

A Guide to Inclusive Curriculum & Educational Practice

CONTENTS

1	Introduction.....	3
2	Principles of Inclusive Practice	3
3	What is Inclusive Educational Practice?	4
3.1	Empower all students to thrive in diverse environments	4
3.2	Co-create with students to enrich the learning environment.....	4
3.3	Diversify the curriculum and broaden intellectual horizons so that students can see themselves reflected and reach beyond themselves	5
3.4	Enable student engagement and success through inclusive pedagogy	5
3.5	Develop students' confidence to participate in disciplinary discourse and community.....	5
3.6	Reflect on our language to promote an inclusive learning environment.....	5
3.7	Value student feedback.....	5
3.8	Encourage all students through inclusive advising and mentoring.....	6
4	What is Inclusive Curriculum Design?	7
4.1	Inclusive curriculum: could the following impact on students on your programme/module?	7
4.2	Examples of interventions to make the curricula more inclusive:	7
5	What is Inclusive Assessment Design?	8
6	What is Critical Reflection on the Curriculum?	9
7	Additional External Resources*	10
8	References	11
9	Terminology.....	13
9.1	Equality	13
9.2	Diversifying the curriculum	13
9.3	Diversity.....	13
9.4	Inclusion.....	13
9.5	Equality Act 2010: Protected Characteristics	14
10	Contributors.....	14
11	Contact us.....	14

1 INTRODUCTION

This guide has been developed through a strategic project called “Curriculum Enhancement”. This project is part of the enabling plan for the [Queen Mary University of London's Strategy 2030](#). The Curriculum Enhancement project ran during 2021 and 2022 and was composed of three workstreams. The workstreams were Assessment and Feedback, Graduate Attributes, and the Inclusive Curriculum. The work on Inclusive Curriculum has involved many discussions with a wide range of stakeholders on this complex and important topic. We are grateful to all the contributors, please find the workstream membership in section 10.

2 PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Inclusion is about the right of all students to gain access to the same learning opportunities at university, and that all students should be provided with the support they need to enable them to achieve and to be valued for who they are.

Drawing on Queen Mary University of London's Strategy 2030, to “be inclusive and maintain our proud tradition of nurturing and supporting talented students and staff regardless of their background and circumstance”, curriculum, and teaching and assessment practices must be “progressive, inclusive” and be “always devised with the student at the centre” (Queen Mary University of London, 2020).

To develop the inclusive pedagogic practices needed to achieve these goals, educators should start by recognising that they “have the opportunity to begin creating and nurturing environments where multiple forms of knowledge, identities, locations, and ways of knowing hold credence” (Osei-Kofi et al., 2008; Apert et al., 2017). This is a shift away from an understanding of inclusivity that centres around student deficits and refocuses the conversation on individual students’ abilities and needs, and critically evaluates educational and institutional practices to identify those that may alienate certain students. To continue to devise a curriculum that centres the student as a partner in knowledge construction, inclusive pedagogy embraces a wide range of differences and is attuned to the impact of pedagogical initiatives on individual learners.

Through a collaborative cross faculty and services initiative, a set of overarching principles have been developed to guide inclusive education at Queen Mary, these are:

