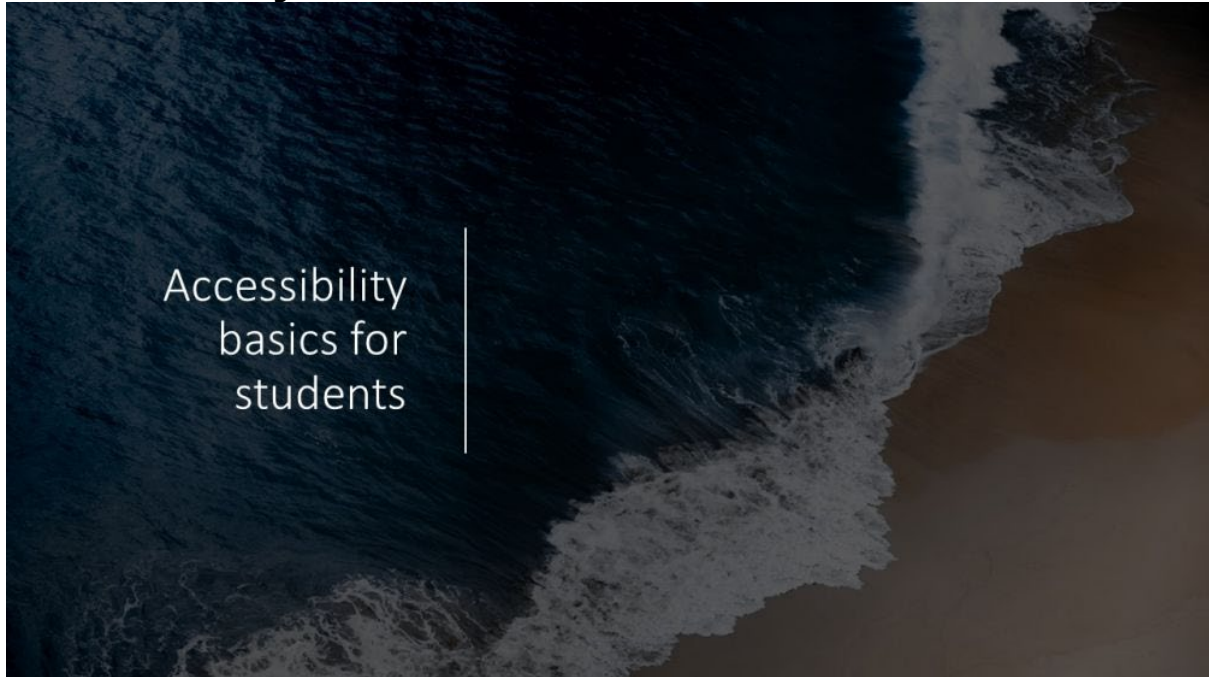# Accessibility basics for students

Accessibility basics for students

What do I need to know?

At work: when you start your employment, you will be expected to make sure that your work and communications comply with accessibility legislation.

At UHI: learning about accessibility and making your work outputs accessible is a graduate attribute related to digital literacy.

Get into the habit of embedding accessibility into all your work while you are a student, then when you are in the workplace, it will be an easier transition.

As students you would expect to have equal access to all the learning material and services at university/college. In the same way, as members of society in general, you would expect to be able to shop and use online services with no obstructions or impediments to your ability to do so.

The accessibility of digital material is crucial to allowing this inclusive access to all.

Key things to do

To make considering accessibility part of what you do everyday, think 'little and often'. Make small changes to your work such as using the Word accessibility

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checker when you finish writing a new document or designing a new PowerPoint
- just as you might use the spellchecker.
Some of the easiest things you can do which will have the largest impact in making
your material accessible are illustrated here.

The items covered in the information below refer to users who are using Windows 10
and Office 365 products. This covers most of the UHI and Academic Partner
technology provided for use by students. Students using other operating systems or
software can request further assistance in how to access accessibility checking
features.

