

Inclusive practice is an approach to teaching that recognises the diversity of students, enabling all students to access course content, fully participate in learning activities and demonstrate their knowledge and strengths at assessment. Inclusive practice values the diversity of the student body as a resource that enhances the learning experience.

Why does inclusive practice matter?

- = Higher education institutions (HEIs) have a responsibility to deliver quality teaching and learning to all their students.
- = The student population reflects the increasing diversity of UK society and the success of HEIs in attracting international students.
- = The diversity of students frames the learning experience. Inclusive practice maximises the value of this resource and enriches the experience for all.
- = Students who acquire the skills to work productively with people from different backgrounds are likely to be attractive to potential employers.
- = A proactive approach to inclusion is likely to reduce the time academics would otherwise spend working on a one-to-one basis with students who are experiencing problems with learning.
- = Students have a legal right to teaching that does not discriminate against them on grounds of age, disability, ethnicity, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. Disabled students have a legal right to reasonable adjustments to ensure that their needs to access education are met.

Checklist

Reflecting on your teaching practice

You can increase the effectiveness of your teaching practice by reflecting on diversity, being aware of how your own background and identity are expressed in course design and teaching style, and understanding your reactions to particular individuals and communities to recognise your affinities and prejudices and consider how they affect students' experiences of your course.

Encouraging interaction

As students may be inclined to work with others from a similar background – which may be particularly true for students whose first language is not English – consider allocating teams for group work rather than allowing self-selection, asking groups to reflect on the process of shared projects as well as the task, and encouraging students to reflect on diversity issues in personal learning journals.

Course content

By explaining cultural references and using accessible language, illustrating points with examples that reflect the diversity of your students, recognising how the dynamics of relations between different groups have impacted on your subject field, and acknowledging which voices/issues are not represented you are more likely to engage and motivate all students.

Flexible teaching and assessment methods

By using a variety of teaching and assessment methods (essays, examinations, website and blog development, seminars, presentations, etc) each student will have the opportunity to enhance their strengths and challenge their less-developed learning skills. The response of your students to each activity will enable you to identify whether some methods work better for particular groups of students and to pinpoint any barriers to learning that might need to be addressed.

Meeting disabled students' access requirements

It is important that you understand what reasonable adjustments your disabled students need in order to facilitate their learning, and adapt your teaching methods appropriately. This might affect the rooms used, activities, lecture delivery, the format of materials, coursework and assessment methods.

Accommodating other needs

Students may request alternative arrangements for reasons other than disability – for example a student may ask to be allowed to breastfeed in a lecture – and you will need to decide what can be reasonably accommodated given the nature of the request and the impact on the activity and on other students.

Further information on various aspects of inclusive practice can be found at:

- = www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/evidencenet/Inclusive_learning_and_teaching_in_higher_education_synthesis
- = www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/inclusion/Disability/Inclusive_curriculum_design_in_higher_education
- = www.educationscotland.gov.uk/communitylearninganddevelopment/inclusion/samedifference/approaches/index.asp
- = www2.glos.ac.uk/gdn/icp/index.htm

This is part of a series of factsheets for academics
www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/e-and-d-for-academics-factsheets



Equality Challenge Unit

© **Equality Challenge Unit 2013**

ECU's publications are produced free of charge to the UK HE sector and also for colleges in Scotland. Information can be reproduced as long as it is accurate, the source is identified and it will not be used for profit. Alternative formats are available: E pubs@ecu.ac.uk

Company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales, No. 05689975.
Charity no. 1114417 (England and Wales) and SC043601 (Scotland).