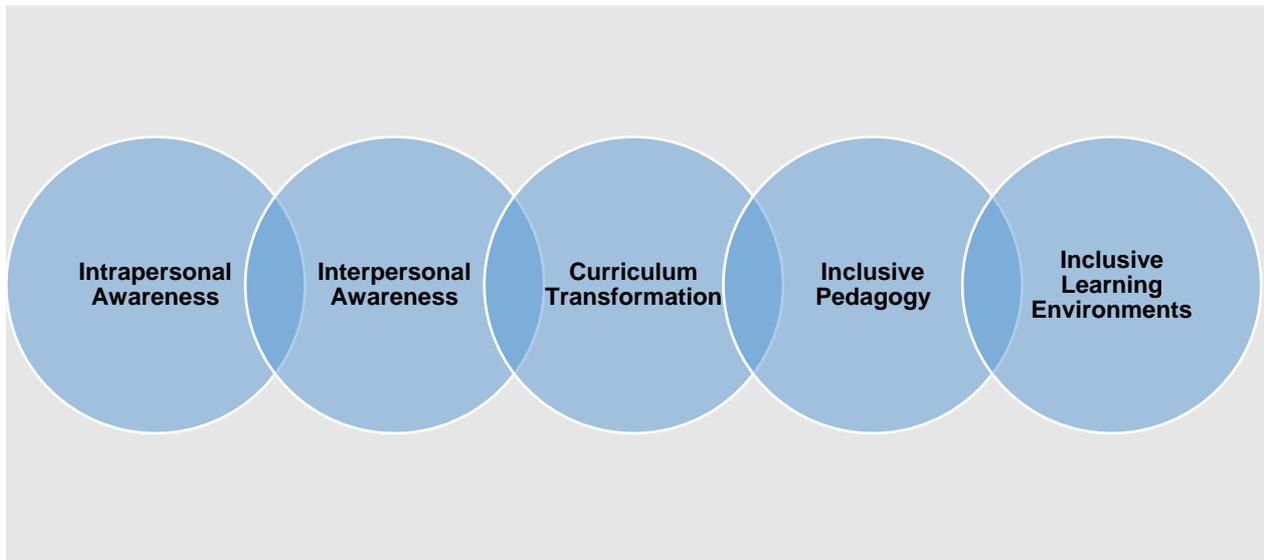
1. Empower all students to thrive in diverse environments
2. Co-create with students to enrich the learning environment
3. Diversify the curriculum and broaden intellectual horizons so that students can see themselves reflected and reach beyond themselves
4. Enable student engagement and success through inclusive pedagogy
5. Develop students' confidence to participate in disciplinary discourse and community
6. Reflect on our language to promote an inclusive learning environment
7. Value student feedback
8. Encourage all students through inclusive advising and mentoring

These are further expanded on in the section on what is inclusive educational practice below.

3 WHAT IS INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE?

Ensuring an inclusive educational practice requires taking several factors into account, including the planning process, the learning environment (be it in-person, online, or blended), what materials will be used, and the methods of instruction.

Salazar et al. (2010) developed a framework for inclusive excellence with 5 dimensions.



At Queen Mary – we considered the education environment and developed 8 principles to support an inclusive curriculum. An inclusive curriculum would:

3.1 EMPOWER ALL STUDENTS TO THRIVE IN DIVERSE ENVIRONMENTS

We aim to develop graduates with a global outlook who will flourish in diverse multilingual communities locally and around the world (and who can make a difference to those communities).

Our graduates should recognise and respect their own, and each other's, individual worth.

We offer our students of all backgrounds, cultures and identities a wide range of critical cultural and intercultural encounters both within programmes and in broader community engagement.

3.2 CO-CREATE WITH STUDENTS TO ENRICH THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Students and staff work in partnership on curriculum development and/or co-curricular areas to create "a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways" (Cook-Sather et al., 2014, pp. 6–7).

Co-creating involves shared decision-making and commitment, encourages respectful interactions between students and staff and fosters student engagement. We think students can really help staff to think about what an inclusive learning environment looks like.

3.3 DIVERSIFY THE CURRICULUM AND BROADEN INTELLECTUAL HORIZONS SO THAT STUDENTS CAN SEE THEMSELVES REFLECTED AND REACH BEYOND THEMSELVES

We encourage students to think about their own experiences and how these intersect with the intellectual material they encounter (Rendon et al, 2004).

We aim to acknowledge and address structural inequalities by including diverse voices, perspectives and identities so that our curriculum is exciting, challenging and relevant.

Our graduates should be open-minded, confident about engaging with contrary perspectives, and responsive to feedback

3.4 ENABLE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND SUCCESS THROUGH INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY

Traditionally, when discussing an inclusive curriculum or diversifying the curriculum, there seems to be an emphasis on content; making "what is taught" more diverse and inclusive. Inclusive pedagogy relates to "how we teach", therefore, focusing the inclusion lens onto the teaching approach, regardless of the content.

