HOW TO TEACH WITH INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Learning through diversity
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Foreword

Inclusive practice is about designing learning experiences for all students.

In our university classes we have a diversity of students with a diversity of learning needs and preferences. By catering for a range of student requirements we find that learning opportunities are enhanced for all students.

Take the time to think about how you would provide appropriate learning for a sight-impaired student in your class. Would you provide more podcasts? Would you orally describe diagrams more fully? More tactile materials? This is the situation I faced ten years ago and I had to think about how to communicate ideas that were normally presented symbolically and graphically. Working with this student, I found that I learnt to describe the symbolic and graphical worlds more fully and made audio recordings (of course not podcasts then!). What was interesting was that I made the recordings available to all the class and many other students found them extremely helpful in their learning.

Another example was a student who had an injury to his wrists. He could not write or type. He had a scribe to write the notes in class for him and to write his examination answers. We also allowed him to dictate his assignments or present them orally. This student is now an Associate Professor and he can write again after successful surgery. He still talks about the help we gave him in achieving his academic and personal goals.

Both of these examples are perhaps the easy part of inclusive practice because the barriers to learning were clear. There will be many students who are not so obviously in need of different learning methods. The difficulties they face may not be visible (for example depression or dyslexia); this is in fact the largest and fastest growing group of students identifying with a disability. The same approach is required. A wide range of learning activities and assessments will cater for most of the learning needs and preferences in our classes – and you can plan for this with the design of your unit.

We now have access to fantastic tools to assist us to offer our units in a variety of modes: we have digital recorders to do podcasts quickly and easily; Camtasia software to create talking; and PowerPoints as well as professional video equipment. Students also can be invited to present their assessments in a variety of modes, perhaps multimedia, podcasts, orally or written – this will depend on the learning objectives of the unit.

Providing a range of learning experiences for your students will enhance the learning of students from many different backgrounds. Students who speak languages other than English will benefit from podcasts and visual modes of learning, as will Indigenous students. More material is not necessarily better, but different modes of the same material will cater for a wide range of learning styles.

So I invite you to use your imagination and the tools available to offer students an expanded array of learning experiences and, though you are doing this for students facing obvious barriers, all students will benefit!

This guide:
• explains the foundations of inclusive teaching practice
• sets out practical teaching strategies
• provides contacts for Macquarie services and resources to assist you in your teaching and to support students at risk or facing difficulties
• provides information on additional external resources.

Leigh Wood, Associate Dean, Learning & Teaching, Faculty of Business & Economics

The guide is one of a series produced as part of the Learning Excellence and Development (LEAD) program, which brings together a multi-disciplinary group of University staff, using an action research approach to nurture a responsive teaching culture. Central to the program is pedagogical change for the improvement of learning. The other guides in the series are available in hard copy from the Faculty of Business and Economics, or online at http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/FBE_resources.htm.
Introduction

Teaching in a university with a diverse student population presents opportunities as well as challenges. Every student learns within their own personal context and they may meet barriers within a standardised higher education system. As teachers, we would like to provide our students with a comfortable and accessible environment, while designing and presenting courses, lectures and tutorials that are clear and comprehensible for as many students as possible. The best teaching practice of all is inclusive practice, since strategies that target particular student groups will almost certainly benefit the majority of students. The main factors for successfully reaching your students are as simple as being considerate and exercising empathy – put yourself in their shoes!

This section contains a number of ways which will assist you not only excite your students but also encourage the quiet ones. The techniques are not mutually exclusive and more than one may be used in any class group – for instance, you can use name tags to loosen your group up, and then run a class debate. Try them out and experiment to find the ones you’re comfortable with.

Inclusive teaching practice is also known as “universal design in education”, which involves teaching practice – and the design of products such as software – where as wide a range of students’ needs as possible are accommodated from the planning stages, as opposed to a learning environment which “integrates” diverse students’ needs into standard arrangements. Inclusive teaching practices and universal design in education make the curriculum and its delivery accessible from the very beginning, rather than trying to fix things when we discover that they are not working.

This guide focuses on how you can improve the effectiveness of your teaching practices by reviewing and reflecting on your educational practice, including curriculum development, modes of delivery, and your response to the changing needs of your students. It refers to Macquarie University policies and legislative guidelines – mainly to give an idea of the context you are teaching within – and presents insights from equity principles and academic best practice. In particular, it presents suggestions for teaching strategies as well as considerations for assessment.

The guide is not intended to be exhaustive and so we would encourage you to follow up other resources as well. For instance, there are a couple of excellent Australian websites that can provide you with extra background information and ideas for teaching practice. The “Creating Accessible Teaching and Support” (CATS) website has been set up to offer resources for teachers specifically in relation to students with disability, and it has fact sheets on a range of topics as well as links to other resources. The cultural diversity and inclusive practice (CDIP) website project by Flinders University has many useful resources, including a “toolkit” with general information and teaching strategies. Their approach rests on three essential principles, which highlight the fundamentals of inclusive teaching:

• cultural diversity: relates to the diverse ethnic, religious and language dimensions of all people in a university community.
• inclusive practice: recognises diversity as a resource that enriches a university’s core activities (teaching and learning; research; leadership and administration; and community engagement).
• benefits of celebrating diversity: a culturally inclusive university provides a creative and productive, innovative environment, and promotes mutually respectful relationships.

Myth 1:
Inclusive teaching practices reduce genuine academic competence standards.

Reality: Inclusivity does not involve dumbing down material, it simply aims to ensure that alternative ways of demonstrating or assessing competence standards are developed so as to allow the full participation of students from diverse backgrounds and with a variety of personal attributes.

