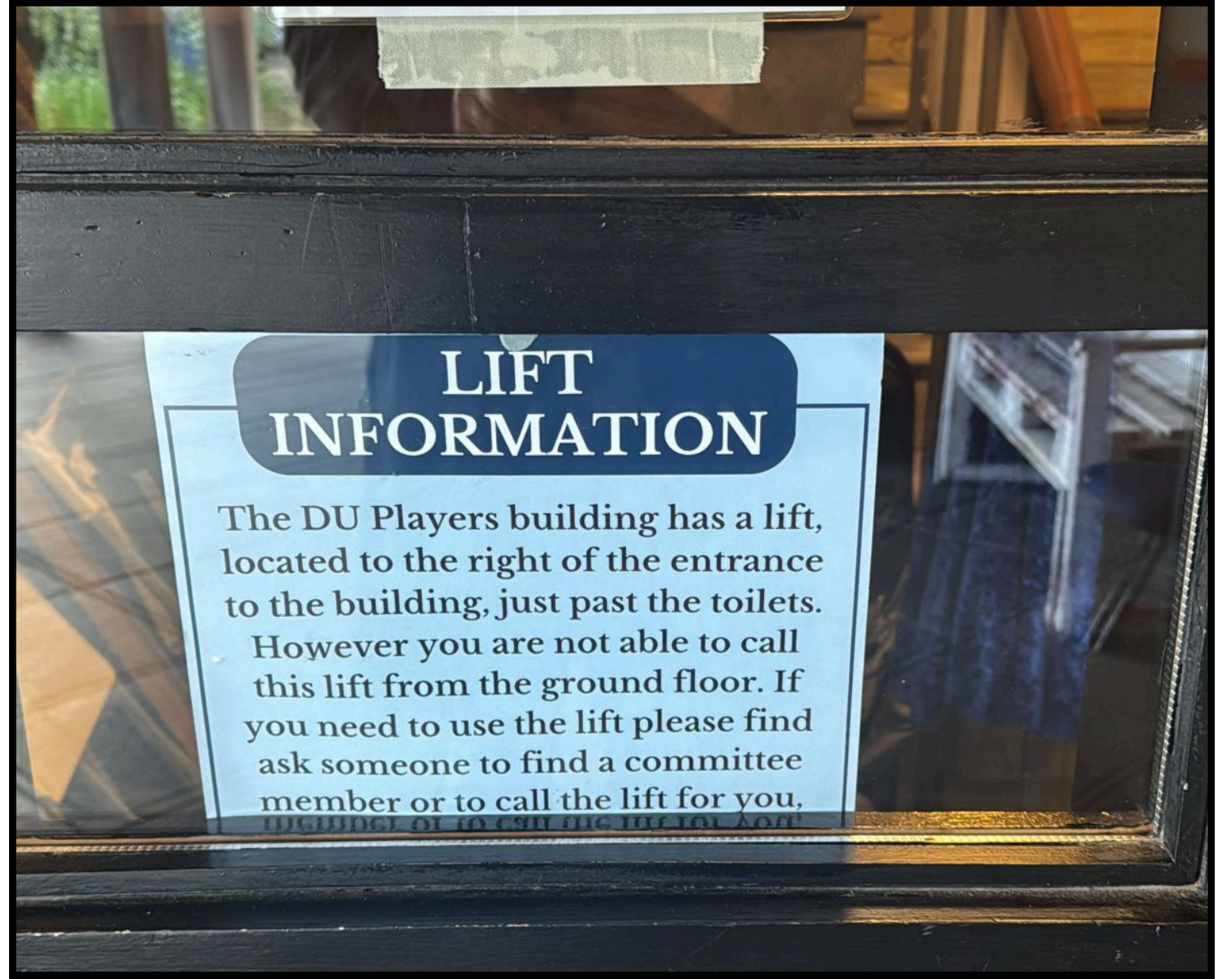
