# BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT, ACCOUNTANCY AND FINANCE

**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 business, management, accountancy and finance. 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

### Involving stakeholders in designing a culturally relevant curriculum

Based on Australian research Crossman discusses the importance of drawing upon multiple stakeholder perspectives when designing a curriculum that is going to effectively enable all students to develop international cultural leadership skills in the university Business curriculum. Students reported that they found the following activities helped them:

— working as an intern;
— learning a language;
— becoming a mentor for a student from a different cultural heritage;
— attending a presentation by an international speaker;
— learning collaboratively online with Business students from other international institutions (Crossman, 2010: 35).

Management students and business stakeholders all supported: "online learning with students located internationally, through blogs, email, wikis and discussion boards, as a valuable form of experiential learning, largely because computer mediated communication in the workplace represented a major form of intercultural communication, project development and decision making" (Crossman, 2010: 37).

Everyday experiences that increased opportunities for experiential learning about cultural issues that course designers can promote include:

— publicising, for example, volunteering opportunities to welcome international students and support with induction;
— encouraging students to reflect upon their own experience of travel;
— building into the Business Management curriculum, for example, ideas from business such as international event management or researching arrangements for working in another country.

See also Law, and Social Policy and Social Work subject guides for involving stakeholders and user groups in curriculum design.

## Responding to the changing employment context

Designing for inclusion involves consideration of the overall goal, which for the majority of students is a job, and the learning activities and assessment students need to complete to achieve their goal.

An evolving approach to design is one that responds to the changing employment context as well as the student profile (George, 2006). London South Bank University developed two modules, 'Management Skills' and 'Life Career Development', that show how employability is embedded within the core curriculum and an employability-related module of a wider degree programme such as their Business Programme. Both modules include a number of inclusive design features such as:

— explicit outcomes related to personal development, which increase relevance;
— at least one element of assessment that requires the student to write reflectively on where they are, where they would like to be and how they might get there, which allows students to progress from their own starting point;
— an enquiry-guided learning approach usually delivered in a workshop style, which supports students learning from each other;
— resources developed in collaboration for tutors and students to use, adapt and share, which increases students ownership.

The guiding principle in developing the Life Career Development module was to put the learner at the centre of this experience. We tried to see life and career development theory through the eyes of the individual student: to help them understand how and why s/he became the person they are, and to discover what this tells us about ourself, others and the world we live in. (George, 2006: 7)

An alternative approach to the integration of employability is the 'online virtual working' project at the University of Abertay Dundee. This represents one element of a comprehensive redesign in the undergraduate Business education programme, which aimed to enhance Business Studies students' skills related to communication and teamwork and "develop knowledge building and critical thinking skills in an environment significantly different from that of the classroom" (Malcolm, 2006: 2).

This redesign was inclusive in its approach because it:

— responded to external changes in the world of work and aimed through the curriculum to prepare students and enhance their employability;

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**Five ideal types for developing employability (Yorke, 2006)**

1. Employability through the whole curriculum.

2. Employability in the core curriculum.

3. Work-based or work-related learning incorporated as one or more components within the curriculum.

4. Employability-related module(s) within the curriculum.

5. Work-based or work-related learning in parallel with the curriculum.

— recognised students came with different skills and broke tasks down allowing all students to gain confidence at each stage;
— involved students in negotiating ways of working that drew on the groups experience rather than imposing a framework;
— allowed the writing task focus to change according to the module subject.

Redesigning assessment supports transition into new subjects

| Accountancy module task | Law module task | Economics module task |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Students are asked to consider how a reader-centred approach to memo writing might inform the structure and phrasing of a covering memo summarising a lengthier explanation of a financial situation, targeted at non-specialists. | Students tackle the task of formulating for an organisation's legal advisers a problem that requires attention. | Students focus on the communicative power of visual aids, designing a single PowerPoint slide that meets elicited principles of good communication practice. |

(Malcolm, 2006)

Business, Management, Accountancy and Finance programmes and modules often attract large diverse student cohorts who may not have studied these subjects prior to higher education. Reasons for uncertainty about studying new subjects at university may arise because of greater tutor contact prior to higher education, a different relationship with the tutor due to cultural context of another education system or differences in the academic support for disabled students. The University of the West of England (UWE) Business School attracts a diverse student group with increasing numbers; to reduce the anxiety that some students experience when entering higher education they have changed the assessment for the Level 4 Management and Organisational Behaviour module in their Business School's Graduate Development Programme. This inclusive design response and change to assessment has helped with time management and pressures of overload for staff and students in the Business School. The assessment strategy adopted:

— spread assessment throughout the module's 22 weeks;
— included different types of assessment experiences;

— gave students some meaningful formative feedback near the start of their first semester;

— introduced a research activity that allowed individuals to pursue topics of interest and relevance.

Baker's account (2010) outlines the detailed changes and the implications of different aspects of the overall strategy. The conclusion offers suggestions when redesigning assessment within a management programme.

1. Introduce small pieces of work that are easy to mark and allow for quick feedback.
2. Make the activities relevant to other larger pieces of assessment to increase relevance.
3. Make some marks available for these activities as an incentive for students to engage with formative feedback assignments. The aim is to make the process worth something without making it so important that anxiety levels rise.
4. Try self- and peer-assessment as means of developing immediate feedback rather than formal feedback.
5. Inform students that the value and importance of feedback is more than the mark and that the most important aspect of feedback is what they do with it.
6. Explain the assessment rationale to ensure students understand the role of different items of assessment (adapted from Baker, 2010: 8).

## Using technology to engage students in large cohorts

Large student cohorts, especially those with high numbers of international students present course designers with the challenge of getting students to interact with each other and staff in large group settings.

Bath Spa University explored the use of podcasts in three management modules – Marketing Business, Human Resource and Marketing Management (Leng, undated). Rather than introducing choice by offering a different assessment, the introduction of an alternative assessment format for presentations was used, whereby students posted a podcast onto a virtual learning environment and other students and tutors posted and responded to questions (as they would in a face-to-face presentation). This offered students an alternative format for delivering their assessment, saved class time and extended out-of-class engagement in their own and peers' learning.

Technology used by Bath Spa Business and Management course designers provided opportunities for devising new and inclusive

learning activities that:

— diversified methods of communication with students during the course;
— offered students a chance to extend their use and confidence in working with technology;
— encouraged greater dialogue and feedback between students and staff.

Introducing choice into the assessment regime is a popular inclusive strategy among students; it can, however, generate additional demands for the tutor and raise issues of parity. As a general rule it is more inclusive to increase the range of assessments within a programme, but retain the alignment of assessment with learning outcomes.

The Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, and Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine subject guides provide examples of how technology has been used to diversify teaching methods.