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1 See http://www.adcet.edu.au/Cats
2 See http://www.flinders.edu.au/cdip. Macquarie University is licensed to use the resources from the website.
Tertiary institutions in Australia are obliged to ensure that all students receive non-discriminatory treatment and there are various Acts designed to eliminate discrimination which apply in the University context. For instance, the Federal Disability Discrimination Act of 1992 and its amendments (2009) include an obligation to provide reasonable educational adjustments. Macquarie University is committed to promoting equity of access to education by removing barriers and providing quality education to everyone who wishes to pursue higher education. The University also has formal and informal policies and guidelines that aim to deliver best practice or are intended to promote inclusive practice (see Policy Central).

This guide seeks to illustrate that although there are legislative and policy obligations on you as educators, these can equally act as guidelines for developing an inclusive teaching environment: inclusive practice is in actual fact good teaching practice. Inclusive practice is a response to student diversity through the development of effective methods of learning and teaching that support all types of learners in the classroom, regardless of their educational background, physical ability, gender, cultural background, religion or beliefs, political affiliations and/or any other individual characteristics. The guide is intended to provide you with some ideas about teaching strategies to incorporate the diversity of backgrounds that students come from, and in so doing make your teaching practice more inclusive for the benefit of all learners. In particular, our aim is to help you challenge some of the standard views of university teaching and patterns or ways of learning.

It is important to remember, however, that you cannot resolve all of the difficulties your students may be grappling with, particularly some personal problems. If you are concerned, the first step is to investigate student support services in your faculty or more generally on campus, particularly Campus Wellbeing; if you are a tutor, discuss the difficulty with your unit convenor. It is recognised by the support services that students may not always be well equipped to seek help when they most need it. You can contact the Campus Wellbeing Service directly for advice and also encourage the student to consult the service. Alternatively you can ask the student if you can refer them to Campus Wellbeing, then someone from the service will contact them. The most important step is for you to recognise there is a problem, then you should refer the student on – even if you have good intentions, unless you are specifically trained in counselling or health you may not be able to offer the appropriate advice. If you are unsure about the veracity of a claim, give the student the benefit of the doubt but requesting a medical certificate may be a reasonable solution. At the end of the guide is an overview of Macquarie Student Support Services and resources for both you and your students.

Accessibility

Accessibility is a general term used to describe the degree to which a product, device, service, or environment is available to as many people as possible. Accessibility can be viewed as the "ability to access" and possible benefit of some system or entity. Accessibility is often used to focus on people with disabilities or special needs and their right of access to entities. Accessibility is strongly related to universal design when the approach involves "direct access". This is about making things accessible to all people (whether they have a disability or not). An alternative is to provide "indirect access" by having the entity support the use of a person’s assistive technology to achieve access (such as screen readers).

From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accessibility

Myth 2:

"Non-traditional" students are under-prepared for university!

Reality: Non-traditional students have different ways of responding to and understanding the academic world, derived from their own cultures and prior learning environments. Culture and tradition influences the way that students think, express themselves and interact in the classroom. While these different ways of seeing the world can sometimes have adverse consequences in higher education, reflecting on your own perceptions and attitudes will facilitate your understanding of your students and allow you to reap the benefits of their diversity.

1 See http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/index.html

4 The Learning and Teaching Centre have produced a short guide to “Services that support students” that has suggestions for who to contact in a range of situations, at: http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/pdfs/060_student_wellbeing.pdf
Planning for diversity

So what is inclusive practice? Think about the students you have met: they come from different backgrounds, they have different needs, and they face different barriers (rather like your academic colleagues!). It is clear that your teaching needs to be sufficiently flexible and well planned to reach as many students as possible. They will differ in learning styles, achievement levels, family structure, ethnicity and socio-economic environment, to name just a few variables. In light of the multitude of complex issues, dynamics and personalities in your classes and in the wider University, the idea behind inclusive teaching is to promote equity of access, participation and achievement throughout the university experience. It is the attitudes and strategies embedded in teaching practice that can ensure that students are not isolated, and potentially discouraged, from successful participation.

When planning for diversity, the main attributes to consider include (in alphabetical order):

• age
• disability and/or health condition
• educational background
• ethnic or cultural background
• fluency in English
• gender
• mental/physical abilities
• religious beliefs
• sexual orientation
• socio-economic background.

Some initiatives which seek to address this diversity amongst students are remedial in nature, that is, they aim to reduce or remove the differences among students. Broader strategies, however, aim to assist all students (including those considered to be from “non-traditional” backgrounds) to improve their learning, skills and adaptation to academic skills and expectations. By providing adequate academic and accessibility support, all learners can be assisted throughout their studies by the use of inclusive teaching; equally learner diversity is a resource that can be used to improve the learning experience of all students.

Proactive inclusive teaching practice includes conducting preliminary assessments of class settings and modes of delivery; that is, assessing the potential for adverse consequences for a particular student group, and finding solutions before the teaching semester commences. Thus disadvantages for certain students can be avoided or minimised; moreover, by meeting the needs of one group of students, the teacher can create opportunities which enhance the learning experience for all students. For example, a student whose first language is not English may require written directions to comprehend the scope and nature of a particular assignment. If you provide for the needs of this student, there will be positive impacts for other members of the class since the same written directions can be helpful for students with hearing or concentration difficulties, and/or someone who may have missed the particular class in which instructions were given due to illness or family responsibilities. Inclusive teaching practice is good teaching practice!

Some of the relevant Macquarie University policies and anti-discrimination legislation are described in the rest of this section, to illustrate the context within which you are teaching as well as to help you with the design of your teaching practice and communication with your (decidedly diverse!) students.