3.5 DEVELOP STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE TO PARTICIPATE IN DISCIPLINARY DISCOURSE AND COMMUNITY

We want our students to be able to engage in, and contribute to, disciplinary conversations and communities.

Language is a critical tool for developing thinking and understanding in the disciplines. Learning a discipline or subject means learning a disciplinary language and ways of thinking supported by it. None of us are native speakers of Science and Engineering language, or any other discipline, even if it is expressed through the medium of languages in which we may or may not be fluent. Therefore, a powerful way of dismantling barriers to academic inclusion is to focus on decoding disciplinary language and making it accessible.

We build students' confidence and enable them to foster connections by including them in disciplinary communities of practice and specialities

3.6 REFLECT ON OUR LANGUAGE TO PROMOTE AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

We aim to be welcoming and to communicate with accuracy, care and respect throughout the learning environment. Using appropriate language can help to reduce fear, othering and feelings of exclusion.

We recognise that language is constantly changing and evolving and that sometimes we inadvertently make mistakes or misinterpret what others say to us.

3.7 VALUE STUDENT FEEDBACK

We welcome feedback and engagement from students about their learning experiences. We recognise that "engaged student learning is positively linked with learning gain and achievement" (Healey et al., 2014: 7).

We encourage students to tell us what they think so that we can reflect on what works and what doesn't and act together on what we want to improve (Larrivee, 2000).

3.8 ENCOURAGE ALL STUDENTS THROUGH INCLUSIVE ADVISING AND MENTORING

Effective and inclusive advising plays a key role in supporting our students with a range of different backgrounds and experiences to succeed. We recognise that not all students come to Queen Mary fully equipped to take on academic study. Inclusive advising can support all students "to attain academic success and achieve desired qualifications" (Smith, 2005: 45).

Peer mentoring fosters a sense of belonging in new students, eases the transition into university and supports student engagement by means of "collective sharing of knowledge through facilitated group discussion" (Spedding et al., 2017: 145).

4 WHAT IS INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM DESIGN?

Inclusive curriculum design aims to support the learning of all students. This includes measures that may be put in place to support students with specific learning needs, or those in protected characteristic groups. But rather than treating these students any differently from their peers, inclusive curriculum design seeks to make positive changes to the curriculum for the benefit of all students. For example, if an educator is providing slides in advance of session or written notes for students with a specific learning difficulty, then they might consider also providing these for all students.

Drawn from the Advance HE inclusive curriculum support materials, you could use these prompts as a starting point for reviewing the inclusivity of your curriculum design. Below the prompts are suggestions of practical changes you could make to curriculum design to enhance inclusivity.

“An inclusive curriculum is universal and intended to improve the experience, skills and attainment of all students including those in protected characteristic groups. It aims to ensure that the principles of inclusivity are embedded within all aspects of the academic cycle” (Advance HE, 2019)

For more information on inclusive instructional design, including subject-specific please visit the [AdvanceHE resource webpage](#).

4.1 INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM: COULD THE FOLLOWING IMPACT ON STUDENTS ON YOUR PROGRAMME/MODULE?

1. Assumptions about students' prior knowledge.
2. Timetabling.
3. The use or non-use of technology.
4. Staff knowledge and awareness of cultural differences.
5. The variety, or lack of variety of delivery and assessment techniques.
6. The choice and use of field trips/excursions/practicals.
7. The choice of texts, case studies, examples.

4.2 EXAMPLES OF INTERVENTIONS TO MAKE THE CURRICULA MORE INCLUSIVE:

1. Provide opportunities for students to work with diverse and mixed groups.
2. Develop programme/module content that covers contributions by people from different genders, sexual orientations, racial and cultural identities, and geographic and socio-economic communities.
3. Develop programme/module content that covers multiple perspectives and theoretical standpoints.
4. Provide opportunities for the sharing of the diverse experiences, voices, and learning of students.
5. Write student learning outcomes that reflect engagement with equality and diversity.
6. Explore own identity beliefs, cultural assumptions, and unconscious biases as part of class preparation.
7. Address own potential biases about module-related material during class.
8. Be mindful of own personal educational preferences and their influence on module construction.

