

Interacting with students

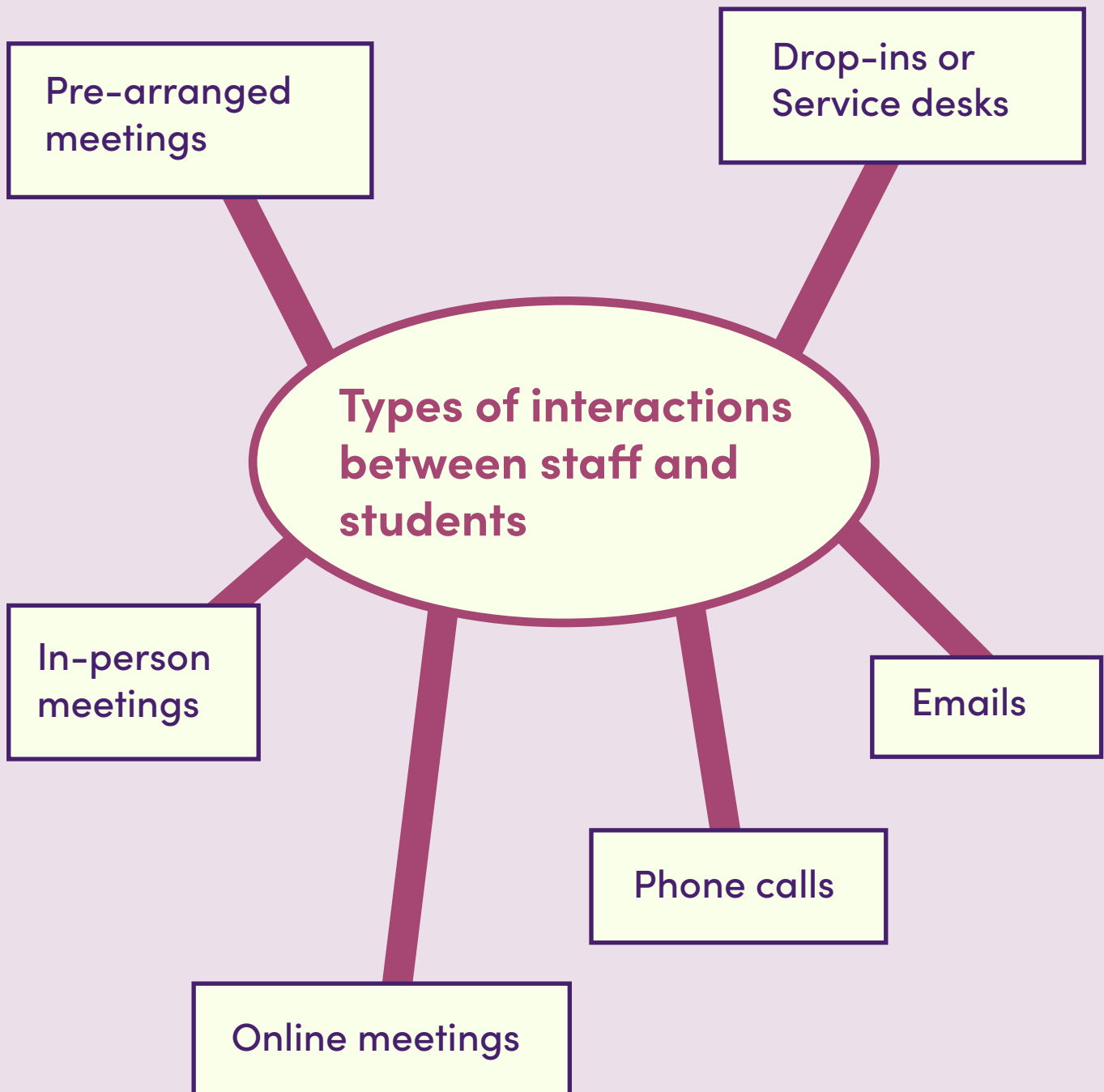
Student Service Disability Toolkit



Trinity
disAbility Hub

How do you interact with students?