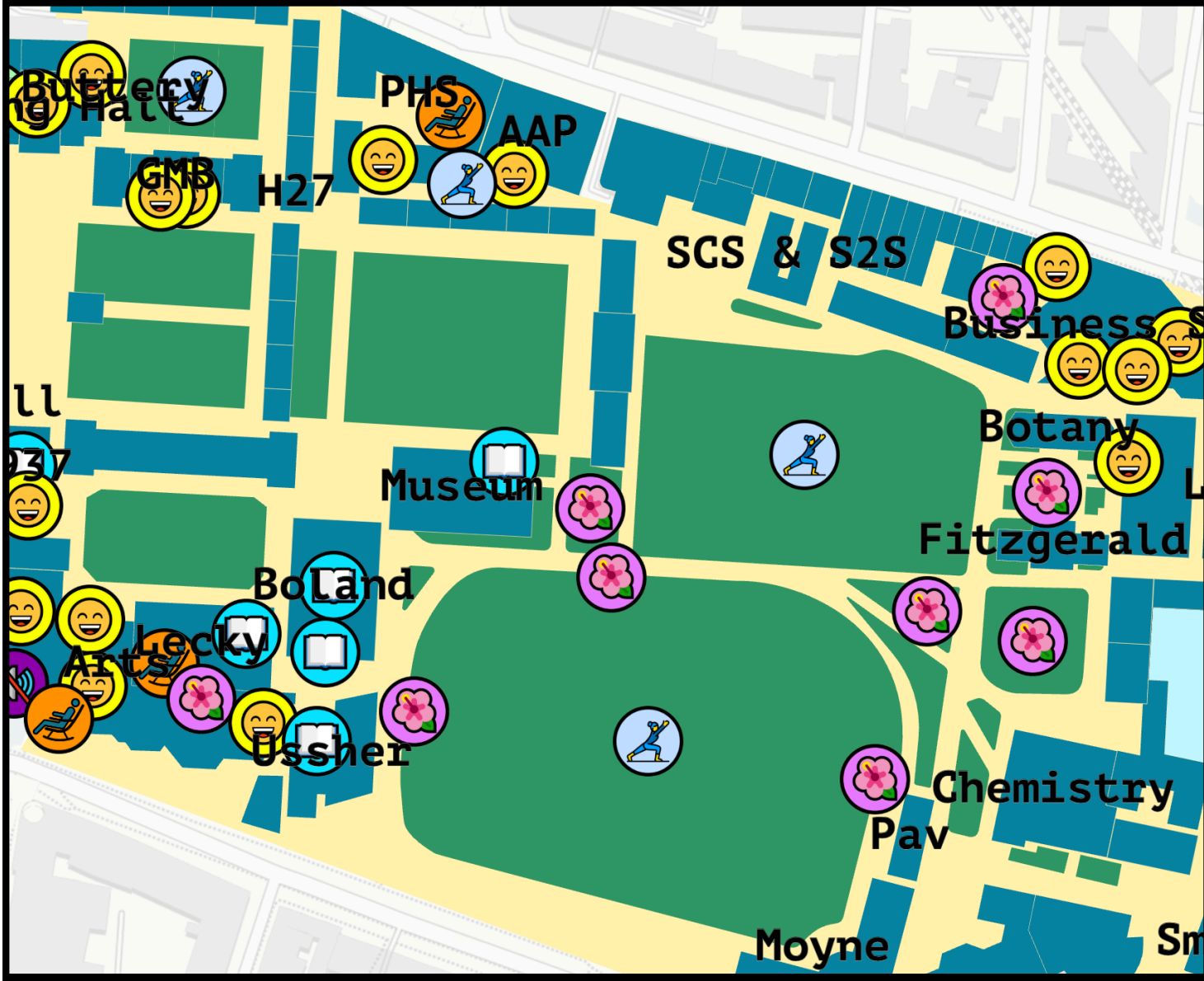