Macquarie University social inclusion policy

Macquarie University has endorsed the federal Strategic Directions 2008–2012 document, and some of the consequent Social Inclusion Principles for Australia (developed as part of the Strategic Directions) are directly relevant to the Macquarie context:

• Reduce disadvantage: ensure people in need benefit from access to good health, education and other services.
• Increase social, civic and economic participation: help everyone to get the skills and support they need so they work and connect with the community.
• Give a greater voice, combined with greater responsibility: governments and other organisations giving people a say on what services they need and how they work, and people taking responsibility to make the best use of the opportunities available.
• Build on individual and community strengths: make the most of people’s strengths, including the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders and people from other cultures.
• Develop tailored services: services working together in new and flexible ways to meet each person’s different needs.
• Early intervention/prevention: preventing problems by understanding root causes and intervening early.
• Use evidence and integrated data to inform policy: finding out what programs work well and understanding why so that good ideas can be shared and to put into effect things that work.
• Planning for sustainability: doing things to help people and communities deal with problems they face now and in the future.

The major focus of the Strategic Directions is to enhance participation by the whole community, with priority groups being identified as those from low SES (socio-economic status) backgrounds and Indigenous students. As a consequence, these objectives were identified specifically for Macquarie University as fundamental to effective social inclusion:

• enhance levels of engagement with regional and Indigenous communities
• expand our scholarships program, particularly for those in financial need
• develop the curriculum so that student experience is enriched from both local and global perspectives
• provide additional support for students at risk.

Culturally inclusive learning and teaching policy at Macquarie
Macquarie University policy\(^7\) also incorporates a further commitment: that of ensuring that staff and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have equal opportunity to participate fully in the university community. People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may self-identify on the basis of:

• ethnic background
• country of birth or descent
• linguistic diversity
• ethno-religious and/or cultural background.

The University aims to encourage cross-cultural understanding by providing global perspectives and developing students’ local and international connectedness, for instance through the People, Planet and Participation units. Objectives for these units include:

• develop and support culturally inclusive learning and teaching practices
• identify opportunities to incorporate international and intercultural perspectives into the student learning experience
• provide programs and resources to recruit and support students from equity groups
• incorporate international perspectives into learning objectives, strategies and curriculum content
• provide professional development for staff to ensure that they have the skills to promote diversity, equity and internationalisation.

The Equity and Diversity Unit website\(^8\) contains an Inclusive Language and Diversity Resource, which describes strategies to further these aims.

Rules and regulations
Students do not have to disclose that they have a disability and they may not wish to do so for many reasons, including embarrassment or a wish to be independent; other students may want such information to remain confidential. However, under the federal Disability Discrimination Act of 1992\(^9\) the University (in this case, teaching staff and curriculum developers) has a positive obligation to ensure that measures have been taken to ensure accessibility to all students and that there is no discrimination against a student with a disability. Furthermore, if a student advises you that they have a disability or mental illness, you have a responsibility to encourage them to register with campus services (such as the Disability Service) so that appropriate support can be provided for them. Since your main expertise is in students’ academic welfare, it is better for you and the University to leave decisions of appropriate reasonable adjustments to a qualified member of staff and the student. The most common situation, however, is that you will only know a student has a disability if support services staff ask for some kind of accommodation to be made.

The Equity and Diversity Unit is developing a Disability Action Plan (DAP), due to be introduced in 2011. The priority areas for the DAP are: planning and policy; learning and teaching; information access; the physical environment; employment and professional development; and campus community.

There are other pieces of anti-discrimination legislation (either under federal or NSW law) which apply\(^{10}\) and the relevant Acts include:

• Age Discrimination Act 2004
• Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
• NSW Anti-discrimination Act 1977
• Racial Discrimination Act 1975
• Sex Discrimination Act 1984.

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\(^{7}\) See http://www.mq.edu.au/socialinclusion/equitydiversity/index.html

\(^{8}\) See http://www.mq.edu.au/socialinclusion/research/plans/SocialInclusionplans.html

\(^{9}\) See http://www.mq.edu.au/socialinclusion/CALD/index.html

\(^{10}\) See http://www.hreoc.gov.au/info_for_employers/law/index.html to find out more about legislative requirements.
Strategies for INCLUSIVE TEACHING

General principles
The aim of this section is to provide you with some ideas for designing curriculum and lesson plans, presenting classes and running tutorials. The key approach is to anticipate and cater for the needs of most students: this is important because any changes you may attempt to make after the semester starts may be too late to be truly effective.

Monash University has an online checklist you could refer to in the context of inclusive practice when planning materials, classes and assessment. In addition, consider your whole curriculum from an accessibility perspective for those with disability, for instance, is all unit information accessible or adaptable? In simple terms, is it available online in Word or RTF format?

The key strategy is – be flexible! If a student has particular requirements, or has difficulty with your modes of delivery, it is not a personal insult to you. Some of the ideas in this section may take a little extra planning, but this will almost certainly benefit many of your students.

Some of the strategies here could be considered as simply good teaching practice, while others refer to special needs that need to be catered for. Assessment is discussed separately in the following section.

Icebreakers
A companion guide in the LEAD series, How to lead discussions – Learning through engagement, has suggestions for helping students feel at ease in the classroom and in online discussions, and these icebreakers are a sample:

What language?
These are suitable for a class that has students from different language or cultural backgrounds. Some students are understandably self-conscious about the fluency of their English, or unfamiliar with Australian idiom. Many students simply do not empathise well with others and these exercises allow them to develop a greater understanding.

