

ART, MEDIA AND DESIGN

Principles of inclusive curriculum design

Anticipatory
Flexible
Accountable
Collaborative
Transparent
Equitable

Generic considerations

- cost and financial considerations;
- embedding student and staff well-being;
- promoting student engagement;
- use of technology to enhance learning;
- responding to different approaches to learning;
- avoiding stereotypes and celebrating diversity;
- making reasonable adjustments.

Introduction

It is the responsibility of the every member of staff within HE to respond to the requirements of equality legislation. The basic principle that can and should be universally responded to is that **it is attitudes, barriers and other forms of discrimination within the system rather than individual characteristics or deficits that are the cause of disadvantage**. Employing an inclusive approach is underpinned by the adoption of other principles of inclusive curriculum design, summarised in the adjacent text box and discussed in the introduction section of this guide available at www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/inclusion/disability/ICD_introduction.pdf

May and Bridger assert, in respect of developing an inclusive culture, “making a shift of such magnitude requires cultural and systemic change at both policy and practice levels” (2010: 2). In essence this change is represented by a shift in focus from responding to the ‘needs’ of individuals or specific groups of students to an approach that anticipates and plans for the *entitlements* of the evolving student population. Thus the onus is on institutions and subject communities to change and adapt their policies and practice rather than expect this of individual or specific groups of students.

There are many generic considerations of inclusive curriculum design, summarised in the adjacent text box, which are discussed in the introduction section. The focus of this section is on subject-specific considerations for those in those subjects aligned to art, media and design. Here examples of innovation and effective practice are provided to demonstrate that effective practice for one group can and should be effective practice for all. The examples, resources and ideas included in this and other subject guides have come from the sector. They were obtained directly in response to a general request made to the sector during 2010, from a review of the HEA Subject Centres or from recommendations made by colleagues teaching in the specific subject.

Where there are examples in other subject guides that may be particularly relevant or worth reviewing for further adaptation these are flagged. However, notably inspiration and ideas for curriculum design can come from many sources, therefore reading strategies employed and ideas in other subject areas can be a useful source of new ideas.

Inclusive curriculum design: subject-specific considerations

Promoting the well-being of all students

Many strategies developed in response to students experiencing mental health difficulties can be incorporated into the curriculum at the design stage to benefit all students on Art, Media and Design programmes.

The University of Worcester undertook an [Art and Mental Health](#) project with the aim of ensuring the “most appropriate and effective support” was provided for students with mental health difficulties on Art and Design programmes (Chapman, 2001). The project made a number of recommendations that could be adapted to benefit all students:

gather information at entry about students’ academic, practical and support requirements so these can be anticipated in module delivery;

incorporate the production of materials that increase and challenge stigma about mental health into the learning and assessment activities;

“When using mental health or other equality and diversity issues as a focus for raising student awareness embed the Art and Mental Health project gains at department level through revisions to practice across all Art and Design modules and continued access to the staff/student development materials/training sessions.”

Designing inclusive spaces

Drawing on work with “very disadvantaged learners with mental health difficulties”, Sagan (2008) argues that the greater democratisation or widening participation of arts programmes requires a reappraisal of the learning and other spaces utilised by these programmes. Sagan calls attention to the previous experiences of learning spaces that all students will bring with

them. For some students, particularly those who experience discrimination or disadvantage, these spaces may be associated with “past confusion, anxiety, hostility or even humiliation” (2008: 180). Students identified characteristics of provision they found supportive and facilitative of their learning:

- local safe space;
- ownership over the programme and its content;
- make friends and networks with their peers;
- consistency of ‘teacher, time, place and pedagogical approach’.

Of particular significance were the opportunities for autobiographical expression within students’ learning.

Facilitating collaboration between students

Collaboration is an integral element of many aspects of the creative arts. Students may work together to produce joint work or may invite peers to discuss, debate and critique individually produced material. Some students may experience barriers to learning if their opportunities to participate in collaboration are restricted, for example students studying at a distance or with commitments that restrict the time they can spend on campus. Collaborative learning that is restricted to defined timetabled sessions may also provoke anxiety for students who find face-to-face group work stressful, for example students with communication impairments or for whom English is not their first language, those with mental health issues and students lacking confidence in group settings.

Sketchbook is an online resource developed by the University of the Arts London to provide students with “access to sketchbook work and explanations of the working processes of artists and designers”. This enables students to engage in collaborative working and critical reflection (Gaimster, undated). Web 2.0 technology has been used to facilitate “social networking and active collaboration across disciplines” and between institutions and enable students to “work at their own pace”. It also offers the opportunity for students to promote their work and produce visual research journals.

An inclusive design process element for Sketchbook was testing the site’s usability by student volunteers whose on-screen activity was recorded and their feedback collated through questionnaires. Action was then taken to improve the site’s functionality and accessibility. Students preferred the site to more conventional

Using Auto/Biography in Teaching and Learning

(Frame and Burnett, 2008)

explores ways in which biography and autobiography can be used to enrich the curriculum.

The Learning, Creativity and the Passage of Mental

(iii) Health project has

produced online and print learning and teaching resources drawing on biographic narrative interviews and visual diaries produced by students experiencing mental health issues (ADM-HEA, undated).

virtual learning environments because of its contemporary appeal, likened more to Facebook than an academic site.

Staff working in learning technology roles may be useful collaborators when embarking on projects involving information and communication technologies. They may be able to offer alternative strategies based on new technology, or assist in the introduction of technology within the curriculum.

For examples of student collaborative activities see the Education, and Information and Computer Sciences subject guides.

Increasing the inclusion of all students

The need for creative responses to ensure all students can access the curriculum can be a particular consideration for those working in the arts. Valuable lessons that offer the basis for increasing the inclusion of all students have been shared by disabled practitioners working in the field and feedback from disabled students.

The Being Inclusive in the Creative and Performing Arts (BICPA, undated) project, undertaken by CADISE (The Consortium of Arts and Design Institutions in Southern England), produced a report structured around eight case studies to improve the design and delivery of Creative and Performing Arts programmes focused on the experiences of disabled students.

Consideration should be given to modifications that could be made to learning outcomes and assessment criteria at the design stage. This is not about lowering standards, rather it is ensuring clarity about what is or is not a competence standard.

See the HEA's inclusion e-bulletin for further discussion of competence standards: www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/inclusion/ebulletin_ICompetence_Standards.pdf

Appropriate changes to learning outcomes or assessment criteria increase the likelihood of developing programmes that, “offer the greatest potential to be inherently inclusive, rather than requiring modifications” (BICPA, undated). Examples include:

- recognising British Sign Language as a means to communicate an ‘oral’ presentation;
- considering the terminology of assessment criteria to make it more explicitly inclusive;
- involving disability officers (or other advisers with specialist knowledge relevant to other groups, e.g. international

- adviser) to look at assessment criteria;
- considering more than one approach with students who ostensibly have the same circumstances.

Social relationships develop during study time especially in the creative arts where an emphasis on group working, practice and peer learning exist:

- extended trips offer potential for socialising and shared understanding of students' prior experience. An inclusive approach would ensure all students can participate in the 'leisure', as well as formal learning, aspects of a trip (adapted from BICPA, undated).