Inclusive Curriculum Tool: Guidance

7. Belonging and engagement

7.1 Learning outcomes and marking criteria are clear, measurable, and achievable for all.

When writing learning outcomes, try to avoid jargon and use plain English. Make sure they are measurable (e.g. 'student will be able to…' rather than 'student will gain an understanding of'). Always consider whether someone with a disability would be able to achieve your learning outcome/marking criteria in the way it is written. If not, consider whether it could be measured in a different way, and amend if possible.

Examples of inadvertently ableist marking criteria may include assigning marks for skills such as:

- Speaking clearly (what if the student has a speech impediment?)
- Positive body language (what if they have cerebral palsy?)
- Good eye contact (what if they are visually impaired?)

The Code of Practice on Assessment (CoPA) appendix K, annexe 1 provides practical guidelines and information to support individual markers to implement marking and provide appropriate feedback, as an anticipatory reasonable adjustment for students with dyslexia and/or other Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs), whilst maintaining academic standards.

7.2 Where possible, scheduling is carefully considered with regard to: religious observance, inclusive assessment practices, work placements and field trips, teaching and exams.

Where you have control over scheduling, consider:

- Key religious practices or festivals which may impact on your student's attendance, or ability to meet deadlines. (Examples: classes being arranged outside of Friday prayer time for Muslims, not arranging important events on significant national holidays, such as Chinese New Year).
- Avoidance of assessment bunching at programme level (e.g., where multiple modules schedule assessments in the same week, causing serious stress to students). Please note: if no mechanisms exist to avoid this, please raise with the appropriate person in your department.

- Providing sufficient time for all exam types to allow equal opportunity for carers, student parents etc. - particularly relevant where exams are set to be taken at home.
- Providing sufficient notice for international travel/field trips to allow international students to apply for visas, etc.

There is more information on key religious holidays here: HR webpage which links to the UoL Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) & Wellbeing Calendar.

7.3 Students are supported and encouraged to build a sense of belonging and cohort cohesion.

Belonging is recognised as important to student success. A variety of activities recommended for student induction has been compiled by CIE. It's also important to encourage students to begin to work together as a community. Some ways to do this include:

- Providing mechanisms enabling students to provide support for each other, such as facilitating a module Q&A discussion board and encouraging them to provide support for each other by replying to questions posted there.

UoL student recommendations for large cohorts:

- Quizzes, group projects, welcome day events, group activities in lecture theatres, getting larger cohorts to work together early on in smaller groups.

7.4 Class time is used to discuss study support available to students, including: academic study skills (KnowHow), and specialist English Language support (ELC).

It's important that we continue to address any gaps in participation, progression and attainment, recognising that the responsibility for reducing the gap does not lie with the students but with us as educators and our curriculum. We have a responsibility to ensure our curriculum teaches all students everything they need to know to succeed in HE and doesn't pre-suppose unspecified experience/knowledge (e.g. study skills etc.) which some students have and others do not. This is sometimes called 'the hidden curriculum'.

Using a few minutes of class time (possibly at several points throughout the module) clarifies the importance of the support available and normalises it. It's more effective in motivating students to engage with support than signposting in module handbooks or Canvas.

- The English Language Centre (ELC) offer Insessional English classes for non-native speakers, and (for all students): Academic English classes.
- KnowHow academic study skills courses are run by the library.

KnowHow self-access tutorials on:

- [Expectations at University](#) (how the University expects students to study etc.)
- [Preparing for Exams](#) (outlines different exam types and approaches)
- [Academic Integrity](#)

7.5 An appreciation for diverse approaches to a particular subject is cultivated.

Each individual in your class approaches your subject from a unique perspective which relates to their identity and lived experience, e.g. race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality, social capital, etc. Rather than regarding your class as a homogeneous group, invite their differences into your classroom and offer space to share perspectives and learn from each other. This can be as simple as asking students to share their thoughts on a topic in pairs/groups and feedback, or via shared documents or PollEverywhere if your class is large. Acknowledging and appreciating diverse viewpoints allows your students to personally engage with their curriculum.

Engagement is key when working to address awarding/attainment gaps etc. – consider [UCL's 'why is my curriculum white?' campaign](#) and the experiences of other minority students, and recommendations made in the [Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic student attainment at UK universities: closing the gap (UUK/NUS)](#) report (2019).

7.6 Students are valued and empowered as partners in their learning, and find relevance in their curriculum.

Student-staff partnership is defined as a:

'collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualisation, decision making, implementation, investigation, or analysis' (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten 2014, pp. 6-7).

Working with students as partners empowers students to feel valued, encouraged and find relevance in their curriculum. It also enriches the curriculum. It is crucial for engagement and recognised as a successful way to work towards closing any gaps in retention, progression and the attainment/awarding gap.

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Consider:

- [UCL's 'why is my curriculum white?' campaign](#)
- Recommendations made in the [Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic student attainment at UK universities: closing the gap (UUK/NUS) report (2019)](#)

- [Advance HE Guide to enhancing student success and engagement through partnership](#)
- [CIE Spotlight Guide to Student Staff Partnership](#)