One method is to ask several students (preferably volunteers) to say where they were born, what their native language is, if they speak any other language besides English, and if they studied another language at school. Then, in a spirit of fun not humiliation, if the student knows any language other than English you can get them to say something in that language.

The point is to see what it must be like for those students whose original language is not English. More importantly, these students witness the process, and so they hopefully feel more accepted and less shy when they need to talk in class. Online tools can enable students to record their message as a voice file and post it to the discussion. You can then invite students to say something in another language and post it to the discussion. This method can also be done as a text posting.

Alternatively, create a list of ‘Aussie’ words and phrases – be imaginative and write down as many as you can that are commonly used. Then try and put each one in a sentence to explain their meaning. In particular, think of ones that you use frequently – this will prepare the class for the semester ahead!

Get a class discussion going about the terms, and talk about which ones they might find incomprehensible or offensive. Then get them to offer examples they know from other languages which might correspond to your list – some expressions do have quite close versions in other languages, while others are wildly different. This can also be done online.

Speed dating
Speed dating is a technique to get to know people quickly. You have 3 minutes with each person to find out more about them, and then you move to the next person at the sound of a bell (or whatever). You can split the class into two and form two lines or a circle (perhaps having half sitting at desks and the others moving). Each person has to find three important pieces of information about each other person. You can follow this with asking people to recall all the names of those they talked to – there are many follow-up activities that could be used. The facilitator can be part of the ‘dating’.

The speed dating technique can also be used for content dialogue. Students can have 5 minutes with each person discussing the three most important points of the topic then move on. Different people will have different ideas. Because this is a one-to-one activity, it is useful at the beginning of the semester to help people build rapport, and to give an understanding of other people’s backgrounds.

In online groups, students can post short introductions and also respond to other’s postings.

Varied learning styles and learning outcomes

The use of varied teaching and learning methods enhances student engagement since the ways that people learn can differ considerably. The variety of ways that they generate, organise and express their thoughts should therefore be a serious consideration when developing curricula and planning class structures. A mix of interactive and planned classes can engage students from a variety of backgrounds and with different student learning styles. Course/curricula alignment is also essential, that is, ensuring that course inputs (what you teach) are aligned to what you want students to know when they test them (outputs, or learning outcomes – what students learn).

An inclusive curriculum also encourages the expression of discipline-specific thought in multiple forms, which will allow for diverse needs and abilities. For instance, you could choose to assess students’ understanding of learning objectives in varied ways, not just in the form of written assignments or examinations. An inclusive curriculum also challenges standardised academic concepts of learning – including knowledge modes, academic skills and discipline content – which encourages students to apply discipline knowledge as it applies in their own cultural contexts. Provision for alternative ways of seeing issues can also promote critical thinking, a valued graduate capability.

Special needs

At Macquarie University students are able to inform the University that they have special requirements, although they are not legally required to disclose any disability. It is up to the student to contact Campus Wellbeing if they think they will need support or have special requirements, which they can do at any stage of their course. When registering with the service, students demonstrate in some way (such as a medical certificate) that they do have a disability or existing health condition. Professional staff will then work with the student to determine what reasonable adjustment(s) is/are most appropriate for them.

In the interests of protecting the student’s privacy, this information will not necessarily be passed on to the unit convenor or lecturer. When it comes to assessment – tests and examinations – the unit convenor or lecturer will be notified by Campus Wellbeing about what reasonable adjustments need to be provided for a particular student.

You cannot ask students if they have a disability and/or health condition to protect the students’ privacy; however, you can let your classes know that support services are available and that reasonable adjustments can be made when required (such as large print, use of assistive technologies). Make it clear that there is no stigma attached to seeking assistance as there are many reasons a student may be reluctant to ask for help. Alternatively, students may be already well prepared, or may not want to be dealt with any differently to other students – this is a personal choice.

As educators we need to accept that developing accessible curricula is a fundamental equal opportunity and human rights issue, and it is our issue to address.

The main services you and your students can access are:

- **Campus Wellbeing** – they deal directly with students; and can advise academic staff on strategies.
- **MQAS** – this is a unit of the Learning and Teaching Centre; they can convert learning materials to accessible format, and assist teaching staff with accessible and inclusive curriculum design and delivery.
- **Equity and Diversity Unit** – this has a broader policy role for the University; they deal with equity issues for staff, and more recently for students as well.

One technique to assist with the design of an inclusive curriculum is by estimating the numbers per cohort of students from particular backgrounds (indigenous students, international students, those of low socio-economic status, and so on), or with a specific impairment. For disability, a reasonable estimate can be derived by using statistics collected by Campus Wellbeing, and your department should have figures for other potentially disadvantaged students. By catering for the more likely scenarios, you will be acting proactively and will also be able to address the individual requirements of students.

Online resources

Electronic and online versions of material can easily be adapted for different kinds of use and will therefore meet a wide range of needs. Technology can assist your classes to be more inclusive; for example, i-lectures can support external students as well as students who cannot attend due to illness, financial difficulties or family commitments. Other media such as web forums can provide additional resources for students with varied learning styles and abilities, such as those with learning difficulties or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Note that currently it is preferable to use online Journals because then students can more easily change the format for accessibility. Putting materials into e-reserve or into BlackBoard should be augmented by the use of online Journals for the students who require them, because currently these forms are not accessible; this should be remedied over the next few years as the University moves to Moodle and e-reserve is updated.