5 WHAT IS INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT DESIGN?

Inclusive assessment refers to the ‘design and use of fair and effective assessment methods and practices that enable all students to demonstrate to their full potential what they know, understand and can do’ (Hockings, 2010, p.34). It is based on the principle that all students should have a way of demonstrating that they have achieved the learning outcomes of their module or programme and does not make assumptions about the needs of certain students; instead, it considers the strengths and weaknesses of all students (NUS, 2011).

Inclusive assessment (Miller, 2016) involves applying sound assessment design principles and making assessment practices fair and appropriate for all learners using:

- a variety of valid assessment types and approaches.
- explicit preparation and explanation of assessment formats, marking schemes and assessment criteria.
- choice of assessment method.
- balanced timing (across semesters rather than all at the end).
- technology.
- non-discriminatory language and diverse examples.

Assessment and feedback toolkits have been created to help you design a new piece of assessment or review an existing assessment design. In line with the Queen Mary Assessment Strategy 2020 and Queen Mary Values (Inclusive, Proud, Ambitious, Collegial, Ethical), it aims to support educators to design innovative, inclusive, and authentic assessment which is practical for learning.

[QMUL Assessment Toolkit - Overview | Rise 360 \(articulate.com\)](#)

[QMUL Feedback Toolkit - Overview | Rise 360 \(articulate.com\)](#)

6 WHAT IS CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE CURRICULUM?

Critical reflection:

- calls on educators to make “judgements about whether professional activity is equitable, just, and respectful of persons or not”. It is used to place personal and professional actions within “wider social-historical and politico-cultural contexts” (Hatton & Smith, 1995).
- is used to unpack the “mental habits, biases, and presuppositions that tend to close off new ways of perceiving and interpreting our experiences”. Without critical reflection we risk staying “trapped in unexamined judgments, interpretations, assumptions, and expectations” (Larrivee, 2000).
- is the first step to designing inclusive learning environments which are adaptive rather than adapted. All individuals have the capacity to use a range of different ways to process information and that these cognitive styles can be developed (Evans & Waring, 2015).
- on the curriculum, educational, and assessment practices, is not a one-time project that responds to a particular call to action. As the needs of our learners are ever evolving, so too should our development as educators when it comes to critically evaluating our practice with regards to inclusion.

Care is taken within this approach to ensure:

- authenticity in design of curriculum including assessment,
- agency - encouraging practitioners to critically reflect on their own practice, self-understanding and acknowledging individual perspectives of education,
- inclusivity and accessibility - build on learners’ previous personal educational histories; and
- modelling of good practice – using and modelling appropriate pedagogical tools to explore specific dimensions of practice to make learning more explicit.

