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DESIGN

Trinity
disAbility Hub

Transforming institutional accessibility

Using the ULAA-Tool to include staff in higher education

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Does this building comply?

Traditional lens:

- Building regulations
- Expert audit
- Physical access

Lived-experience lens:

- Everyday use
- Sensory environment
- Organisational context

A different question

Compliance is not the same as participation

Not “Does this building comply?”

Accessibility becomes an institutional design question

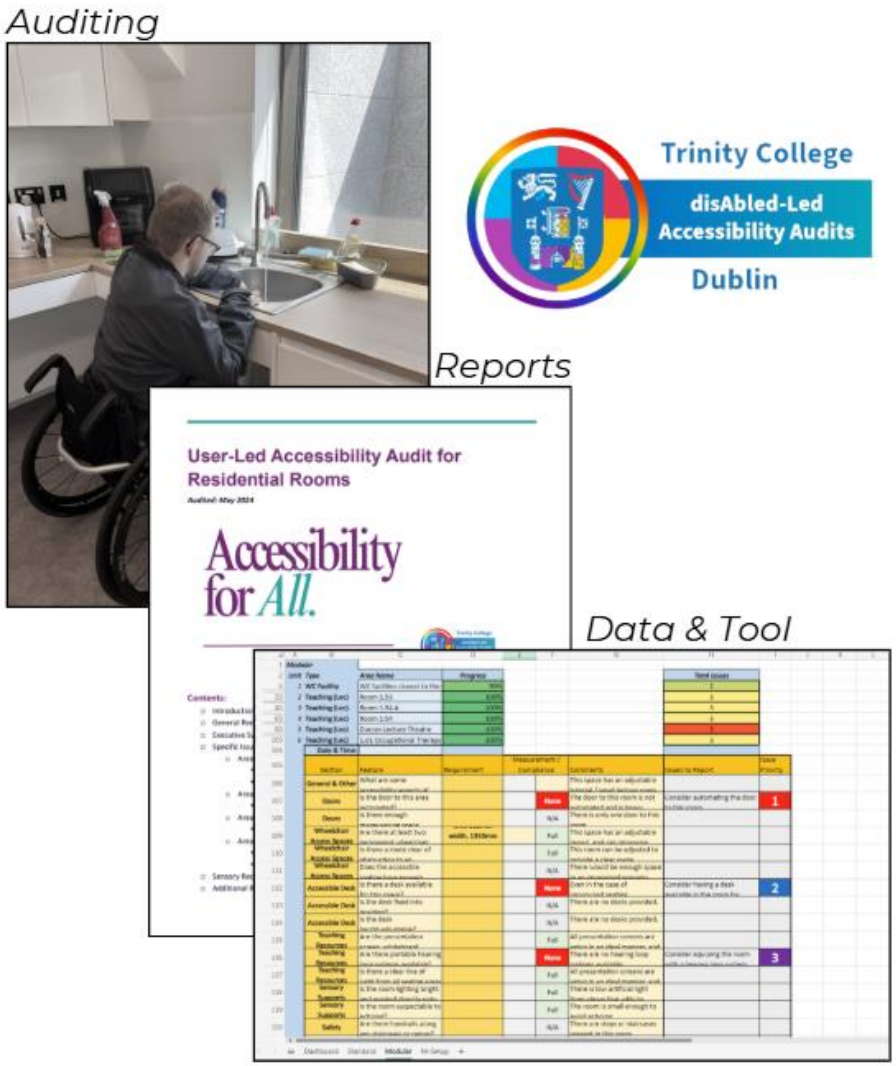
But “Can people use this environment with dignity, autonomy and ease?

How the ULAA-Tool works

- Recruit disabled students, interns and staff
- Audit with a structured walkthrough
- Gather evidence: ratings, comments, photographs
- Review with estates, occupational therapy and managers
- Act through projects, policy and investment

The study in numbers

- 12 buildings: Academic & student accommodation
- 3 trained auditors: Disabled people with lived-experience expertise
- 3 months: Structured walkthroughs during summer vacation



What the audits revealed

- Physical: doorways, routes, signage
- Sensory: noise, glare, visual clutter
- Workplace: no quiet or rest space
- A space can meet regulations and still create barriers.



Lloyd building enabled toilet, during audit

From audit to inclusive internships

- Before internship/placement: audit the workspace
- Joint review with an occupational therapist
- Adjust: quiet space, relocation, wayfinding
- Start better: barriers are addressed before day one
- The paper reports improved supervisor awareness and confidence.

Evidence led to institutional decisions

- A five-year Accessibility Enhancement Plan
- €3.7m of dedicated investment
- A Project Manager for Universal Accessibility
- A Universal Design Policy for the Physical Estate



From audit to Project Manager UA

- deliver accessibility projects with clearer accountability;
- integrate Universal Access into planned and reactive maintenance;
- use data and dashboards to track progress;
- ensure disabled students and staff influence design decisions;
- improve consistency in procurement, consultant briefs and contractor delivery;
- connect accessibility, sustainability and capital planning;
- support compliance reporting, including Estates input into the annual Disability Act 2005 report.

