



Inclusive Education Research in Physics: Inclusivity in Labs

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Introduction and Goals:

In Summer 2025, the Physics Department at the University of Warwick advertised "paid work opportunities on inclusive education topics", including inclusivity in labs. A team of 1 PhD student and 5 UGs in the department aimed to:

Create a database of common disabilities, challenges they may face in labs, ideas for support and equipment for future reference

Create Declaration of Conditions form for students to self report needs, starting conversation between staff and students

Suggest additions to lab demonstrator training to help students and PhD teachers and their lab experience

"What does an accessible lab even look like? Ask five disabled researchers that question, and they'll likely give five different answers. It's hard to think of just this one design that would fit everybody because disability is so varied and diverse," [1]

Anxiety around unfamiliar setting, equipment, requirements

Problem

Idea

Offer an optional lab tour before the first lab session so students can familiarize themselves with the environment and where key areas are (toilets, water fountains, exits, where to go in case of an emergency, who and where to go to if they are overwhelmed)

Pay 1-2 demonstrators for an extra half hour, very low cost

Cost



Bonus benefit!

Would also give other students chance to see if there might be access issues to flag before labs start...

Visual observations, reading labels, instructions, data collection hard with visual impairments

Problem

Idea



Provide verbal descriptions of demonstrations, use 3D tactile models, allow to explore materials via touch before lab sessions, prepare environment for low vision students e.g. option to sit at the front, well-lit, larger fonts, check any diagrams work for those with colour blindness, Braille labels

Some cost for Braille labels, accessible equipment, screen reading software but one time purchases

Cost

Bonus benefit!

Verbal descriptions/screen reading software help dyslexic students, students with ADHD too

Inability to reliably attend lab sessions due to symptoms such as pain, fatigue, illness, etc

Problem

Idea

Extra time, hold catch up sessions, or adjust marks based on percentage of sessions attended. Ensure some tasks can be completed from home. Declaration of Conditions form to allow for adjustments that might make attendance easier

Overhaul of lab structure and marking systems. Form easy to implement, time to triage responses

Cost



Bonus benefit!

This can only benefit able bodied students too, accessibility helps everyone!!

Further Reading:

Carrie S. (2026, Feb 26th) *Announcing the development of a statement of expectations in relation to disability*, Office for Students, <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/blog/announcing-the-development-of-a-statement-of-expectations-in-relation-to-disability/>

References:

[1] Vasquez K. (2024) *What Laboratories Can Do to Make Space for People with Disabilities*. ACS Central Science, 10(4) 754-757
Icons taken from <https://streamlinehq.com>

Read our full report here!