Make your Word documents accessible by using the Microsoft accessibility checker

Use the [Microsoft accessibility checker](#) at the top of your Word 2016 or Office 365
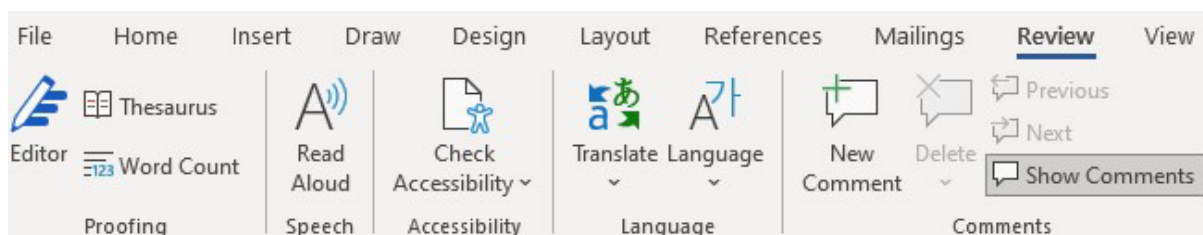Word document.

Figure 1 Word accessibility checker

If you click on the Check Accessibility drop down you can choose 'Check
accessibility' and an 'inspection results' pane will appear on the right hand side. This
will list the errors and if you click on each error it will give further instructions on how
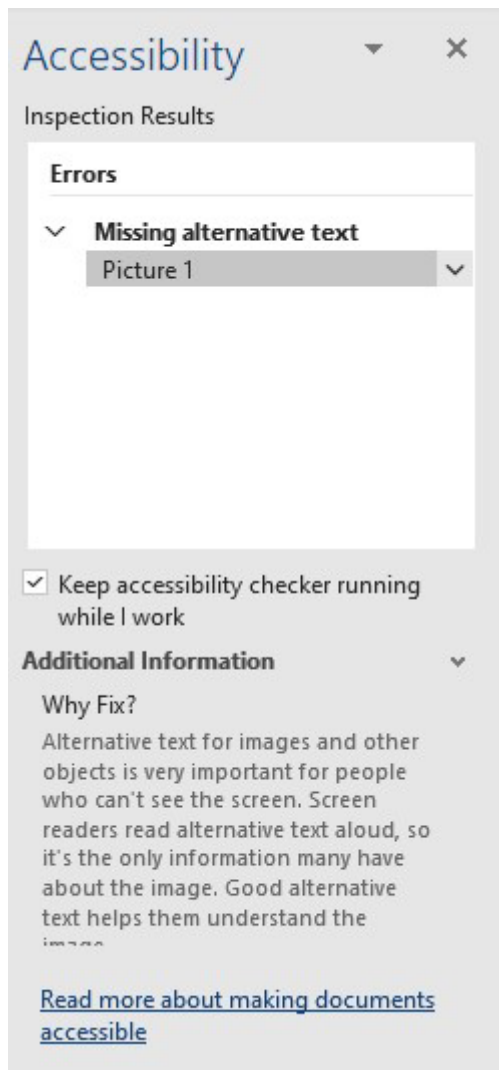to fix them.

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Figure 2 Word error fix column

