

University of Kent

Estate

Guidance and Policy for the use of Access Statements

1.0 Introduction

"The University of Kent is committed to the creation and support of a balanced and diverse community which is open and accessible to all students, staff and service users who seek to benefit and who demonstrate the appropriate potential, skills and abilities.

The University aims to become a fully inclusive society where individuals are integrated within the institution in such a way that individual choice is respected, and where the diversity of individuals is recognised and there is flexibility to support their differing aspirations and goals"

(University of Kent, Student Disability Policy)

As required within the University's Student Disability Policy and Equality and Diversity Policy an access statement is to be used to demonstrate the University's commitment to make it's buildings both inclusive and accessible, stating the objectives and intentions to make it's developments accessible, and to compile a body of evidence about how it has sought to ensure their premises will be accessible to disabled people and all other users.

2.0 Inclusive Design

People are very different in their needs, and in the way they use the built environment. An inclusive environment recognises and accommodates these differences in a way that is universal. An inclusive design provides a single solution for everyone.

The principles of an inclusive environment will be:

- 1) Easily used by as many people as possible without undue effort, special treatment or separation.
- 2) Able to offer people the freedom to choose how they access and allow them to participate equally in all, activities it may host.
- 3) Able to embrace diversity and difference
- 4) Safe
- 5) Legible and predictable
- 6) Of high quality

The University wishes to aim towards achieving the principles of the inclusive environment throughout its building and refurbishment of the estate.

3.0 The Use of Access Statements

For all development and refurbishment projects, the project team shall adopt the principles of the inclusive environment throughout the project's life and shall prepare for each project an access statement.

Where possible the appointment of an access consultant chosen from the National Register of Access Consultants to prepare and develop the access statement shall be preferred.

The access statement shall be more than just a statement that Part M of the Building Regulations and British Standards have been complied with. It should explain how the needs of disabled people and everyone else are incorporated into the general design and arrangements of the scheme, and how the principle of inclusive design have been implemented into the scheme.

The access statement should commence at the project brief stage as an expression of the Universities intent, and expand as the project develops to encompass planning, design, management and maintenance requirements.

The access statement will be used to demonstrate to the various statutory control mechanisms that the University has fully considered access requirements and how it shall meet them and that it recognises its legal duties.

4.0 Sources of Advice and Guidance

The access statement should clearly identify the sources of advice and guidance used both in its production and for the design of the project in question.

The following publications and documents were consulted in the writing of this guidance:

Disability Rights Commission Publications

- *Employers/Service Providers*
- *Educating for Equality*
- *Residential Services Good Practice Guide*

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

Building Regulations

- *Approved Document M, Access and Facilities for Disabled People*
BS 8300 Design of Buildings and their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People- A Code of Practice

University of Kent

- *Student Disability Policy*
- *Widening Access and Equal Opportunities for Disabled Students*
- *Disability Strategy on Priority Work*

Consideration shall be given to consulting with disabled persons\groups to obtain a practical in sight into the use of the proposed development.

5.0 Considerations

The University considers that the following subjects should be considered as part of any access statement, and where applicable has provided details of its general policy and estate issues relevant to the considerations. The following list is not definitive and should be considered as a guide to the various elements of a design.

The University continues to improve access to its estate with an on going programme of improvement works identified in a campus wide audit carried out in 2001.

5.1 External Environment

The external environment is the area outside of the property and its grounds. Consideration should be given to the main routes to and from other facilities and public transport within the campus including pathways, obstacles, lighting, signage etc.

The University publishes and maintains identified routes recommended for wheelchair users around the Canterbury Campus.

5.2 Approach to Building

The approach to the building is the area of land within the curtilage of the property, from the boundary of the site up to the building itself. Consideration should be given to the construction of the pathways and use of various surface materials, dropped kerbs, tactile paving, parking and drop off points.

5.3 Entrances

Entrances should be located in a logical relationship to the accessible routes that serve it. Consideration should be given to signage, lighting, contrast etc. Ideally automated entrance doors should be provided. Where security is required to prevent unwanted access, means of access should be located in a position suitable to all users. Where required reception areas should be strategically positioned in clear view of the entrance door, well signed and easily identifiable.

5.4 Student Accommodation

The University currently has a number of adapted rooms for wheelchair bound users as well as those with hearing difficulties. The room allocation policy of the University allows for the needs of individual to be taken into account prior to commencing residence at the University.

The University considers that where possible adapted rooms should ideally be located close to the centre of campus and has noticed a trend towards wheelchair users preferring catered rather than self catered accommodation. Future development of student accommodation should take into account both the anticipated demand for adapted room as well as the suitability of locations around the estate.

Adapted bedrooms shall include an en-suite adapted shower and wc, and be located in a mixed environment of both adapted and standard rooms. With self catering accommodation, kitchens shall be adapted and suitable for use by wheelchair users. Access to other amenities such as laundries and social facilities shall be provided and where reasonably practical access to other units of accommodation provided to ensure social interaction.

5.5 Internal Design and Layout

The layout and design of internal spaces should take into account access through or to such areas as:

a) Corridors

- b) Stairs
- c) Ramps
- d) Handrails
- e) Lifts
- f) Offices
- g) Meeting rooms, class rooms and lecture theatres
- h) Accessible WC,S
- i) Furnishings and Fittings
- j) Surfaces
- k) Signage
- l) Lighting
- m) Colour Tonal and Contrast

5.6 Emergency Egress

An accessible environment is one in which people not only enter and use safely but one which they can reach a place of safety in the event of an emergency.

Consideration shall be given to the provision of evacuation lifts.

Refuge areas should be provided throughout as a back up system regardless of whether or not the lifts meet BS 5588: part 5.

The University Safety and Evacuation Procedures refer in detail to evacuation procedures for disabled users.

5.7 Technology

The use of technology to assist the visually impaired and hearing impaired should be considered including such items as:

- a) Talking information systems
- b) Electronic orientation systems
- c) Induction loops and infrared systems
- d) Audio description devices
- e) Textphones and minicomms

6.0 Conclusion

This guidance note has been produced to demonstrate the University's commitment to ensuring that the estate is both open and accessible to all. It is not in itself specific to any one development, requiring that an access statement is prepared for each refurbishment and development project. This should on larger schemes entail the appointment of an access consultant and on smaller schemes be prepared by the University's own staff or consultants.

This document is intended to be a guide to some of the key areas that should be considered when producing an access statement.