Figure 31 - The TCD Sense Map provides clear, accessible digital wayfinding with detailed sensory and access information across campus.

Interactive map supporting accessible navigation through clear, user-focused information (Figure 31).

Figure 32 - DU Players Building. Unclear or restrictive signage creating confusion around access.

Signage should support access, not restrict or complicate it (Figure 32).



Figure 33 - Arts Building. Clear and well-structured directory signage supporting navigation and orientation within the building.

This directory signage uses a clear hierarchy, consistent layout, and good visual contrast to present information effectively (Figure 33).

Figure 34 - Close-up of Main Atrium staircase with worn tactile strips and low contrast edges.

Main atrium staircase has worn tactile strips and lack clear colour contrast at the top and bottom of steps, reducing accessibility for visually impaired users (Figure 34).

# Emergency Evacuation

Emergency evacuation procedures must be designed to support the safety and inclusion of all users, including those who may not be able to evacuate independently. Strategies should ensure that appropriate systems, spaces, and support measures are in place so that all users can be assisted safely and effectively in an emergency, without reliance on ad hoc or informal arrangements.

Emergency procedures must support users with disabilities.

Emergency evacuation strategies must consider users who cannot evacuate independently.

User-led audits identified cases where emergency call systems failed to alert staff, creating serious risks for users relying on these systems during evacuation.

Inclusive emergency planning ensures that all users can be evacuated safely, recognising that different individuals may require different forms of support.

## Avoid

- Emergency plans that assume all users can evacuate independently
- Lack of refuge areas or accessible evacuation equipment
- Alarm systems that rely on sound only without visual alerts
- Poorly maintained or inaccessible evacuation equipment
- Routes that are unclear, obstructed, or difficult to navigate
- Lack of staff training in supporting disabled users during evacuation
- Failing to consider different types of disabilities in emergency planning
- Infrequent or ineffective testing of evacuation procedures
- Emergency systems that appear functional but fail to alert staff
- Refuge call points that are not monitored or understood
- Staff not trained in evacuation procedures.

## Good Practice

- Develop inclusive emergency evacuation strategies that support all users
- Provide clearly identified and accessible:
  - Refuge areas
  - Evacuation chairs
  - Visual and audible alarm systems
- Ensure alarm systems are accessible to users with sensory impairments
- Design evacuation routes that are clear, unobstructed, and easy to follow
- Provide clear signage and instructions for evacuation procedures
- Train staff in assisting users with disabilities during emergencies
- Consider users who may:
  - Be unable to evacuate independently
  - Require assistance or additional time
- Regularly review and test evacuation procedures to ensure effectiveness
- Ensure refuge communication systems are clearly understood, monitored, and connected to active response procedures.

## Impact

Poor design can result in injury, loss of independence, and exclusion from core university spaces.

## Outcome

All users can be evacuated safely and with dignity, regardless of their mobility or sensory needs.



# Personal Emergency Evacuation Procedure

- The same basic emergency procedures apply to all campus buildings.
- During an evacuation, **follow steps 1 to 4.** →
- See location of evacuation equipment located in Trinity College buildings and local contact number below.
- Buildings with evacuation lifts (i.e. lifts that can operate during an evacuation) have a green 'Emergency evacuation lift' sign.
- Assembly points vary; refer to 'Fire Action' notices at entrance to each building
- College 24 hour emergency **01 896 1999**
- Safety Office **01 8961912**
- Disability Service (Printing House Square) **01 896 3111**

## 1 Evacuate or move to refuge

- Fire alarm sounds – where possible follow evacuation plan.
- Otherwise call for assistance or move to safe refuge area.
- Trained Chair operator plus assistants (as needed) proceed to the safe refuge area.

## 2 Assess and prepare

- By use of communications assess situation and respond accordingly.
- First choice, stay where you are, ready to evacuate if needed.

## 3 Respond and move

- If threatened - move horizontally to another refuge area if safe to do so.
- Use Evacuation Lift if available



## 4 Evacuate

- If still threatened – evacuate vertically and out of the building
- If threatened or uncertain at any point evacuate out of the building



### SafeZone A Free Safety App

- This Trinity App increases the security and safety of students and staff while in a Trinity location.
- It provides immediate access to Trinity resources to provide assistance in cases of emergencies or when an alert is raised.
- [More info](#)
- [SafeZone website](#)



Personal Emergency Evacuation procedure leaflet highlighting clear, structured evacuation guidance supporting understanding and response in an emergency.