If you have an older version of Word that does not have the 'Check Accessibility' in the Toolbar, you can access the checking feature by clicking on 'File' in your Toolbar, then go to Info, then you will see 'Check for issues'. If you click the dropdown, you will see the 'Check Accessibility' option.
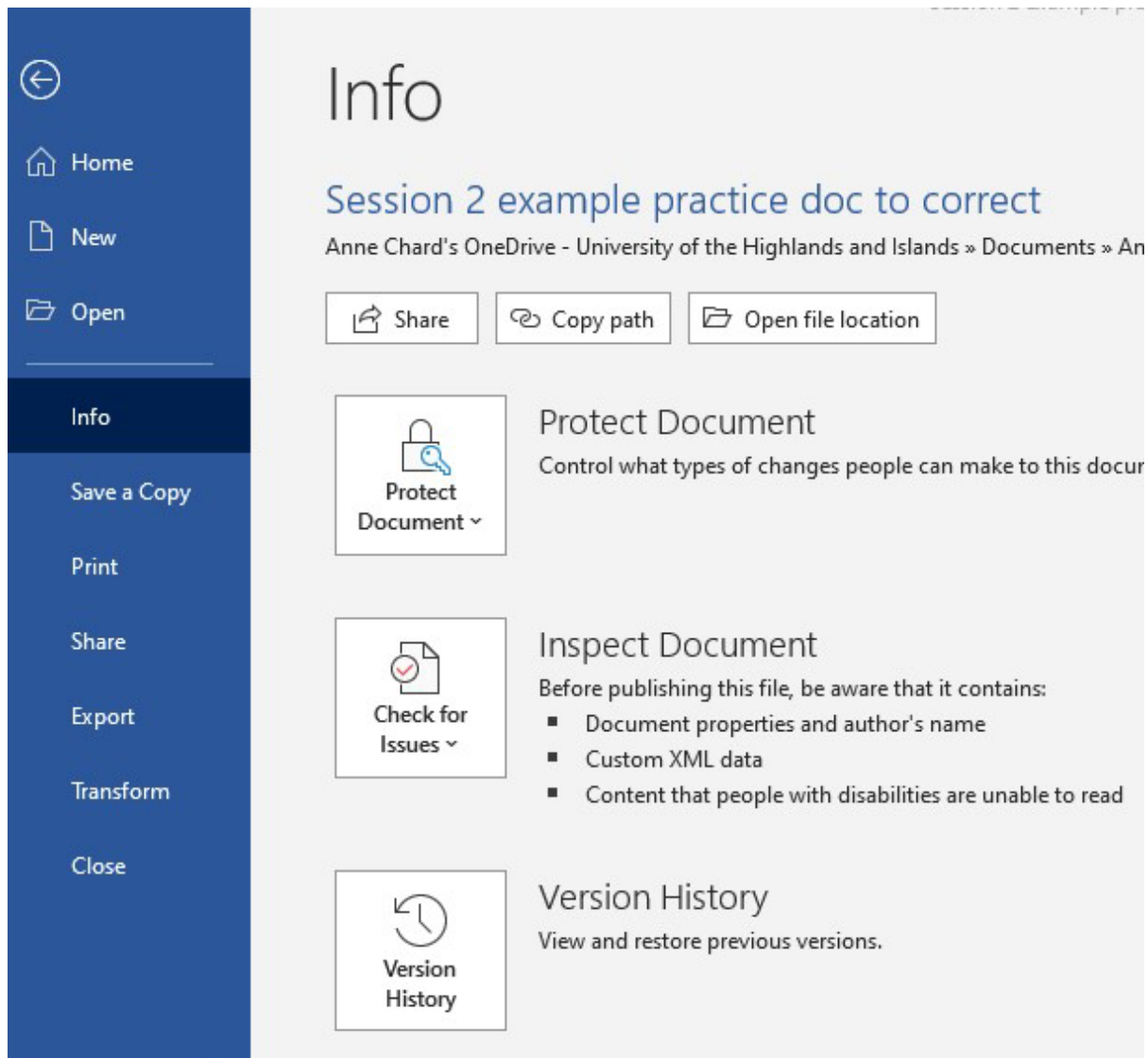
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Figure 3 Word alternative accessibility check access

Make your PowerPoints and Excel spreadsheets accessible by using the Microsoft accessibility checker

Use the [Microsoft accessibility checker](#) at the top of your 2016 or Office 365 PowerPoint presentation or Excel spreadsheet.
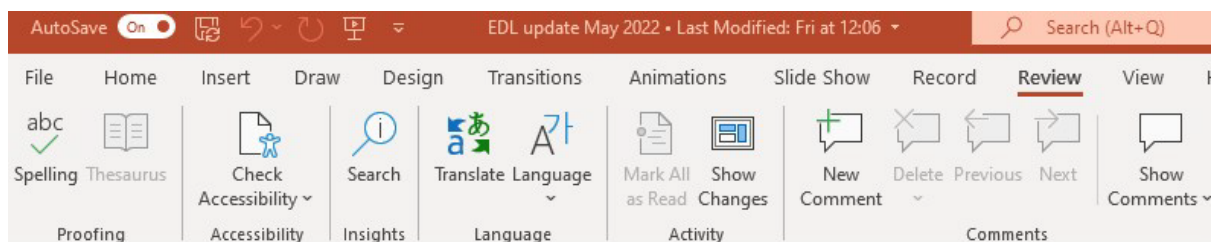