From accommodation to governance

- From individual requests to institutional evidence
- From reactive adjustment to anticipatory design
- From local to shared responsibility
- From accessibility after design to accessibility in planning and procurement

What the ULAA-Tool can and cannot do

It can

- Surface overlooked barriers
- Prioritise action
- Strengthen business cases
- Connect lived experience to governance

It cannot alone

- Remove heritage constraints
- Create unlimited funding
- Override regulation
- Replace organisational commitment

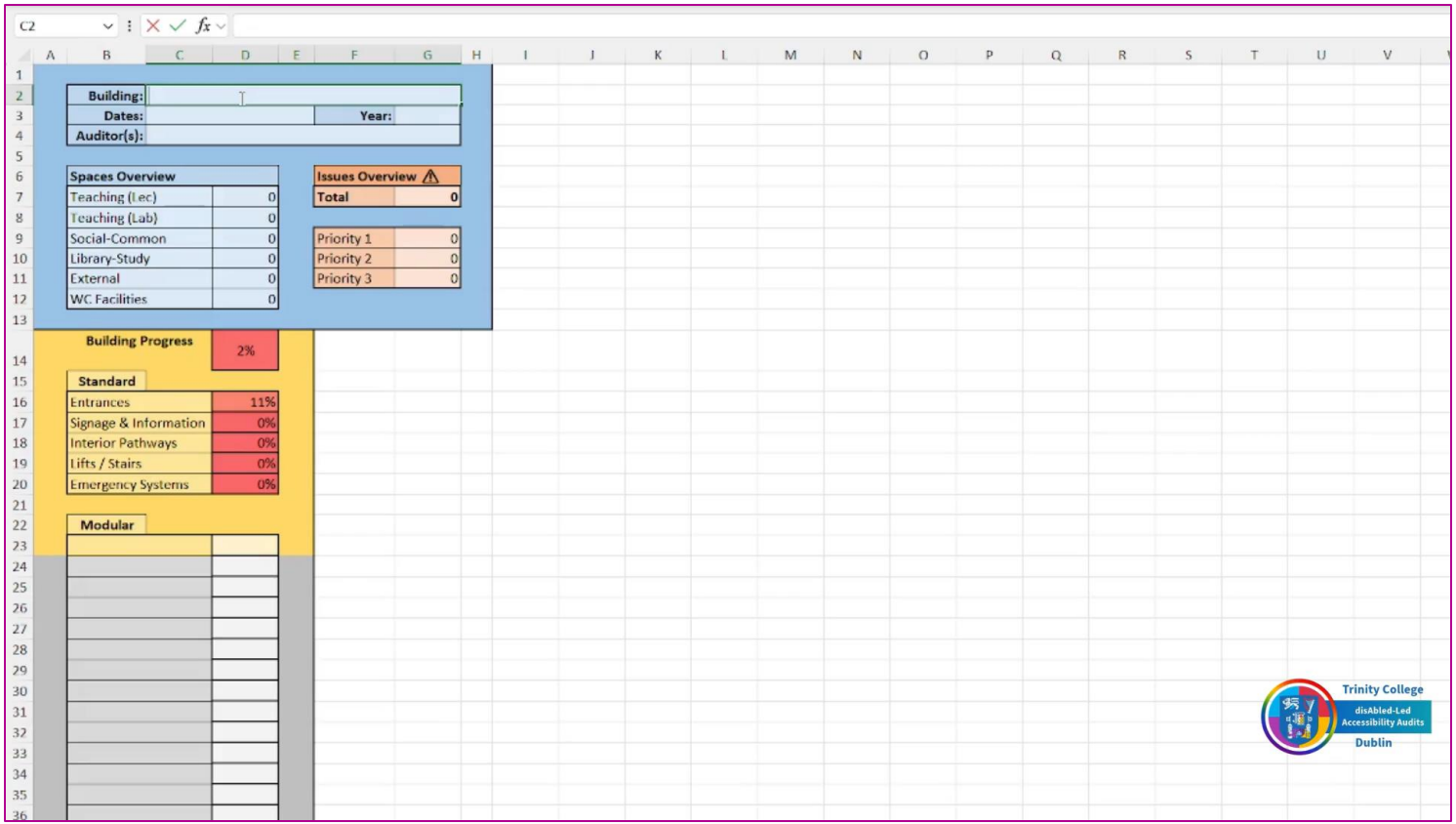
Policy and Part M+ Procedures

- Policy: Draft Universal Accessibility Policy out for consultation
- Part M+: Procedural document drafted
- Accountability: Policy and Procedures and reporting
- Training: Estates teams given user led training
- Reporting: plan for diversity from the start
- Say aloud: This moves us from consultation to partnership, and asks whose knowledge counts.

Five principles for other institutions

- Participation: disabled people lead
- Co-design: solutions are shaped together
- Remuneration: expertise is paid
- Accountability: findings enter decisions
- Universal design: plan for diversity from the start
- Say aloud: This moves us from consultation to partnership, and asks whose knowledge counts.

ULAA-Tool Demonstration Video



A question for institutions

- Are we prepared to invest in the structures, leadership and partnerships that make accessibility part of everyday institutional practice?

- Move beyond minimum compliance to anticipatory accessibility

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Thank you!



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