

# Developing Inclusive Practices

*"It's not really an issue about accommodating special circumstances, it's more an issue about getting a student-centred approach to teaching and learning."*

[Professor Jonathan Montgomery [1]]

## Defining Inclusion

Drawing on a range of definitions [1-17] the Inclusion Task Force has chosen to define inclusive learning and teaching as:

- Recognising, accommodating and meeting the learning needs of all students;
- Recognising that students may reach their goals and realise their potential in different ways – and that this is true particularly for students who have an additional learning need or a disability;
- Recognising that students have valuable skills and expertise that they can bring to the learning experience;
- Acknowledging that students have a range of individual learning needs and are members of diverse communities;
- Avoiding pigeonholing students into specific groups with predictable and fixed approaches to learning.

Approaches to developing inclusive learning and teaching will therefore be underpinned by some or all of the following principles:

**Pro-activity:** planning for and anticipating how to address a range of learning needs;

**Adaptability:** being flexible, varying teaching and assessment practices, making reasonable adjustments, reviewing and modifying practices in the light of feedback and evaluation;

**Coherence:** approaches, methods etc. adopted are consistent, well-organized and ensure equity in terms of how students are dealt with and the learning experiences they are offered;

**Holism:** teaching practice that covers all aspects of curriculum and environment and involves the whole department/institution in a collaborative, seamless and joined-up manner;

**Transparency:** clearly communicating (internally and externally) a consistent message regarding inclusion and being open in communicating and promoting that message.

We are applying these definitions and principles to inclusion as it relates to disability, but they could equally apply to race, culture, gender and other issues. Therefore methods and approaches designed to include students with disabilities could benefit all students [18,19].

## An indicative good practice check-list for Faculties

It is not our intention to produce an exhaustive, formalised good practice checklist because several good ones exist in the public domain already [12-19].

This section therefore provides an overview of the kinds of questions that Faculties could address in relation to inclusion, which is intended to be informative rather than prescriptive.

### Learning environment

How does your Faculty ensure that the venues to be used for teaching and the ways of informing students about that are compatible with the disclosed needs of the students?

How does your Faculty communicate with students with disabilities in order to identify their support needs (e.g. note-taker, sign language interpreter) and the potential implications for the way in which the learning environment is managed?

Does the way in which your Faculty organises placements, study abroad or field trips take the needs of disabled students into account?

### **Learning resources**

Does your Faculty as a matter of routine make the information provided for students in lectures (and other activities) available in ways that take into the account the needs of all students, including those with disabilities?

Are staff in your Faculty aware of the relatively simple ways in which they can make learning resources accessible to all students (e.g. preparing in electronic format, coloured handouts, large font size, wide margins and spaces, reduced use of italics and bold text)?

### **Curriculum design and development**

What flexibility is available in your programme of study in relation to student attendance, part-time or full-time, extensions to programme completion dates, transfer to other programmes and scope for choice of modules or elements within the programme?

In the mapping of assessment to learning outcomes has the possibility of offering alternative assessment tasks to meet the needs of a range of students been considered?

What are the procedures for acquiring feedback from disabled students about courses and how is this applied to course reviews and future course planning?

Where appropriate, are disabled people involved in the process of designing and developing new course/curricula?

Would the content of your course be different if you asked yourself "what is important to disabled people about this subject matter"?

### **Learning and teaching methods and activities**

Does the programme use a variety of instructional strategies or teaching methods?

Are there opportunities for students to suggest different methods/activities or tasks that would meet the learning outcomes?

How do teaching staff take into account the previous experiences of students and the learning strategies they have developed?

Does the ways in which your Faculty makes adjustments to teaching methods and learning activities maximize student's independence?

What arrangements do you make for flexibility over deadlines and timetabling of assessments for students requiring this?

Do teaching staff provide opportunities for the experiences, voices, work and learning of students with disabilities to be shared and valued?

Do the learning and teaching methods used on your programmes encourage students to work together in mixed groups e.g. in lab work?

Do the examples that teaching staff use (e.g. case studies, scenarios) reflect the diversity of people in the community and the workplace? (e.g. with respect to disability, race, culture and gender)

Do students have the opportunity to choose their units, work placements and other learning activities? Are teaching sessions planned to allow question and discussion time, as well as opportunities for reinforcing knowledge and building on what is already learnt?

### **Learning support**

When reviewing students' academic progress, do staff evaluate (in collaboration with students) whether the support requirements of disabled students are being met effectively?

Can teaching staff provide feedback to students on their work/performance in a way that is appropriate for students with disabilities e.g. by email for blind students (so their screen reader can access it) and that recognises success?