Figure 4 PowerPoint accessibility checker

If you click on the Check Accessibility drop down you can choose 'Check accessibility' and an 'inspection results' pane will appear on the right hand side. This will list the errors and if you click on each error it will give further instructions on how to fix them.
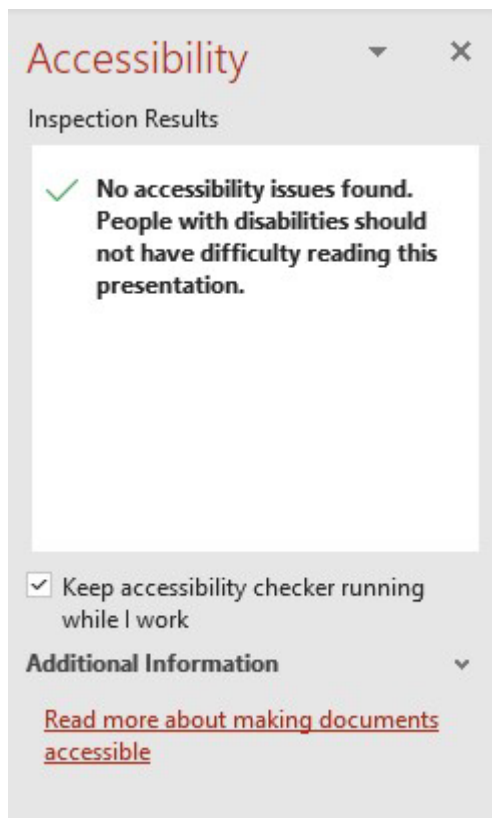

Figure 5 PowerPoint error fix column

If you have an older version of PowerPoint or Excel that does not have the 'Check Accessibility' in the Toolbar, you can access the checking feature by clicking on 'File' in your Toolbar, then go to Info, then you will see 'Check for issues'. If you click the dropdown, you will see the 'Check Accessibility' option.
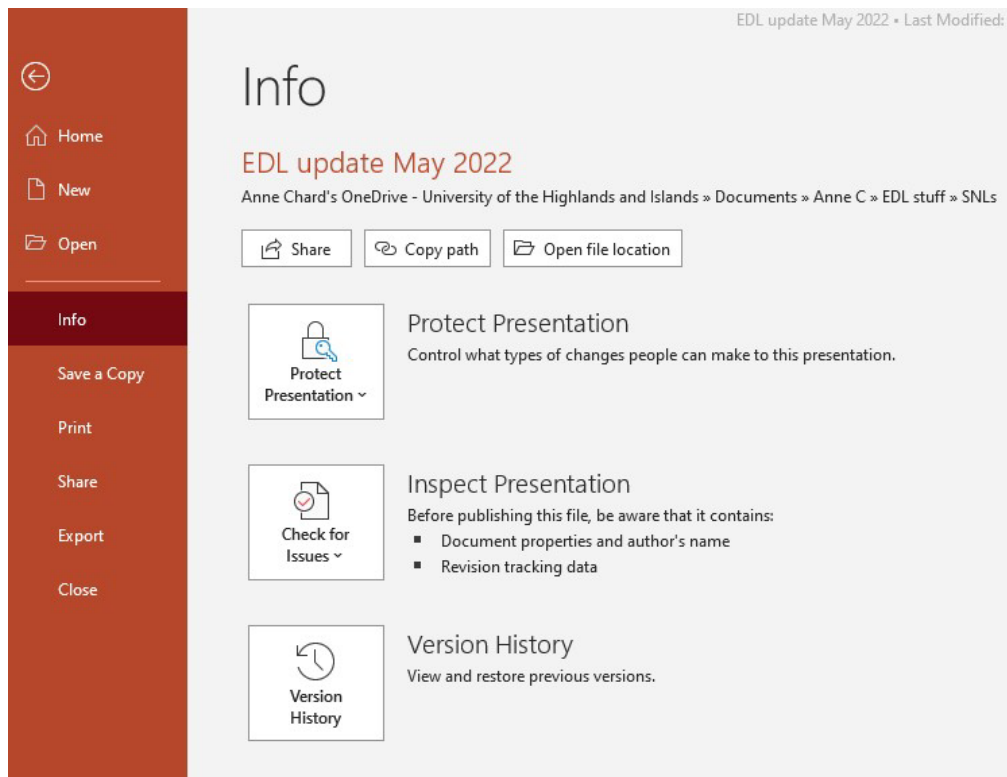
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Figure 6 PowerPoint alternative accessibility check access

