

**Discussing liberation, equality and diversity in validation events**

Quality and Standards Committee (QSC), in October 2019, approved the introduction of a discussion of how programme teams have considered the liberation of the curriculum and equality and diversity in developing their programmes.

This discussion will be a mandatory part of the validation or revalidation event for every programme at the University, and programme teams should use the prompts below as a basis for their thinking. Programme teams will be asked similar questions as part of the validation event.

**What is liberation of the curriculum and why is it important?**

Liberation of the curriculum covers a number of groups in society that may have been marginalised in the past. ***Liberating the curriculum means*** working to challenge and reverse the effects of structural oppression in society. The most well-known initiative of this type is decolonising the curriculum, which means creating spaces and resources for a dialogue on how to imagine and envision all cultures and knowledge systems in the curriculum, with respect to what is being taught and how it frames the world.

Liberating the curriculum is also about challenging the marginalisation of women, and ensuring the work of marginalised scholars on race, sexuality, gender and disability are also fairly represented in curricula.

Equality and diversity are also important in our academic programmes – for these purposes, ***equality is defined*** by the NUS as taking responsibility for ensuring the curriculum is fair and does not disadvantage any student or group of students because of their background or characteristics. The NUS also ***define diversity as*** ensuring the curriculum is respectful and representative of the diversity of contemporary society and facilitates an environment in which all students can feel a sense of belonging within the learning community.

All of the above are important issues that should be considered by programme teams in developing their curricula. This is in the context of the University and its values and mission, and our commitment to social justice. Social justice is at the heart of the University’s inclusive and socially transformative ethos, embracing equal rights, opportunity and treatment for all.

You can [find out more about the University strategy here](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/about/2026-strategy/).

Reasons for the attainment gaps for students of different ethnicities are complex, but feelings of alienation have been highlighted as a possible factor. There has been some suggestion that belonging interventions might be a way of helping students overcome feelings of alienation – and so may help, alongside other initiatives, to bridge that gap.

**Prompts to consider when developing programmes at the University**

The following are some initial questions that programme teams might consider to be useful when developing their curricula. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but some starters for consideration and prompts for discussion in the validation events themselves.

* Have you considered how inclusive your teaching and assessment strategies are?
* Does your curriculum promote diversity?
* How have you addressed any marginalisation and bias in your programme?
  + Does your teaching, resources (e.g. case studies) and reading lists reflect diversity, and are marginalised scholars on race, sexuality, gender and disability fairly represented?
  + What steps have you taken to eliminate marginalisation – e.g. to decolonise your curriculum away from Eurocentric outlooks?
  + To what extent is your curriculum relatable for students at the University?
* Have you designed the programme in a way that everyone can take part, and no-one is excluded?
* Does the design and delivery of the programme promote social justice?
* How did you ensure your learning outcomes are equitable, so as not to introduce any unnecessary or unintended barriers?
* How will all students, regardless of background or belief, engage with your programme? Will they all be able to relate to what you are teaching and their learning?
* How might you pre-empt any future structural oppression?