Points to consider:

- Written materials online need to be provided in Word or RTF format – or Word or RTF as well as a PDF file – because some conversion software requires Word files or RTF files.
- The use of i-lectures or podcasts (audio and visual recordings) allows for students who may have difficulties with either attending in person or concentration; however, they should also be captioned where possible for students with hearing difficulties.
- Captioning can also be used with videos and DVDs.
- Using i-lectures also may assist those for whom English is an additional language to go back over a lecture at their own pace.
Flexibility and preparation

- Prepare the curriculum and materials early. If conversion of materials is necessary, such as into Braille, a significant lead time may be required. Alternatively, a deaf student may require a sign language interpreter who would need to be familiar with the terminology you may use during class and this requires preparation.
- Be supportive of the presence of note takers (scribes), sign language (or Auslan) interpreters or other support people in the class.
- Ensure that your classes are held in accessible rooms. You may find that one or more of your students are wheelchair users; others may require support technology.
- Discuss the details of any arrangements with the individual student, as they are the best judge of what they need.
- Provide students with an opportunity to see you in private as they might not feel comfortable disclosing their needs in front of others.
- Familiarise yourself with the support services available on campus – a selection of these is listed at the end of this guide.

Reading

Reading is an activity that takes time. A rough estimate is that it takes around 5 minutes to read one page on a superficial level. Reading for thorough comprehension will take longer; and if the cultural assumptions or language are unfamiliar to the reader, then it will take even more time. So you need to consider carefully the length of time it will take your students to read and digest properly any material you produce. This applies to all the materials you might use, including handouts, PowerPoint presentations and website content. Reading lists also can be over-ambitious and require an excessive amount of time to get through; or the sources may simply be written at a level that is too complex. One solution is to divide the list into those that are core requirements, plus readings that the enthusiastic student can follow up. Students are not doing only your unit and may have many conflicting demands on their time.

Class length

Consider the length and structure of classes: including a number of short breaks within any activity will assist people with short attention spans, illness, and even the “average student” to pay attention effectively for longer. Some students may still require extra breaks, but avoid drawing attention to these students if they leave; if you are concerned about the frequency and timing of their breaks, ask them privately what the problem is.

Speaking

Speaking clearly and at a moderate pace, using plain English vocabulary, will benefit students with a disability as well as those students whose fluency in academic English may be limited. Students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as well as domestic students may struggle with understanding your speech or complex words and jargon. It is also wise to avoid colloquialisms, difficult words, metaphors or analogies which could be hard to follow.

Obviously some technical terms may be unavoidable, but they need to be explained clearly as your students’ understanding of the words may be different to yours. Face the students when talking and do not obscure your mouth as some students may be lip reading.

You can also discuss with your students what they think are the most effective teaching and learning strategies for them. Try to encourage participation by everyone in your classes, but at the same time you do not want to force anyone. It is also a good idea to explain why you want them to participate since this is not a standard method in some educational systems (they may think you are being lazy!).
What to avoid

Language that may be considered offensive – this can range from terms for particular groups of people, to statements that might insult or invalidate others’ ways of being. Be respectful of the students and their socio-cultural diversity. Avoid isolating or humiliating students by airing assumptions and stereotypes; insulting jokes or comments will isolate and/or offend such students, while many others in your class will think less of you for it. Also take care with cultural references – it can be interesting for your students to hear about cultural differences, but be sure of your facts and be careful not to show a preference for any particular cultural practices. If in doubt, leave it out!

Seeking diversity

Create an atmosphere that is open, positive, supportive and hopefully enjoyable. Encourage participation and also recognise that some students may feel intimidated or threatened if they are forced to participate. Give students opportunities to work with each other in groups and then report their findings back to the whole class: the extrovert in the group will inevitably be selected to report back. Provide constructive feedback early and frequently to help students feel that they can do well (see our guide on this subject, How to give quality feedback – Learning through dialogue). Also be aware that students with mental health conditions and learning difficulties may find two-way communication troublesome for a variety of reasons.

Most of all, seek out the diversity in your classrooms, and have fun!

Presentation of materials

• Multimedia and multi-sensory approaches, and mixing verbal and visual techniques, make presentations more interesting as well as being of assistance for some impairments.
• Font style, size and line spacing are important for people with sight impairment.
• Materials can be designed for use with a screen reader in Word or RTF format.
• Use both text and diagrams or images where possible to explain a point.
• Orally describe images when presenting them in class.
• Provide transcripts of lectures and audio-visual material – this may only be necessary for those who request it.
• Provide a written overview of unit information before each class.
• During a class, write the main points up on the board to reinforce understanding and allow all students to keep track of the discussion.
• Ask the students to put up their hands when they want to contribute and to state their name before they speak each time; this can assist students who may have trouble following discussions.
• You could arrange for student note takers for each class and have them provide the notes electronically; you or they could distribute them to rest of the class.

Myth 3:

Equal opportunity means that everyone should be treated the same – so students with disability or facing other difficulties should not be entitled to support services.

Reality: Equal opportunity means all people should be treated in a way that enables them to achieve their potential. Macquarie University’s support services assists students with such tasks as reading and processing information, conducting library research, preparing assignments, photocopying and performing manual procedures that they may have trouble with otherwise.

Myth 4:

Students with disabilities are more likely to drop out of courses than other students, even when given support.

Reality: These students withdraw from study or training courses for the same range of reasons as other students, but they are not more likely to do so. In fact, recent research by the University of Tasmania demonstrates that students with disability who have access to required services are less likely to withdraw than students who do not have disability.
For assessment to be effective there needs to be alignment between the assessment of the mastery of content knowledge and academic skills in relation to the stated learning outcomes for a unit. Effective assessment relies on measuring student achievement in coursework by having the student demonstrate what they have learned, with their demonstration of knowledge being evaluated against the core requirements for success in a particular course. It is important that the form of the assessment itself does not require capabilities beyond the required discipline knowledge and acquired skills; for instance, you do not want it to be a test of English language skills unless that is a stated learning outcome. Outcomes-based education is founded on alignment between curriculum design and assessment.