Interactions between students and staff take place in a variety of contexts. This booklet will outline these interactions and outline how these can be made inclusive to disabled students. Creating a more inclusive environment to interact with disabled students will improve the experience of all students engaging with your service.



Communication Tips

Staff have a responsibility to support students and should **avoid creating a hostile environment** with rude or impatient communication in-person, online or through email.

Do not call out students individually. If you have an issue to discuss with a student, request a one-on-one meeting.

Understand the individual needs of students. Some students have specific communication or learning needs, be open to meeting or communicating with them on an individual basis.

Be aware of disability etiquette. Do not use outdated terms such as 'invalid,' 'crippled,' or 'differently abled.' Avoid dehumanising language like 'wheelchair-bound' or 'confined to a wheelchair.' Do not use the term normal when referring to people without disabilities.

Do not assume that a student is not disabled because you cannot see their disability. One out of every ten students you interact with will be disabled. These tips are for interactions with all students, regardless of whether you are aware of a disability.

Respect different communication styles. Some students need things repeated to them, need extra time to communicate due to stammer or require clear instructions and clarification.

How do I make my interactions with students inclusive to disabled students?

The majority of disabilities are invisible. In Trinity College Dublin, 1 out of every 10 students that staff interact with are disabled. In most cases they will not be aware of a student's disability. These tips should be implemented into interactions with **all students**.

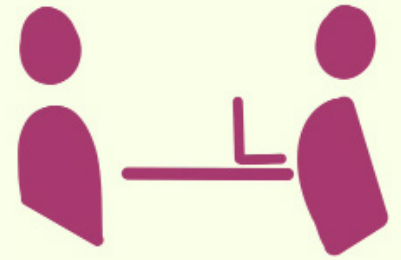
Step 1: Booking a meeting or one-on-one interaction

- Provide an option to **book a meeting online**. Lots of disabled students find phone call bookings to be a barrier of engagement (for example, students who are deaf or hard of hearing, autistic students or students with speech impediments.)
- Use **reminders for meetings**. Many systems have automatic appointment reminders.
- Be Flexible with individual students preferred formats of meeting. **Offer different formats**; phone, online, in-person, formal appointments, drop-in meetings.
- Have clear **information on the accessibility of your space** on your website and booking pages. Use the **Trinity Accessibility Statement Generator** for help with this. Ask students for accessibility requirements or support they require for the meeting.
- Give students **information on what the format of the meeting could be**. For example, information on who they will be meeting such as bios or introduction videos.
- Use of **pre-meeting forms** with some questions to help prepare for the meeting.
- Agree **schedule of meetings** as possible. Offer regular times as students often prefer this.



Step 2: Meeting Students

- Ensure that the building, waiting area, meeting rooms and bathrooms are **physically accessible**. If they are not, this should be **communicated** to all students on your website and booking page.
- Provide **clear directions** to a meeting room.
- Do not play **loud music or audio** in waiting rooms and keep activity to a minimum in this space.
- Be aware that **some students may not hear a staff member calling them** into an appointment due to a hearing impairment or being distracted by other noise in the room.
- **Ask students if they are comfortable** with lighting, sound, seating arrangements and the physical or virtual environment when all students enter an appointment.
- Understand that some people need to **make noise, find it hard to remain seated** and need **space to move** around.
- Remind students that they can ask questions at any time and **check-in with them throughout the meeting** to ask if they understand or need clarity on how items are being explained.
- Understand that students have **different communication styles**. Some students have speech impediments, hearing impairments, or other disabilities that require different types of communication. Be adaptable to all student's needs by becoming familiar with different disability types on the [Disability Service website](#).