The Personal Emergency Evacuation procedure leaflet shows step-by-step instructions and clear visual layout help users understand what to do in an emergency, supporting safer and more inclusive evacuation.

Download the Personal Emergency Evacuation Procedure (PEEP) leaflet (PDF):

[https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/disability/Evac-leaflet-\(3\).pdf](https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/disability/Evac-leaflet-(3).pdf)

# Maintenance and Monitoring

Maintenance and monitoring are essential to ensuring that accessibility features remain reliable and usable over time. Ongoing inspection, prompt repair, and effective management are required to prevent barriers from emerging and to ensure that buildings continue to support independent and safe use for all users.

Where critical accessibility features (such as lifts, automated doors, alarms, or accessible toilets) are out of service, the responsible service must:

- Log and prioritise the fault
- Assess user impact
- Provide interim arrangements where possible
- Communicate clearly with users
- Escalate prolonged or repeated failures

Accessibility features must be maintained to ensure ongoing usability.

**Maintenance schedules should include:**

- Door opening forces
- Lift operation
- Hearing loops
- Emergency alarms.

Maintenance programmes provide an opportunity to improve accessibility in existing buildings over time.

Accessibility is not achieved at completion; it must be maintained to remain effective over time.

## Avoid

- Allowing accessibility features to fall into disrepair or become non-functional
- Treating accessibility elements as low priority in maintenance planning
- Infrequent or inconsistent inspection and testing
- Delayed response to faults affecting accessibility
- Failing to maintain systems such as:
  - Lifts
  - Hearing loops
  - Alarm systems
- Lack of monitoring or feedback on real user experience
- Missing opportunities to improve accessibility during routine maintenance works
- Systems that appear operational but fail during real use.

## Good Practice

- Maintain all accessibility features to ensure they remain fully functional and usable
- Include accessibility in planned maintenance schedules, covering:
  - Door opening forces
  - Lift operation and reliability
  - Hearing loop systems
- Emergency alarms and assistance systems
- Carry out regular inspections and testing of accessibility features
- Respond promptly to reported faults or accessibility issues
- Keep clear records of maintenance and repairs
- Use maintenance programmes as an opportunity to identify and improve existing accessibility barriers
- Engage with users to understand ongoing accessibility issues in practice
- Test all accessibility features regularly, including emergency alarms, lift communication systems, and automated doors.

## Impact

Reduces usability, creates barriers over time, and undermines otherwise accessible design. User-led audits identified failures in maintained systems, including alarms and door automation, highlighting the importance of ongoing testing.

## Outcome

Accessibility features remain reliable, safe, and effective, supporting consistent access for all users.

✓ **Good practice**



Figure 35 - Trinity Sport Centre Respite Room. Calm and uncluttered respite space supporting sensory regulation and independent use.

This respite space is maintained as a clear and uncluttered environment, allowing sufficient space for movement and use. A simple layout and minimal visual distraction support users who require a calm setting for rest, regulation, or recovery (Figure 35).

✗ **Avoid**



Figure 36 - Arts Building Respite space used for storage, reducing its effectiveness as a low-stimulation environment.

This respite space is compromised by the presence of cleaning equipment, which introduces visual clutter and undermines its intended purpose as a calm, low-stimulation environment. Accessible spaces must be maintained and kept clear to remain usable for those who rely on them (Figure 36).

✓ **Good practice**

✗ **Avoid**



Figure 37 - Health Centre Respite. Well-maintained respite space with comfortable seating and a calm, low-stimulation environment.

This space provides a calm and comfortable environment with soft seating, muted colours, and minimal visual clutter (Figure 37).

Figure 38 - Arts Building Respite. Clutter within a respite space reduces usability and disrupts the intended calm environment.

The presence of stored items within this space reduces available usable space and introduces unnecessary visual distraction (Figure 38).

# Training and Awareness

Training and awareness are essential to embedding universal access across all aspects of the Trinity estate. All staff involved in planning, designing, delivering and managing buildings must understand their role in creating inclusive environments, ensuring that accessibility is considered in everyday decisions and practices.