There are two useful Macquarie websites which can help here; and the Accessible Assessments website at Sheffield Hallam University provides suggestions for designing assessments for students with specific impairments. There are three distinct ways of creating accessible assessment activities for those with special needs:

• alternative assessments involves providing a completely different assessment (type or mode) for some students;
• additional arrangements involves providing extra resources for particular students, such as a computer, a scribe, an online version of the assessment, or even a calculator;
• adjustments to assessments involves providing variations to the implementation of the assessment activity; for example, with written tests a requirement might be extra time, a separate location, assistive technology, or a chance to re-sit the test.

It is important to use a variety of assessment tasks as much as possible, so that students are assessed across a range of forms. This could include offering students the choice of different types of assessment; for instance, a student with anxiety may choose an essay instead of sitting for an examination. Variations to the mode of assessment to accommodate learning styles and difficulties include informal dialogues; self/peer assessment; online tests; teamwork projects; and holistic course-performance evaluation. Group presentations can benefit certain students who may have anxieties about written assessments, although others may find them a barrier. Ideally, inclusive assessment design would involve the use of a variety of assessment tools within a subject, with the facility for student grading systems to be flexible enough to cater for individual circumstances.

A companion guide in the LEAD series is How to create exams – Learning through assessment. This has been written specifically to help with the design of exams for a culturally and linguistically diverse student group, but it also could give you some guidance in designing other forms of assessment. It describes:

• general considerations for designing an examination for a diversity of student needs
• aligning exams to learning outcomes
• structuring the questions
• wording the questions
• presentation of the exam.

Some Macquarie University policies and procedures also include guidelines about assessment, for example:

• The Assessment Policy states that all assessments will: "Recognise and value student diversity, including the indigenous and international character of the student body and promote and support internationalisation and the international experience of learning to achieve personal, social and cultural development by students, teachers, and the University community." Assessments should also: "Exemplify ethical practice, honesty, integrity, objectivity, equity, social justice, tolerance and inclusiveness, thus providing an opportunity for success for all students."
• The Examination Policy states that the University is committed to catering for students with a disability or other special needs.


See http://www.shu.ac.uk/services/lti/accessiblereassessments

• There is a Special Consideration Procedure, giving students the opportunity to contact the Disability Service at Campus Wellbeing for information about available support.

• A section on inclusive practice in The Guide to Implementation of Assessment Policies and Procedures notes that:

“Assessment must abide by Macquarie University statements about equity and inclusiveness. They must reflect a positive value related to diversity among students in relation to process and content. Certain modes of assessment may privilege some students and disadvantage others. Every attempt must be made to identify and rectify any unintended negative consequences in the assessment design and processes. Reasonable adjustment in teaching and assessment methods must be made to accommodate students with an officially recognised disability, impairment or medical condition.”

You have now successfully guided your diverse students through your course. We have highlighted planning as an essential feature of inclusive teaching, mostly because reactive adjustments of teaching practices are often too late to be meaningful for the students affected. The adoption of accessibility and inclusivity practices benefits all students, not just those with a particular background.

The next two sections present information about resources available at Macquarie University – for staff and students – and elsewhere for you to assist your students, or to find out more about inclusive practice.

**Myth 5:**

Students with disabilities are too time-consuming and their needs are too difficult to cater for in a university environment.

**Reality:** These students are highly motivated to attend tertiary education and training and overcome any barriers they may encounter during their participation. They are usually very well organised and experienced in finding solutions to problems which may initially appear daunting to staff. Moreover, the support you require to assist these students is readily available within the University.

**Myth 6:**

Some courses are not suitable for students with disability.

**Reality:** This statement stems from preconceived ideas about people’s capabilities, accommodating their course needs and future employment options. Such students have the same right as others to aim for careers consistent with their goals, interests and abilities and should not be denied opportunities because of such preconceptions.

**Myth 7:**

Students with disability create substantial costs, for instance through the provision of extra equipment and additional staff time.

**Reality:** Not all students will require assistive equipment or additional learning support. Appropriate site and delivery modifications are often simple and low cost. Moreover, equipment and support personnel, such as interpreters and note takers, are provided to students through separate funding from the Federal Government and these ‘extra requirements’ are provided to the student independently of teaching staff.

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**Q – Should alternative assessments be made available to all students?**

**A –** If you have decided that the alternative assessment meets the intended learning outcomes and maintains academic standards, then why shouldn’t all students have the choice to undertake this particular form of assessment? If you decide that this is not appropriate, you need to ask yourself: why not? In the case of formal examinations, how important is it that the examination is time-bounded? What skills are being assessed? If it is the ability to work under pressure, what is the relative weighting of this skill compared with the others being tested, such as knowledge, or the construction of essays? In other words, consider the possibility of redesigning the assessment for everyone.

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Faculty of Business and Economics
In this section are some faculty-specific resources and programs:

1. BESS (Business and Economics Student Services) is a drop-in centre in room 106, Building E4B, for students who are taking units within the Faculty. Students can talk to Peer Advisers, who act as a first port of call for general enquiries as well as for explaining FBE and University processes. They can also suggest options to get further help and information. BESS also runs:
   • a peer-assisted learning program for accounting units
   • conversation groups to develop language skills.

For more details see: http://www.businessandeconomics.mq.edu.au/new_and_current_students/undergraduate_current_students/bess.