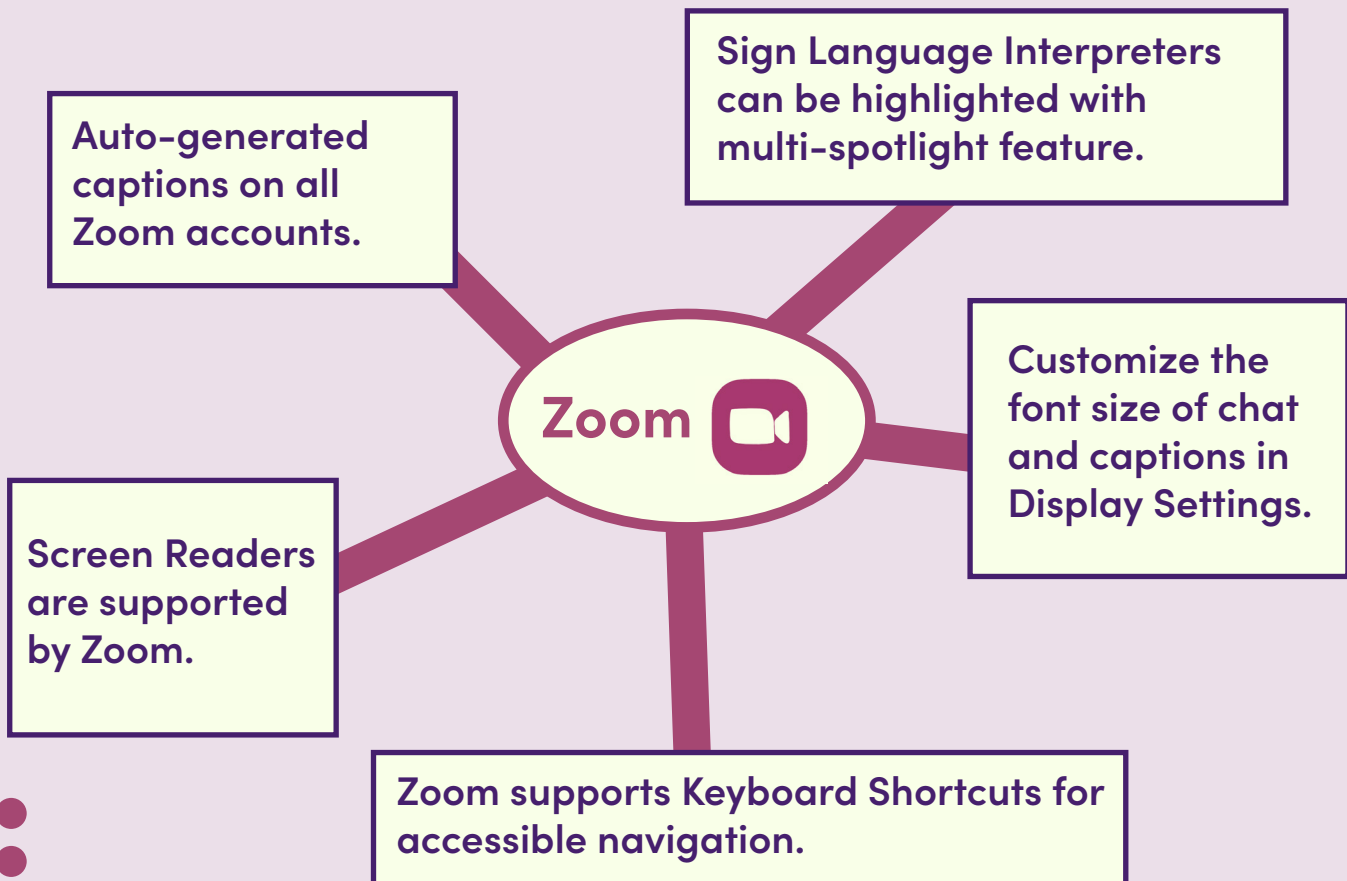


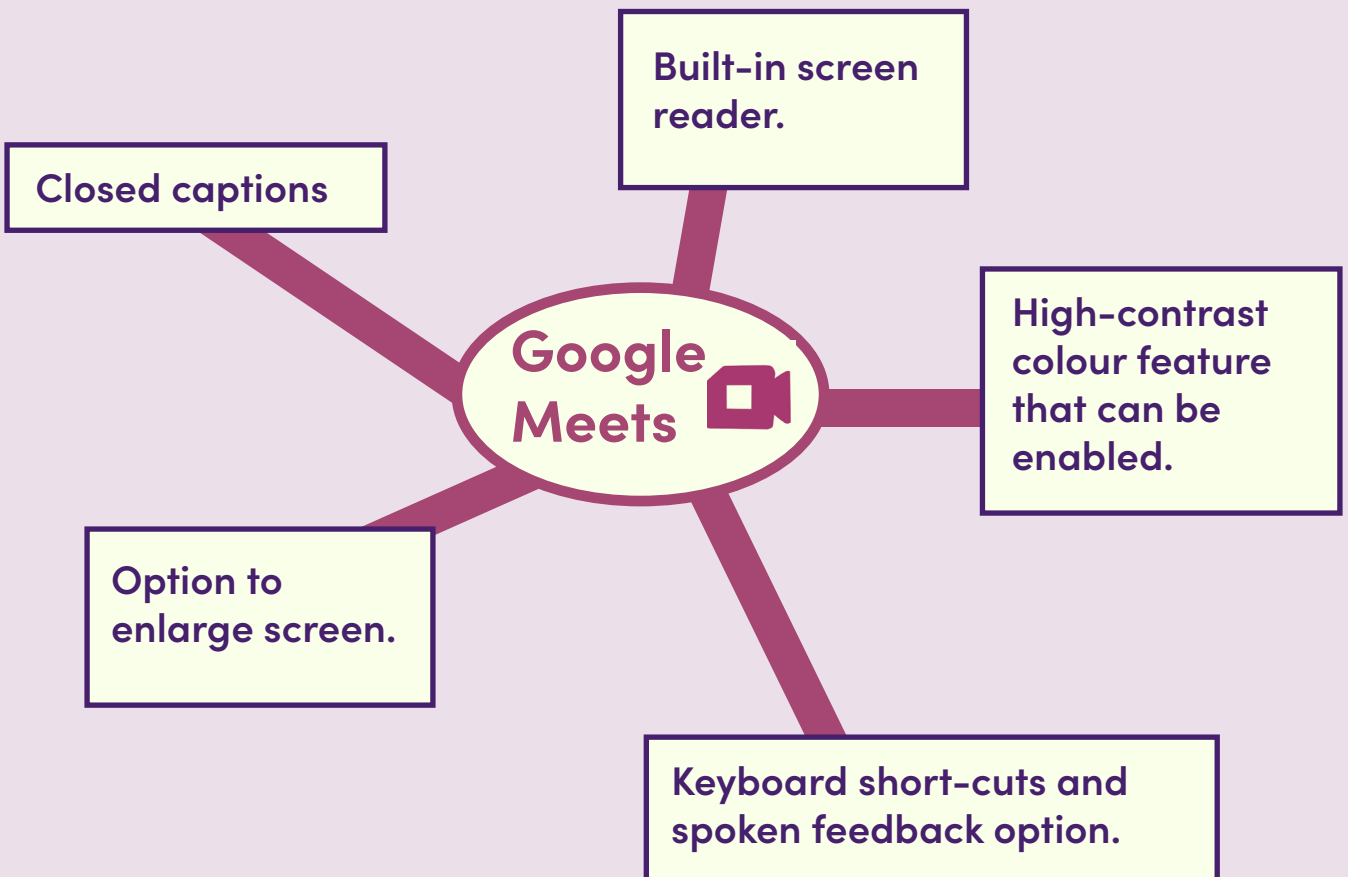
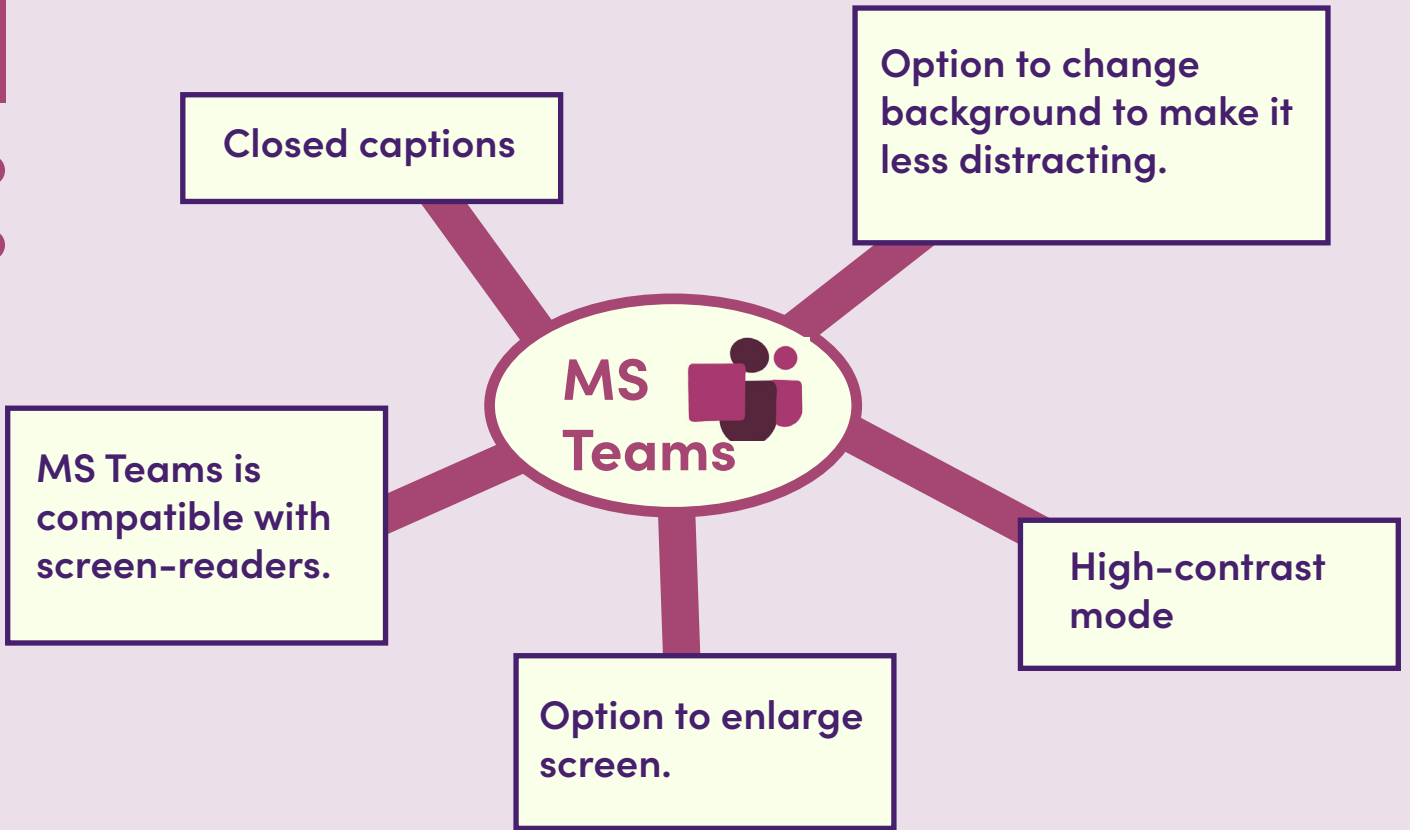
Step 3: Following up with students

- Provide **clear information** on how students can make further appointments.
- Follow-up after the interaction to check that a students **needs have been met** and there were no additional queries.
- If there are **any actions** arising out of a meeting, provide clear and detailed written instructions in an email to the student.
- Gather **feedback** on student experience of meetings.
- Share **summary notes** with student.



Online Meeting Accessibility





Tips for group meetings

- 1.** Plan the meeting in an accessible venue or online alternative. Ask for any accessibility requirements.
- 2.** Ensure that all participants are provided with specific details well in advance. For example, exact location, transport routes, time, and agenda.
- 3.** Stick to the agenda, participants should introduce themselves when they speak. Summarise discussions and decisions at the end of each item.
- 4.** Consider the length of time that the meeting goes on for. Some people will struggle to sit in one location for longer than one hour.
- 5.** Circulate notes to all members after the meeting.
- 6.** Be aware that some students will have sensory requirements which need to be accommodated, such as leaving their camera off or turning down the lights in their room.
- 7.** Ask people about the accessibility of the meeting and make improvements based on this.