7 ADDITIONAL EXTERNAL RESOURCES*

* All resources were last accessed on 25th of May 2022

General Resources	“Inclusive Practice” Queen Mary University of London Disability and Dyslexia Service
	“Student retention and success in higher education” Advance HE
	“What works in approaches to the BME attainment gap” (project overview) Advance HE
	“Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education” Advance HE
Inclusive Educational Practice	“Inclusive teaching check-list” Anglia Ruskin University
	“Inclusive Teaching Resources” University of Exeter
	“Guide for Inclusive Teaching at Columbia” Columbia University
Inclusive Curriculum Design	“Inclusive curriculum design in higher education (knowledge hub)” Advance HE
	“Inclusive Teaching and Course Design” (blog post) EDUCAUSE Review
	“Inclusive educational design” Imperial College London
Assessment Design	“Inclusive assessment” University of Plymouth
	“UNSW Assessment as Learning Toolkit” University of New South Wales Sydney
Reflective Practice	Queen Mary’s Disability and Dyslexia Service has several resources to help practitioners develop curriculum and assessment that takes into accounts the needs of students with differing physical abilities, learning difficulties and other neurodiversity.
	UCL has designed the Inclusive Curriculum Health Check to support UCL staff to reflect on how to embed the principles of inclusivity in all aspects of the academic cycle. This tool promotes an inclusive curriculum that aims to improve the experience, skills, and attainment of all students, including those in protected characteristic groups, by ensuring that all students, regardless of background, can participate fully and achieve at equal rates.
	The SOAS has published the Decolonising Learning and Teaching Toolkit for Programme and Module Convenors (2018) identifying some questions that should be raised in terms of pedagogy and assessment an encourage educators to: diversify assessment practices to recognise and cultivate different skill sets; devise assessment that builds up skills iteratively; make time in core educational sessions to go through assessment expectations explicitly.
	The Assessment Gap Analysis Audit by Plymouth University intends to promote the dialogue with module and programme colleagues about the methods to assess learning outcomes. It can be adapted for each degree programme to include discipline specific elements and the involvement of students in this process is strongly recommended.
	The NUS ‘Assessment and Feedback benchmarking tool,’ based on 10 principles of effective practice, can be used to map practice and suggest areas for improvement. Once the current level is mapped out, the priority areas to work towards achieving the next level can be identified. The tool is a good starting point for discussions between staff and students about how to work together to improve feedback and assessment.
	This guide from the Royal Academy of Engineering on Designing inclusion into engineering education is an example of the type discipline-specific tools you may also want to include in your review.

8 REFERENCES

- Advance HE (2019). Inclusive Curriculum. Available at <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/inclusive-curriculum#overview> last accessed on 25th of May 2022.
- Apert, L., Simonian, C., Irvin, A., Jungels, A.M., Klaf, S., and Phillipson, M. (2017). Guide for Inclusive Teaching at Columbia. Available at <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/edblogs.columbia.edu/dist/8/1109/files/2020/02/Guide-for-Inclusive-Teaching-at-Columbia-Accessibility-Revisions-15-January-2020-FINAL.pdf> last accessed on 25th of May 2022.
- Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C. & Felten, P. (2014). *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching: A Guide for Faculty*, Wiley, ISBN: 978-1-118-43458-1.
- Evans, C., & Waring M. (2015). *Using an informed understanding of styles to enhance learning and teaching in 21st century learning environments*. In R. Wegerif, Kauffman, J. and Liu, L. Handbook of research on teaching thinking. London: Routledge.
- Hatton, N. & Smith, D. (1995). Reflection in teacher education: towards definition and implementation. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 11(1), 33-49.
- Healey, M., Flint A. & Harrington K. (2014). Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education, Higher Education Academy.
- Hockings, C. (2010). Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education: a synthesis of research. EvidenceNet - HEA resource.
- Larrivee, B. (2000). Transforming teaching practice: becoming the critically reflective teacher. *Reflective Practice* 1(3), 293-307.
- Miller, M. (2016). The ethnicity attainment gap: literature review. Sheffield: University of Sheffield.
- NUS (2011). Liberation, equality, and diversity in the curriculum. National Union of Students. <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/about-dmu-documents/quality-management-and-policy/academic-quality/programme-approval-management/programme-approval-validation-revalidation/equality-liberation-curriculum.pdf> last accessed 25th of May 2022.
- Osei-Kofi, N., Richards, S.L. & Smith, D.G. (2008). Inclusion, reflection, and the politics of knowledge: on working towards the realization of inclusive classroom environments. In: Plymouth University (2014) 7 Steps to: Inclusive Assessment. Available at https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/2/2401/7_Steps_to_Inclusive_Assessment.pdf last accessed 25th of May 2022.
- Queen Mary University of London (2020). Queen Mary University London Strategy 2030. Available at <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/strategy-2030/#a-edu> last accessed 25th of May 2022.
- Rendon, L.I., Garcia, M. & Pearson, D. (2004). (eds.) *Transforming the first-year experience for students of color (Mono graph No. 38)*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resources Centre for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition).