Make your emails accessible in Outlook by using the Microsoft accessibility checker

Use the accessibility checker under the Review tab in Outlook. This works exactly the same way as the Microsoft accessibility checker in Word, PowerPoint and Excel.
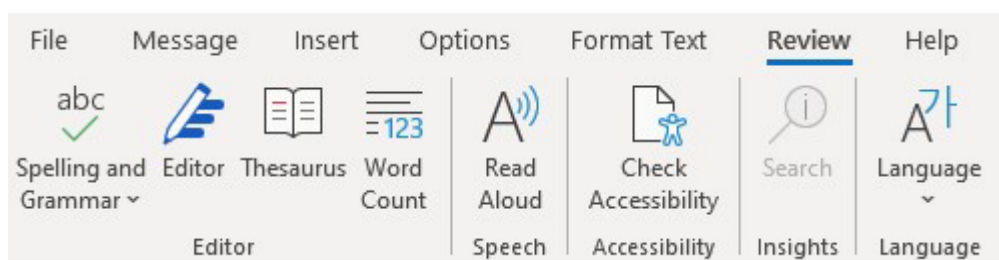

Figure 7 Outlook accessibility checker

Make images and diagrams accessible

If your work contains images, consider how people who are visually impaired can access the information. Do you need to describe the image? Or is it purely decorative? The easiest way to make images and diagrams accessible when using them in Microsoft Windows 11 products such as Word documents, PowerPoints etc is to click on the image and right click on your mouse. Then choose 'Edit alt text' from the dropdown.
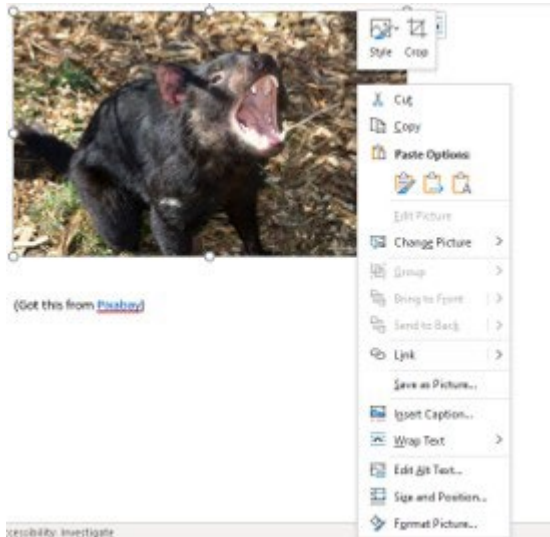
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Figure 8 Image Alt text right click view

This will open an 'Alt Text' panel on the right. You then add a short description of the image into the box then close the panel by clicking the X.

If the image is decorative, you do not need to describe it. In the Alt Text box, click Mark as decorative. Further information, see When to describe images and How to describe images.