In addition, BESS can help academic staff with alternative arrangements for tests or exams for students with particular needs.

2. The Faculty has an academic writing support service for postgraduate students:
   http://www.businessandeconomics.mq.edu.au/new_and_current_students/higher_degree_research_students/support/academic_writing_specialists.

3. The Centre for Macquarie English provides a range of workshops for Master of Accounting students, including:
   • Embedded workshops – these workshops are embedded in the standard lecture framework and are developed in collaboration with lecturers. They reflect the communication requirements of the study unit.
   • Transition workshops – These workshops are scheduled weekly over the first five weeks of the semester and focus on study strategies and writing skills.

Individual consultations are also available to students for help with specific language or communication issues.

4. The Department of Linguistics (in the Faculty of Human Sciences) runs a communication course: ACBE100 Academic Communication in Business and Economics. It is worth 3 credit points and it is counted as a People unit.

5. The Numeracy Centre offers assistance to students doing mathematics and statistics subjects, such as ACST101 Techniques and Elements of Finance, and STAT170 Introductory Statistics. They have a drop-in centre and also run exam preparation workshops.

Student Support Services
Campus Wellbeing is the main contact for student support services:
http://www.campuslife.mq.edu.au/campus-wellbeing

The Learning and Teaching Centre have also produced “A guide to services that support students”; see http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/pdfs/060_student_wellbeing.pdf

Campus Wellbeing’s services include:
• Disability Service – reasonable adjustments and assistance to students who have a disability and/or a health condition at http://www.campuslife.mq.edu.au/campus-wellbeing/disability-support-unit.
• Counselling – free, confidential counselling for students to discuss any issue of concern, including psychological, emotional and/or social difficulties affecting academic progress, university and personal life.
• Medical – a comprehensive general practitioner service to all students and staff including sexual health, preventative medicine and women’s health.
• Welfare – a support, information, advocacy and referral service on welfare, health and wellbeing related matters such as financial, tenancy, legal, sexuality, drugs and alcohol, mental health, and sexual health.
• An online “Self Help area” for a range of issues, relevant for both staff and students: http://www.campuslife.mq.edu.au/campus-wellbeing/counselling/self-help-resources

There are also services and advice for international students:
http://www.international.mq.edu.au/studentservices
Study Skills Support Unit
This is a support unit in the Dean of Students Office that offers academic support as well as a range of literacy study skills. [http://www.mq.edu.au/studyskillssupport/index.html](http://www.mq.edu.au/studyskillssupport/index.html). They provide:

- study skills workshops – these cover a range of topics, and there are extra workshops available for international students
- individual consultations
- online resources relating to different aspects of learning
- online resources on study skills development
- free academic writing programs for students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

There is also an interactive online study skills site via a student ID number, which deals with forming study plans (“Taking Charge”); and “Effective Academic Reading”: [http://learn.mq.edu.au/webct/RelativeResourceManager/15797077001/Public%20Files/index.html](http://learn.mq.edu.au/webct/RelativeResourceManager/15797077001/Public%20Files/index.html)

Macquarie University Library
Don’t forget the Library! It too has many resources, and you can ask staff for assistance:
[http://www.library.mq.edu.au/academic-staff/](http://www.library.mq.edu.au/academic-staff/)

Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Human Sciences
The department has courses and online modules to assist students to develop academic literacy:
[http://www.ling.mq.edu.au/support/academic_literacy.htm](http://www.ling.mq.edu.au/support/academic_literacy.htm)

- Academic Literacy for Research Students (online modules for HDR students).
- Core Academic Literacy Workshops (for students doing postgraduate studies by coursework).
- Academic Literacy Units for undergraduates for credit - ACSC100 for science students; and ACSH100 for humanities and social science students.
- Writing Skills Program for undergraduates (not for credit).

Learning and Teaching Centre
The Macquarie University Accessibility Services is a unit of the Learning and Teaching Centre (LTC) and they can convert learning materials to accessible formats, as well as assist you with accessible and inclusive curriculum design and delivery (see [http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/mqas](http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/mqas)). They have educational developers who can give you one-to-one support with:

- advice with the development of accessible curricula to meet the needs of students with disabilities and other access needs;
- information on best practice access methodology;
- conversion of materials into accessible formats, such as Braille, large font, audio books, or for screen readers;
- resources such as training and support material;
- the use of new and emerging technologies.

There are also links for curriculum development resources at: [http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/mqas/services.htm](http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/mqas/services.htm).

- LTC has many other resources and links; see [http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/index.htm](http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/index.htm) for a list. Of particular interest on the website are:
  - tips for encouraging diversity: [http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/diversity.htm](http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/diversity.htm)
  - resources for accessible and inclusive curricula: [http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/inclusivity.htm](http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/inclusivity.htm)

Centre for Macquarie English
The Centre for Macquarie English (CME) is at: [http://www.cme.mq.edu.au](http://www.cme.mq.edu.au)

CME provides language and literacy classes for domestic and international CALD students. Their programs include English language classes, intercultural communication workshops, and individual support. They also provide a range of discipline-specific language and academic study skills programs for University faculties; these programs are funded by individual faculties and provided free of charge to students where students can learn academic strategies in the context of their own discipline. Support for enrolled students can be provided to faculties and departments in one of the following ways:

- embedded programs – workshops designed in collaboration with content specialists
- transition programs, to provide a bridge for international students
- consultations with students.

