



# Accessible Event Planning

## A Check List



This document was prepared to assist University personnel when organizing events. Planning with access in mind is not just a good thing to do but our responsibility under the law. Contact the Human Rights Office should you have any questions or concerns.

12/3/2009

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When planning an event at VIU, please consider the following checklist to ensure that your event is accessible to all your participants.

## Advertising, outreach and registration forms

- Give ample notice for your upcoming event – this allows people to arrange for transportation, assistants or other supports they may require.
- Provide space on your registration form for people to identify their accommodation or access needs
- On advertising include contact information (e.g., phone number and e-mail address) so that attendees can contact you regarding access and accommodation issues. *Sample: Please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ should you have any access related concerns or needs.*
- Follow up with people who request accommodations in a timely fashion to inform them whether or not their needs can be met.
- On the posters or information sheets, include accessibility symbols.

Sample: 

- Promote a scent-free practice for all events.
- If you are serving food, ask participants about any dietary requirements.


## Selecting the room or venue

Attempt to find a space that is fully accessible and meets the needs of your event. Things to look for include:

- The location and approximate distance for nearest accessible parking – this should be less than 30 metres from the accessible entrance to your event.
- Make sure that wheelchair access is via the main entrance. If this is not possible post clear, legible signs at the main entrance showing alternative, safe and accessible entrances.
- Make sure people with a disability can reach all areas used at your event independently or with assistance from your volunteers, e.g., the registration desk, auditorium, breakaway rooms, stage, etc.



## Events in the Royal Arbutus Room

- If your event is scheduled for the Royal Arbutus Room note that accessibility for persons using wheelchairs or scooters is problematic. Do not place the  symbol on your promotional material. The maximum capacity of the stair lift is 450 lbs (person & wheel chair combined) and is not appropriate for most users. A further complication is that washrooms are on the lower level, requiring arrangements for an operator for the stair lift should the person need to use the washroom.
- It is recommended that if you choose to use the Royal Arbutus Room you ensure that any advertising or invitations ask participants with mobility impairments to contact you. *Sample: Please contact the organizer if you have a mobility impairment as access for persons with mobility related disabilities is limited.* This will ensure that you are aware of their mobility needs and can determine whether any appropriate arrangements can be made. You do not want a participant to arrive, only to find out that they cannot access the room or that arranging for the stair lift at the last minute creates delay and inconvenience.
- Inform any participant planning to use the lift that this involves ascending the stairs on an open platform. This ensures they have full information when making the decision on whether to attend the event. You might want to look at it yourself so that you can accurately describe it to any potential user.
- Ensure that you know who will be available to operate the stair lift. If it is during cafeteria hours a cashier *may* be able to assist but after hours security will need to be called. Ensure that security knows that they will be needed for your event and the approximate time when they will be needed. Remember to make arrangements for both the beginning and the end of the event. Ensure you know how to connect with security should a washroom visit be required. Access to your event should be convenient and respectful of the person requiring this assistance.



## Setting Up the Room/Facility

Make sure the room set-up for your event is as accessible as possible. Consider the following elements:

- Allows for easy movement for wheelchair and scooter users (You may have to rearrange furniture).
- Wide aisles.
- Includes accessible areas interspersed throughout the room – front, middle and back.
- Plenty of space around tables.
- Good lighting (bright, without glare and allows for adjustment).
- If a stage is used, it is easily visible.
- Projector screen is easily visible.
- Good acoustics.
- Provide for seat reservations for people who are Deaf, deafened, hard of hearing, or visually impaired as appropriate.
- Accessible washrooms within a reasonable distance.

### **Also make sure that you:**

- Cover electrical cables or cords that cross over aisles or pathways so wheelchair users as well as people who use canes and walkers can traverse safely across them.
- Post clear and easy-to-read signs showing locations of accessible washrooms, elevators, phones, etc.
- Wherever possible, try to eliminate or reduce background noise during proceedings.
- Make sure organizers, presenters and volunteers are aware of emergency evacuation procedures for participants with disabilities.



## Planning ahead with any volunteers or other event organizers

- Train your volunteers for the event about how to respectfully assist people with disabilities and to respond to any accessibility issues that may arise.
- Make sure that volunteers are easily identified (use name tags and/or other identifiers).
- Book English/American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters or computerized note taker / real time captioning, if these services have been requested. Students can often make their own arrangements through the Disability Services Department.
- Provide interpreters and note takers with agendas and presentation outlines in advance of the event.
- At the event, be sure the interpreters and/or captioners are introduced and explain what they will be doing during the event.
- If food is provided, make sure the total count includes interpreters, note takers, and attendants.

## Suggestions for Effective Presenters

- Remind presenters to end meetings or presentations on schedule (people making transit arrangements often have very little flexibility).
- Produce some materials in large print (16-point type or larger) and have available electronically in case of a request for such a format.
- It is always good to have a few print copies on hand. Encourage and support presenters to offer copies of their material in different formats before their presentation starts.
- For presenters, lectern heights and audio visual controls need to be adjustable to meet the needs of different speakers.
- During the session, presenters should verbally describe contents of videos, or any written materials, including overheads or chalkboard notes for those audience members with vision loss.
- Encourage presenters to use captioned videos.



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## Budgeting for your event

- Set aside some funds early in the planning stage in the event there is a request for ASL/English interpretation or to have materials prepared in Braille. Note that students with disabilities attending an institutional event can often be accommodated through the Disabilities Services Department.

## Evaluation

- Evaluation forms include a section about the accessibility of the event. This can provide valuable information for use in future event plans.

## Institutional Resources

### Disability Services Department

- Available to assist registered students with disabilities with their accommodation/access needs.
- Willing to assist University personnel problem solve access related issues as they have a wealth of experience and information

### Human Rights Office

- Available to assist organizers understand our responsibility to ensure our events are as accessible as possible
- Able to assist University personnel problem solve access related issues

This information has been adapted by the VIU Human Rights Office from a check list provided by Hall, Dale. (2006, November 21). *Accessible Events Guidelines*. Retrieved August 16, 2007, from Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Educations (CADSPPE): <http://www.uottawa.ca/cacuss>