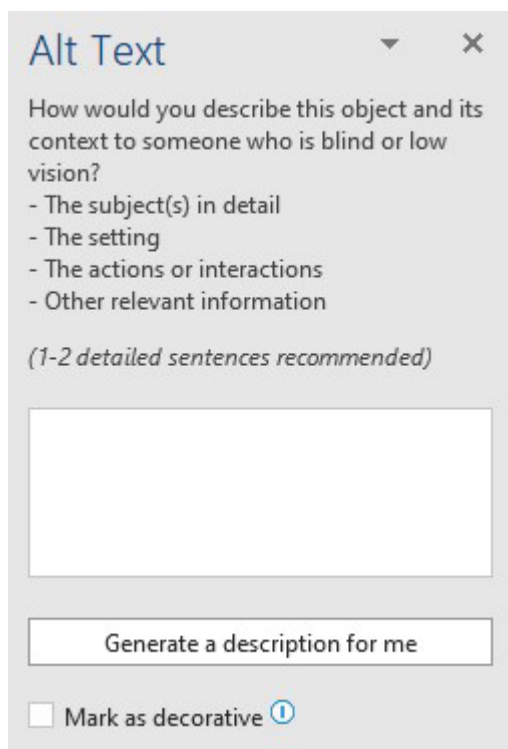*Figure 9 Image Alt text entry box*

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Make your MDFs accessible

A PDF file is a type of file format that enables a document to be presented in the same format as the original. It can be read by anyone who has a PDF reader (e.g., Adobe Acrobat Reader) installed on their computer. If you are saving a Word document as a PDF file, make sure that your Word document is properly formatted in Word first. Run the accessibility checker on the Word document when you have finished it before you save it as a PDF. Once a document is in PDF form it is very hard to change it if it is not accessible, and you will not be able to change it at all if you are not the author of the PDF.

Make sure your videos have captions or a transcript

If you are taking videos with your phone or another digital device, add captions or a transcript so that the video can be watched without needing sound. For example, this may be because someone has low hearing, is watching in a noisy room, is watching in a public place but has no headphones. Captions (sometimes called subtitles) are text that appears at the bottom of the screen as the person is talking. Some of these are auto-generated such as the ones on YouTube and some have to be manually put into the video. Transcripts are the text translation of the audio part of the video. They are usually in the form of associated files.

Consider how someone who is visually impaired or has hearing loss can understand what is happening in your video. As well as providing captions, you may have to provide a descriptive transcript to describes the action. Ask yourself if there are words on the screen or important sound effects that are crucial to understanding the video? If yes, these need to be described in a transcript. For example, if a fire alarm sounds and people are shown running out of the building, you need to say this in the descriptive transcript.

- How to add captions on Android devices: Android has [live captioning facility](#) for viewing media but there are [other methods of captioning a video on Android using various apps.](#)
- Captions on iPhones : captions for videos taken on iPhones have to be typed in manually through a [feature in the phone](#) or can be done automatically using the [Apple Clips app](#).
- How to add captions in [Windows 10 Video editor.](#)

What the law says

In 2010 the Government introduced the [Equality Act](#) to legally protect people from different types of discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.

In 2018 the Government extended the protection against discrimination by bringing in the [Accessibility Regulations](#) to help make sure that public sector bodies (such as
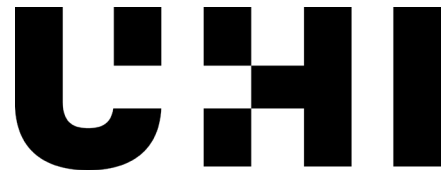
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NHS, councils, Universities, Government departments etc) made their websites and apps more accessible.

Now public sector bodies must:
- meet the [international WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standard](#) - although there may be [valid legal reasons for not meeting accessibility standards](#)
- publish an accessibility statement that explains how accessible their website or mobile app is

UHI
Websites can include *intranets* within an organisation. In the case of [UHI](#), that includes the teaching apps e.g. Brightspace (virtual learning environment) and the learning materials within Brightspace.

Other helpful links
The [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)](#) are the international standards agreed by the [Web Accessibility Initiative](#). These guidelines are the basis of much of the accessibility legislation and 'best practice' guidance worldwide.