Universal access must be understood across all teams responsible for managing and developing the estate.

## Training should be provided for:

- Estates staff
- Project managers
- Designers
- Contractors.

Raising awareness of inclusive design helps ensure accessibility is considered in everyday decision making.

Training shall include awareness of neurodiversity, sensory sensitivities and cognitive access. This should apply to all staff whose decisions affect the built environment, including Estates, project teams, contractors, cleaning staff and operational teams.

As part of ongoing staff development, initiatives such as the #InclusiveTrinity Awareness Training Series support greater understanding of inclusive practices and language. Delivered through Trinity-INC, this series of workshops focuses on building awareness, confidence, and practical skills for creating inclusive learning and working environments.

Further resources are available at:

<https://www.tcd.ie/equality/inclusive-curriculum/staff/trinity-inc-event-resources/trinity-inc-awareness-training-series/>

Awareness and understanding are essential to embedding accessibility, ensuring that inclusive design becomes part of everyday practice.

## Avoid

- Treating accessibility as the responsibility of a single individual or team only
- Providing limited or one-off training without ongoing engagement
- Lack of awareness of universal design principles among key decision-makers
- Failing to include contractors or delivery teams in accessibility training
- Treating accessibility as a compliance issue rather than a design priority
- Making decisions without understanding real user needs
- Lack of communication or consistency across teams
- Staff unfamiliar with evacuation procedures or accessibility equipment.

## Good Practice

- Provide regular training on universal access and inclusive design for all relevant teams
- Ensure training is delivered to:
  - Estates staff
  - Project managers
  - Designers and consultants
  - Contractors and delivery teams
- Embed accessibility into everyday decision-making processes, not just project milestones
- Raise awareness of different user needs and lived experiences
- Include practical examples and real scenarios to support understanding
- Encourage a culture of shared responsibility for accessibility across all roles
- Provide clear guidance and resources to support informed decision-making
- Provide practical, scenario-based training using real examples from Trinity buildings.

## Impact

Leads to inconsistent implementation, missed opportunities, and environments that do not fully support all users. User-led audits identified gaps in staff knowledge of emergency procedures, reducing the effectiveness of accessibility measures.

## Outcome

Accessibility is consistently considered and implemented across all projects and operations.

# Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

Monitoring and continuous improvement are essential to ensuring that universal access is maintained and strengthened over time. Regular review, user feedback, and ongoing evaluation help ensure that the Guidelines remain relevant, effective, and responsive to the evolving needs of the Trinity community (see Appendix E - Key Accessibility Contacts).

Ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement are essential to maintaining accessible and inclusive environments. Regular feedback from users—including students, staff, and visitors—should be actively encouraged through surveys, direct communication, and accessible reporting mechanisms.

Clear and transparent feedback and complaints procedures enable issues to be identified and addressed promptly, ensuring that barriers do not persist. Feedback from students, staff and visitors will inform future revisions, supporting a culture of accountability, learning, and continuous enhancement of accessibility across all services and spaces.

Universal Access Guidelines will be reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with:

- legislative changes
- best practice guidance
- campus development plans.

Continuous improvement ensures that accessibility evolves alongside the needs of the community and advances in best practice.

## Avoid

- Treating the guidelines as a static document that is not regularly updated
- Failing to respond to changes in legislation or best practice
- Lack of engagement with users and lived experience
- Ignoring feedback or failing to act on identified issues
- Infrequent or inconsistent monitoring of accessibility performance
- Repeating the same accessibility issues across projects due to lack of learning
- Lack of accountability for implementing improvements
- Failing to act on known accessibility issues identified through audits.

## Good Practice

- Review the Universal Access Guidelines regularly to ensure alignment with:
  - Legislative changes
  - Best practice guidance
  - Campus development plans
- Establish a process for ongoing monitoring of accessibility across the estate
- Gather and incorporate feedback from students, staff, and visitors, including disabled users
- Use feedback and audits to identify barriers and inform improvements
- Track progress and ensure continuous enhancement of accessibility standards
- Integrate learning from completed projects into future design and delivery
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement and accountability
- Use user-led audits as an ongoing tool to evaluate real-world accessibility performance.