Salazar, M, Norton, A. & Tuitt, F. (2010). 12: Weaving Promising Practices for Inclusive Excellence into the Higher Education Classroom. *To Improve the Academy*, 28(1). 208-226.

Smith, D. (2005). The impending loss of talent: An exploratory study challenging assumptions about testing and merit, *Teachers College Record*, 107 (4).

Spedding, J., Hawkes A. & Burgess M. (2017). Peer Assisted Study Sessions and Student Performance: The Role of Academic Engagement, Student Identity, and Statistics Self-efficacy, *Psychology Learning and Teaching*, 16(1).

Thomas, L. & May, H. (2010). Inclusive learning and teaching in Higher Education. AdvanceHE.

9 TERMINOLOGY

This list outlines some of the key terms relating to inclusivity which provides a useful starting point for thinking about this issue.

9.1 EQUALITY

Equality is ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and equally in relation to their needs. The Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination on nine Protected Characteristics (see below).

9.2 DIVERSIFYING THE CURRICULUM

Having a diverse curriculum is essential to ensure that students can broaden their intellectual horizons, see themselves reflected and reach beyond themselves. Diversifying the curriculum entails expanding it to make it more inclusive and intersectional, by including, for example, expanded readings from underrepresented backgrounds, addressing the diverse history of any subject acknowledging the contribution of scientists who are often overlooked. It might also entail adopting a diverse range of pedagogies and diversify the assessment away from traditional invigilated exams for some parts of the programme.

9.3 DIVERSITY

Diversity literally means difference. When it is used as a contrast or addition to equality, it is about recognising individual as well as group differences, treating people as individuals, and placing positive value on diversity in the student community and in the workforce.

All forms of diversity need to be included when considering curriculum, teaching and assessment. Those include the following:

Educational	Level/type of entry qualifications; skills; ability; knowledge; educational experience; life and work experience;
Dispositional	Identity; self-esteem; confidence; motivation; aspirations; expectations; preferences; attitudes; assumptions; beliefs; emotional intelligence; maturity; learning styles perspectives; interests; self-awareness; gender; sexuality.
Circumstances	Age; disability; paid/voluntary employment; caring responsibilities; geographical location; access to IT and transport services; flexibility; time available; entitlements; financial background and means; marital status.
Cultural	Language; values; cultural capital; religion and belief; country of origin/residence; ethnicity/race; social background.

Source: Thomas, L. and May, H. (2010)

9.4 INCLUSION

Inclusion is about focusing on the needs of every individual and ensuring the right conditions are in place for each person to achieve their full potential. Inclusion should be reflected in an organisation's culture, practices and relationships that are in place to support a diverse workforce or learning community.

9.5 EQUALITY ACT 2010: PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

The Protected characteristics referred to in this document are those outlined in the Equality Act 2010:

- Age
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Religion or belief (or no belief)
- Disability
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Sex
- Gender re-assignment
- Race
- Sexual orientation

Socio-economic status, class or background is not a “protected characteristic” under the Equality Act, but we consider that the experiences of groups of people whose life chances may be affected by their social identity, those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, is an important issue to consider.

10 CONTRIBUTORS

The workstream members are listed below, the main contributors to this guide are indicated with a *

Emma Caseley	Alistair Morey
Gabriel Cavalli*	Esther Murray
Colleen Cotter	Christina Perry
Janet De Wilde*	Chris Phillips
Esther Dominy	Alex Prestage
Angela Gallagher-Brett*	Adi Sawalha
Elizabeth Gillow	Saynab Sharif
Lesley Howell	Manoj Singh
Shoshi Ish-Horowicz	Daniela Tavasci*
Lucie Langley	Josephine Wilkin

11 CONTACT US

To explore this topic further, or to request bespoke resources or training for your department, group or programme from the Queen Mary Academy, please contact us gmacademy@qmul.ac.uk