A4.2

Inclusion at the University of Worcester

University of Worcester

Being inclusive in Creating Inclusive Learning and Teaching Environments

What?	How?	Why?
Anticipate diversity.	Assume that your students will come from a variety of socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and include disabled students who may or may not have disclosed a disability to the University[1]. Avoid making assumptions about gender, sexuality, beliefs and values.	Planning teaching for a diverse group will ensure that the vast majority of students will benefit from your teaching methods and the number of students who may feel left behind or confused will be reduced. You will need to make fewer one-off adjustments for students with common disabilities such as dyslexia.
Ensure learning materials are accessible	Check accessibility of electronic texts and websites (https://karlgroves.com/2013/09/05/the-6-simplest-web-accessibility-tests-anyone-can-do) before recommending them to students. Design your resources so that they are compatible from the outset (https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/02/dos-and-donts-on-designing-for-accessibility/).	Not all texts are accessible. Students who use screen-reading and text-to-speech software may find it difficult to read texts which have been repeatedly photocopied and scanned and will therefore be at a disadvantage.
Make good use of Blackboard and think about how you use technology.	Make sure your Blackboard site is organised and accessible. Consider how students with different disabilities will engage with learning tasks that involve different technologies.	This will lead to a more flexible delivery where students can be more actively involved rather than being passive recipients of knowledge. Including audio, visual and interactive formats will enhance learning for a large number of students.[2]

What?	How?	Why?
Create a friendly atmosphere.	Get to know your students, by name if possible, and help them to get to know one another. Develop a sense of learning community built on collaboration and partnership, trust and respect.	A welcoming atmosphere is more conducive to effective learning and engagement. With levels of anxiety amongst students increasing, it is important to create an environment where students feel they can approach staff for support.
Communicate clearly.	Use Plain English (http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/how-to-write-in-plain-english.html) to avoid ambiguity, and practice this in your everyday communications with all students. Think about your communication style – consider slowing down your delivery, always face the students and don't cover your mouth when you're speaking. Provide glossaries of new terms. Use size 12 point sans serif fonts with plenty of blank space between text on all your written communication where possible. Make this your default. See the Disability and Dyslexia Service's design and presentation ideas (https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/documents/Disability_and_Dyslexia_Service_-_design_and_presentation_ideas.pdf) for further guidance.	Students will be less likely to misinterpret essay briefs and exam questions, as well as everyday communication, if it is easy to decipher the meaning. This will make it easier for deaf students or non-native speakers to understand you. Dyslexic students and non-native speakers may have difficulty guessing the spellings of new terms if they don't see them written down.[3] This is the recommended style for dyslexic individuals[4], helping to reduce elements of visual stress associated with reading and therefore making reading more effective.

What?	How?	Why?
Support transition.	Acknowledge that some students will find it harder to adapt to a new level of study and may need additional guidance or support.	It can be hard for some students to settle in to new environments and ways of doing things. They may quickly fall behind or start to feel isolated if they are not supported through change and properly inducted into new systems. Many students find it difficult to ask for help if they seem to be the only one who is struggling.
Check facts and assumptions.	Don't assume prior knowledge of what you think students should know, unless it's something you have covered previously. Consider whether things are tacit or implicit within your subject, and whether additional explanations or context may be required.	Students will have a variety of prior educational backgrounds and may not all be at the same starting point.
Understand the legislative and policy frameworks for equality.	Read the University's Staff guidance for inclusive assessments & making reasonable adjustments. Understand the difference between inclusive practice and the requirement to make reasonable adjustments (https://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/Staff_Guidance_for_inclusive_assessments_web_version_Jan_2021.pdf). Complete the University's Diversity in the Workplace e-learning package (https://www2.worc.ac.uk/personnel/656.htm)	Being more inclusive in the way we deliver learning and teaching will mean more students can benefit without having additional arrangements made, but there will always be individuals who need to do things in a different way because of their disability. This will give you a greater understanding of the law and what constitutes the different forms of discrimination, meaning you'll feel clearer how to approach situations that may arise in your work.

What?	How?	Why?
Encourage interaction.	Provide opportunities for students to get to know each other and work together (see Being inclusive in Group Work). Encourage students to reflect on diversity.	Students are naturally inclined to speak to those who are similar to themselves and may be apprehensive about mixing with others without encouragement. They may also worry about communicating with other students where there is cultural or ethnic diversity, or a sensory or physical disability, but these fears are often dispelled once the initial interaction has taken place. This will enable them to recognise any prejudices they have and how interacting with a diverse group is enriching their learning.
Help students feel they belong.	Ensure the curriculum is diverse by providing examples in teaching materials which reflect the diversity of the student body. This should also be the case for all publicity and marketing materials. Make sure information about University support and advice services is visible and widely available to students.	Providing examples that students can relate to will help to make the curriculum more relevant and meaningful and is likely to inspire and engage them more fully. By ensuring information is widely available, and by avoiding stereotypes, particularly around protected characteristics, students are more likely to seek support if needed and to recognise that it is okay and normal within the institution.
Consider the physical environment.	Think about the accessibility of the room. Flat floors are preferable for group tasks with plenty of space to move furniture. Consider the acoustics of the room for group work and whether there are quieter break-out spaces available for groups.	This will ensure that all students can fully participate. Students with hearing impairments, attention difficulties and non-native speakers may struggle to fully engage if there is too much background noise.

[1] Matthews, N. (2009) 'Teaching the "invisible" disabled students in the classroom: Disclosure, inclusion and the social model of disability', Teaching in Higher Education, 14(3), pp. 229–239

[2] Montgomery, A.P., Hayward, D.V., Dunn, W., Carbonaro, M. and Amrhein, C.G. (2015) 'Blending for student engagement: Lessons learned for MOOCs and beyond', Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 31(6)

[3] Scudmore, R (2013) Engaging Home and International Students – a guide for new lecturers. Higher Education Academy. Available online at: https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/engaging-home-and-international-students-guide-new-lecturers [Accessed April 2021]

[4] British Dyslexia Association – BDA Style Guide. Available online at: https://cdn.bdadyslexia.org.uk/documents/Advice/style-guide/Dyslexia_Style_Guide_2018-final-1.pdf [Accessed April 2021]