## Impact

Leads to outdated guidance, missed opportunities for improvement, and environments that do not fully meet user needs. Repeated accessibility issues across buildings demonstrate the need for structured feedback loops and accountability.

## Outcome

Accessibility is continuously improved, ensuring the campus evolves to meet the needs of its diverse community.

# Universal Access Design Guidelines

Trinity College Dublin



## Closing Statement

These Universal Access Design Guidelines represent Trinity College Dublin's commitment to creating an inclusive, accessible, and equitable campus for all. By embedding universal design principles into every stage of planning, design, delivery, and operation, Trinity ensures that accessibility is not treated as an obligation, but as a fundamental component of high-quality design. Through ongoing monitoring, user engagement, and continuous improvement, the University will continue to evolve its built environment to support independence, dignity, and full participation for all members of its community.

Universal access is not a fixed standard, but an ongoing commitment to improving how people experience and use the Trinity campus.

## Appendices

The following appendices provide practical tools, reference standards, and governance frameworks to support the implementation of Universal Access across all Trinity projects.

# Appendix A - Universal Access Project Checklist

This checklist should be completed at each stage of the capital project process to ensure that Universal Access principles are embedded within project planning and delivery. This is a Do the Work (Checklist).



Project Stage	Universal Access Requirements	Responsible Party	Evidence / Reference *	Date Completed	Signed Off By *
<b>Concept Design / Brief</b>	Accessibility considerations included in project brief	Project Sponsor	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Consultation with disAbility Service / Access Officer	Project Manager	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Universal Access Panel review (if required)	Estates	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Preliminary access strategy prepared	Architect	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Sensory accessibility and cognitive access requirements included in project brief		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Users with lived experience of sensory and information-processing differences consulted		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Need for quiet / restorative space considered		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Preliminary sensory access considerations documented		<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Developed Design</b>	Step-free access confirmed for entrances	Architect	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Accessible circulation routes confirmed	Architect	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Accessible toilet provision confirmed	Architect	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Accessible lift provision confirmed	Architect	<input type="checkbox"/>		

	Accessible parking and drop-off areas included	Architect	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Wayfinding and signage strategy developed	Design team	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Acoustic strategy reviewed for noise, reverberation and sound separation		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Lighting strategy reviewed for glare, reflection, contrast, flicker and user control		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Finishes and colour strategy reviewed for visual clutter, pattern and legibility		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Wayfinding strategy reviewed for simplicity, predictability and cognitive load		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Sensory characteristics of key teaching, support and waiting spaces assessed		<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Technical Design</b>	Door widths and circulation spaces compliant	Architect	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Accessible teaching / meeting spaces confirmed	Architect	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Hearing loop provision included where required	M&E Engineer	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Emergency evacuation provisions confirmed	Fire engineer	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Samples of lighting, finishes and fittings reviewed for sensory impact		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Low-noise equipment and services specified where practicable		<input type="checkbox"/>		

	Quiet / restorative spaces fitted out and protected from clutter and sound ingress		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Access information and preview information prepared where required		<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Construction Stage</b>	Accessibility requirements included in contractor brief	Contractor	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Accessible equipment installed correctly	Contractor	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Accessibility inspection carried out	Estates	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Completion / In Use</b>	Accessibility audit completed	Estates	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Access information added to building access guide	Estates	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Accessibility features included in maintenance schedule	Estates	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Post-occupancy review includes sensory and cognitive access feedback		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Quiet / restorative spaces monitored for availability and condition		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Maintenance schedule includes flicker, noise, scent and sensory environment checks		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Building access guide includes relevant sensory information where appropriate.		<input type="checkbox"/>		

### \* Evidence / Reference

This column should be used to confirm that accessibility requirements are supported by documented evidence, such as drawings, specifications, reports, or photographs. The checkbox indicates that appropriate evidence has been reviewed and is available to verify compliance.

