Three Tips for All Online Communications

With the advice for everyone to continue working remotely wherever possible and the continued growth and evolution in social media, the vast majority of our communications with colleagues and students is now online.

1. Bear in mind that UL is subject to Freedom of Information requests; anything written in an email or in hardcopy may be disclosed through the FOI process.

2. Approach every online communication platform (MS Teams, Sulis, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Instagram and Blogs. etc) as a potential publication that can be shared (without your knowledge in some instances) with multiple users, and which may be subject to defamatory laws.

3. As in broadcasting studios, act as though every microphone and camera is on and potentially transmitting to the world unless you are absolutely sure otherwise.

Creating Accessible Online Communications

1. Alternative text, or "alt text" is a text description of the content of images, graphs and charts. This enables a screen reader to get a description of what is being conveyed in the image, graph or chart, giving a user with vision loss an accessible way of accessing the same content. When writing alternative text, be succinct, accurate and equivalent in presenting the same content and function of the image. Here is an example of how to add Alt Text in Office Word 365 – it is a very straightforward process.

2. Do not use colour or formatting to convey meaning. Ensure a strong colour contrast between your text and the background in which it is situated in every document, slide, and web page. WebAIM can assist with this.

3. Structure your Word document using paragraph headings and styles or include heading tags for web pages.

4. Use Bullet & Number feature to make Lists and use the nest lists to create structure.

5. Accessible tables will have an identified header row and include a table summary, either as a caption or as alt text. Avoid Merging cells and repeat column headings for tables that run over multiple pages.

6. All video content should include accurate captions. Audio-only content should be accompanied by an accurate transcript.

7. Links can be made accessible by keeping them concise, descriptive, and meaningful. Here's a quick example of how to making links more accessible in most of the Office 365 suite.

8. Capitalising the first letter of every word in your hashtags means that screen reader users can understand what it actually says, instead of a random noise or having each letter read out individually.

9. A really useful tool is the Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Office 365 Word and PowerPoint. It can identify many of the accessibility issues in your content and is available by following this link Use the Office 365 Accessibility Checker.