For more information, see: [http://www.cme.mq.edu.au/courses/postentry.html](http://www.cme.mq.edu.au/courses/postentry.html)

Macquarie Writing Gateway
Macquarie Writing Gateway is an online resource which has writing exercises, guides to academic writing and numerous links. It can be accessed by students with their student ID and password; staff can access it if they are registered Blackboard users. It is available at: [http://writinggateway.mq.edu.au](http://writinggateway.mq.edu.au)

Don’t forget the Library! It too has many resources, and you can ask staff for assistance:
[http://www.library.mq.edu.au/academic-staff/](http://www.library.mq.edu.au/academic-staff/)

LTC has many other resources and links; see [http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/index.htm](http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/index.htm) for a list. Of particular interest on the website are:

- tips for encouraging diversity: [http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/diversity.htm](http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/diversity.htm)
- resources for accessible and inclusive curricula: [http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/inclusivity.htm](http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/inclusivity.htm)
Numeracy Centre
The Numeracy Centre is at: http://www.maths.mq.edu.au/numeracy/.
It has two main aims:
- To improve students’ access to mathematics and numeracy-based courses, such as statistics, at undergraduate and postgraduate level.
- To improve students’ completion rates of mathematics and numeracy-based courses.

The Numeracy Centre offers a number of services including a free drop-in service, weekly workshops for some first year courses, bridging programs and preparatory courses at the beginning of each semester and some on-line resources.

Policy Central
Macquarie University has developed a set of overarching policies and procedures that apply across the campus; these are regularly modified and some are still under development. They address the main points of importance and are generally quite short. The main site is at http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/index.html. Relevant policies and procedures include:
- Inclusive Learning & Teaching: https://www.mq.edu.au/socialinclusion/inclusivelearning.html

Currently under development are:
- Disability Action Plan
- Accessibility Policy
- Guidelines for non-discriminatory language and presentation.

Equity and Diversity Unit
This Unit provides advice and assistance on equity and diversity matters for Macquarie staff and students. They also facilitate events throughout the year to increase knowledge, celebrate diversity and build a strong sense of a university community for all. They work closely with faculties and offices on developing local plans, and with the five MUSRA student equity representatives on events and awareness-raising.
The Unit focuses on both policy development and proactive initiatives around gender equity, Indigenous engagement, disability awareness and cultural and linguistic diversity.

Their work includes: “Macquarie Women” (guest speakers, round tables and celebrations); Reconciliation Calendar; Indigenous traineeships (professional staff) and cadetships (undergraduate students); the Ally Network (supporting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex [GLBTI] staff and students); Diversity Week events (1st week of semester 2); development of the Disability Action Plan; work placements for people with disabilities (in partnership with CRS Australia); as well as language cafés and workshops on Courageous Conversations About Race.
The Equity and Diversity Unit is also involved in the case management of discrimination-related grievances for staff and students.

Staff and students are welcomed and encouraged to become involved. For more information you can call 9850 9703 (reception); or contact Kate.Wilson@mq.edu.au; or go to http://www.mq.edu.au/socialinclusion/equitydiversity/index.html

Myth 8:
People with disabilities will be less attractive to employers because they will be less efficient, less reliable, or unsafe employees.

**Reality:** A number of research studies indicate that this is untrue. People with disability value their work role and have fewer injuries; many are more efficient and lose fewer work days than colleagues without a disability.

Myth 9:
Students with disabilities are better off if they study through external courses.

**Reality:** Confinement to external study alone can restrict opportunities for interaction in a stimulating social, intellectual and learning environment. Many students who have a disability want to study on-campus and they are welcome at Macquarie.
If you want to KNOW MORE

If you would like to know more, here are some references and external links on inclusive practice that you may find interesting.

External resources

The CDIP website, Flinders University, has many resources for inclusive practice: http://www.flinders.edu.au/cdip

The CATS website, run by the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET), has resources for teaching students with disability at http://www.adcet.edu.au/Cats

Another website with resources around disability issues, from The Open University in the UK, is Making your teaching inclusive at http://www.open.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching/index.php

A UK Employability and Disability website has resources for staff and students on disability and general graduate skills, at http://www.usemyability.org

University of Tasmania (1999), Inclusive Practice is Good Practice, UTas Press, includes a variety of resources at http://services.admin.utas.edu.au/Gateways/IPIGP_pubs/ipigp.html


Checklist for designing inclusive teaching practice by Monash University at http://www.monash.edu/lls/inclusivity/Strategies/2.5.html

The Cross-cultural supervision site: this is the product of a Macquarie University project and is a website with various resources for supervision of HDR students, at http://www.altexchange.edu.au/group/cross-cultural-supervision-project


References


This booklet is one of a series produced for the Learning Excellence and Development (LEAD) program. The program brings together as a team a multi-disciplinary group of university staff – general staff as well as academics – each working on a separate but related project to enhance student learning. The projects use an action research approach to nurture a research-based and responsive teaching culture. The program is managed by the Faculty of Business and Economics.

The guides are available in hard copy from the Faculty of Business and Economics, or online at http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/FBE_resources.htm

Other publications in the “How to” series include:
How to run a LEAD project – Learning through innovation
How to lead discussions – Learning through engagement
How to create exams – Learning through assessment
How to give quality feedback – Learning through dialogue
How to collaborate with peer observation – Learning from each other
Do you want to:
- engage as many of your students as possible?
- plan your teaching to reach students with a disability?
- celebrate the diversity in your classes?
- get advice on curriculum development to incorporate diversity?
- direct students in difficulty to the right place to get help?

Then inclusive teaching practice is for you!
Whether you are part time or full time; casual or permanent; a tutor or lecturer; at the start of your academic career or experienced for many years – there should be something in this guide to help you enhance your teaching and support your students.