### \* Signed Off By

Records the individual responsible for confirming that the requirement has been met and verified. Sign-off indicates accountability and confirms that the item has been reviewed and approved.

# Appendix B - Accessibility Design Standards Summary

This table summarises key design requirements expected for Trinity projects. These standards should exceed minimum regulatory requirements where possible. This is a Know the standards (Technical summary).

Element	Minimum Requirement	Trinity Expectation
Entrances	Step-free access required	Single principal entrance usable by all users
Door width	Minimum 800 mm clear opening	Automatic doors at main entrances
Corridors	Adequate wheelchair circulation	Two wheelchair users able to pass
Ramps	Maximum slope 1:15 where possible	Level access preferred
Lifts	Accessible lift required in multi-storey buildings	Audible and visual floor indicators
Reception desks	Accessible section required	Lower counter with knee clearance
Toilets	Accessible WC required	Changing Places facilities where feasible
Signage	Clear signage required	High contrast, sans serif fonts
Teaching spaces	Accessible seating required	Integrated wheelchair seating positions
Parking	Accessible parking spaces	Spaces located close to entrance

These standards should be read alongside:

- Building Regulations Part M
- BS 8300
- Universal Design Guidelines.

# Appendix C - Universal Access Panel

## Terms of Reference

### Purpose

The Universal Access Panel (UAP) provides independent advice on accessibility and universal design in relation to Trinity capital projects and estate developments. The Panel ensures that the design of buildings and campus spaces supports equitable access for all users. This is a Who is responsible (Governance).

### Objectives

The panel will:

- Review proposed building developments and refurbishments.
- Advise on universal design best practice.
- Identify potential accessibility barriers in proposed designs.
- Support Trinity in achieving best practice accessibility standards.

### Scope

The Panel may review:

- New building developments
- Major refurbishment projects
- Campus landscape developments
- Significant accessibility upgrades.

Minor works may be reviewed where requested

### Membership

Membership should include:

- Access Officer (Chair)
- Representative from Disability Service
- Estates representative
- Architect or built environment specialist
- Disabled student representative
- Disabled staff representative
- External accessibility expert (optional)

## Meeting Frequency

The Panel should meet:

- Quarterly
- Or as required for major projects.

## Reporting

Recommendations from the Panel will be reported to:

- Estates and Facilities
- Project Design Teams
- Capital Projects Governance structures.

# Appendix D - Accessibility Review Template for Capital Projects

This template should be completed during project design review stages. This is a How to review (Process template).

- Project Name:
- Project Sponsor:
- Project Manager:
- Architect / Lead Designer:
- Stage of Review:

1. External Environment	Item	Yes	No	Comments
	Step-free access to building	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Accessible parking provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Accessible drop-off area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	External routes accessible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Building Entrance	Item	Yes	No	Comments
	Principle entrance accessible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Automatic doors provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Adequate manoeuvring space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Internal Circulation	Item	Yes	No	Comments
	Corridor widths adequate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Accessible lift provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Accessible signage included	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

4. Facilities	Item	Yes	No	Comments
	Accessible toilets included	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Accessible teaching spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Hearing loop systems provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Emergency Provisions	Item	Yes	No	Comments
	Refuge areas provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Visual fire alarms included	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Evacuation strategy inclusive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Reviewer Summary

**Key Accessibility Issues Identified:**

**Recommendations:**

**Reviewer Name:**

**Date:**

# Appendix E - Key Accessibility Contacts

The following roles provide guidance and support regarding universal access within Trinity. This is a Who to contact (Support & accountability).

Role	Responsibility
Access officer	Oversight of accessibility compliance under the Disability Act 2005
Director, Disability Service	Strategic leadership on accessibility and inclusion
Estates & Facilities	Implementation of accessibility within campus infrastructure
Programme Management Office	Integration of accessibility into capital projects
Universal Access Panel	Independent review of major projects
Health and Safety Office	Emergency evacuation planning
IT Services	Accessible technology and digital infrastructure

Contact details for these roles should be maintained on the Trinity Estates website and reviewed annually.