Has your Faculty discussed with students, possible procedures that could be put in place to promote trust and respect in your Faculty e.g. setting aside time when students can ask questions or disclose a disability in private or agreeing how to liaise with placement providers over specific needs?

Do teaching staff ask students prior to teaching, about their individual needs and what reasonable adjustments could be made to improve access and inclusion?

### **Staff attitudes and awareness**

Do teaching staff know about other university services that can help to support disabled students?

Are internal and external teaching staff aware of the procedures within the institution/Faculty for accessing support for disabled students?

Have you considered offering appropriate disability awareness or equality training to staff in placement organisations?

Has your Faculty considered the ways in which it might inform staff in advance, of the disclosed needs of students likely to require additional help or modification of teaching practice to enable students to participate e.g. large font size for handouts?

When discussing the needs of disabled students with potential placement providers and other learning support staff do you focus on the positive abilities of the students, rather than the nature of their disability?

### **Student awareness**

Are disabled students advised of the availability of flexible study modes?

Do induction sessions include information about support available for disabled students and how it can be accessed?

Will the induction process enable students to test out their existing strategies for managing their learning and identify what they see as barriers to their learning?

Is your Faculty able to respond flexibly, to requests from students for adjustments and alternatives?

Do teaching staff provide timely guidance to disabled students of the types of learning activities (incl. Placements) they will be expected to undertake, so that students can negotiate and plan their support requirements well in advance?

Is your Faculty able to offer additional assistance within induction into the range of teaching settings and methods used?

Do you positively promote placements, study abroad and field trips to disabled students?

### **Useful Generic Resources**

<http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/alert/>

HEFCE funded project to identify methods of supporting disabled students to enable them to achieve the pedagogical objectives of their VLE. <http://www.open.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching>

Practical advice about teaching inclusively".

Provides an insight into the experience of disabled students including some from Southampton. <http://scips.worc.ac.uk/>

HEFCE funded project that provides a keyword searchable database of strategies for improving access to the curriculum for disabled students. <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/>

## Equality Challenge Unit

### Events, guidance, publications, and resources

Eight online booklets providing advice on how to make a range of L&T activities accessible

<http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/index.html>

Online materials for staff disability awareness:

<http://jarmin.com/demos/course/awareness/index.html>

### Guidelines, check-lists or audit tools

[www.plymouth.ac.uk/assets/SWA/sendadoc.pdf](http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/assets/SWA/sendadoc.pdf) An audit and guidance tool for accessible teaching and learning

Based on a consensus that for systemic change to take place, current practice in the broad areas of admissions, accessible learning, teaching and assessment for disabled students would have to be targeted at all levels.”

### Subject Specific Resources

Draft guides for inclusion in Geography: <http://www2.glos.ac.uk/gdn/icp/gdintro.htm>

Provides pedagogic resources for Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences in relation to learning support for disabled students undertaking fieldwork and related activities:

<http://www2.glos.ac.uk/gdn/index.htm>. Dissemination of Good Teaching, Learning & Assessment Practices in Geography:

HEFCE funded project offering best practice guidance in relation to disabled social work students and placement:

[http://www.hull.ac.uk/pedds/documents/FINALBestPracticeGuideMasterdocJune2005\\_000.pdf](http://www.hull.ac.uk/pedds/documents/FINALBestPracticeGuideMasterdocJune2005_000.pdf).

Offers Guidance for students, practice assessors/teachers, academic staff and disability support staff

Focusing mainly on engineering & the built environment, the aim of the DART Project was to enhance the experience of disabled students by enabling institutions, faculties, departments, and individual members of staff to assess their current level of provision - in relation to learning and teaching - as it affects disabled students: <http://dart.lboro.ac.uk/>. Offers guidance on how to make the curriculum more accessible.

DVD-ROM resources for all students struggling with maths. Includes ‘mini-tutorials’ downloadable to I-pod. Particularly strong in multi-sensory learning, using visual, auditory and ‘hands-on’ activities.: <http://www.mathtutor.ac.uk/> Developed and run by the same institutions as Mathcentre, viz. Universities of Leeds, Loughborough and Coventry and the Educational Broadcasting Service Trust.

Partners in Practice has created a curriculum framework that embeds disability equality in healthcare education, thereby enabling future generations of health and social care professionals to eliminate disability discrimination from clinical practice: <http://www.bris.ac.uk/pip>

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[1] <http://www.open.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching/pages/understanding-and-awareness/how-much-support-should-you-provide.php>