

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/marketing 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.

Engagement is key when working to address awarding/attainment gaps etc.

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](#)

11. Course content

11.1 Content includes diverse references, artefacts, datasets, examples, role models and/or guest speakers etc. This enables students to 'see themselves' in the curriculum.

Providing different perspectives and enabling students to 'see themselves' in the curriculum is crucial for engagement, and therefore closing awarding gaps etc. It is important that students do not experience our curriculum from the position of 'other' but are included in a curriculum which reflects their attributes, interests, and lived experience. Without this, the curriculum may be experienced as: white/straight/male/able/middle-class etc. Look for meaningful opportunities to include diversity in your content in the ways suggested in this statement. This activity supports decolonising the curriculum in its broader sense (e.g. not just race).

Where this is difficult due to disciplinary context (e.g. historically there is very little information to draw on, or your subject is seemingly without an obvious cultural context), we recommend setting aside curriculum time to discuss this, working in partnership with your students. You might consider asking them for their views and see if together you can come up with any recommendations. Places to start this conversation might be:

- Who or what is missing from our curriculum in this module? (e.g. histories/cultural information)
- Where can we find the roots of our discipline? What are/were the implications for how our discipline developed/develops?
- Who had/has the power to define and pass down knowledge?

See also the guidance for 11.2

11.2 Content includes engaging students with the context of experts and critically evaluating expert perspectives.

This is about decolonising in its broader sense (not just race) and is relevant to every discipline. Historical power structures privileged who had access to education and who became experts in the field. Traditionally, these were likely to be white males of European heritage, of a particular social class, who were (mostly) perceived to be straight, and unlikely to be disabled. This excluded, marginalised and devalued most people and shaped our disciplines and what was valued in particular ways. It's an important discussion to have from a social justice perspective, but also in order to begin to effectively decolonise.

Students should be supported to consider who was allowed to be an expert, who was not, and why this shaped/continues to shape our understanding of our subjects, including what knowledge was/is valued, by whom, and why, and who is missing from the canon.

Ways to address this include:

- encouraging students to create their own research questions relating to this
- providing space in your curriculum for the findings of their research.

Prompts may include:

- Consider the lives of the experts in the field
- How did these experts come to be the dominant voice/s?
- How has this shaped progress in the discipline?
- Who is missing or invisible in the history of your discipline and why?
- What steps might now be taken to rectify past injustices?

See also guidance for 11.1.

11.3 Students can negotiate some areas of choice in your module

Allowing students to negotiate some areas of choice in their curriculum has a very positive impact on engagement, which in turn affects attainment & progression positively (e.g. [Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic student attainment at UK universities: closing the gap \(UUK/NUS\) report \(2019\)](#)). This might include:

- allowing students to negotiate to follow up an aspect/area that particularly interests them (possibly for assessment – formative or summative)
- problem-based/case-based learning, research etc.
- encouraging students to co-create your reading list or glossary.

This builds on the concept of students as partners.

See also guidance for 7.6, [Bovill & Bulley, \(2011\)](#), and [Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2019](#).

11.4 Learning materials are digitally accessible and provided in advance of the teaching session. A mixture of formats is used across the module. Examples: digital text, video, lecture capture.

- HE is in the process of adapting to digital accessibility legislation. This involves creating documents, presentations, videos etc. so they are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Continuing to use a variety of formats while working towards full accessibility remains the most important thing we can currently do to support learners.
- Canvas has a built-in accessibility checker (Blackboard Ally), which can alert you to most accessibility issues with uploaded materials, so that you can fix them.

- Providing materials in advance allows students with a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) time to read the materials and prepare for your class
- [Guidance on creating digitally accessible materials](#)

11.5 Content prepares students to understand diversity and work in a diverse setting.

Examples might include:

- Encourage students to investigate your subject through a series of 'lenses' – e.g. gender, LGBTQ+, disability etc.. Have them consider how past or present experiences may shape past or present expectations or behaviour.
- Encourage students to consider the impact of intersectionality ('The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage' (Oxford English Dictionary)).
- Authentic activities working with/for/to a brief set by; clients/public bodies etc. with a diversity element.
- Group-work elements (guidance on inclusive group-work is in the Teaching and Learning Delivery section).

11.6 Reading/resource lists clearly identify which texts or resources are essential, and which are optional.

While this is helpful for all students, it particularly helps some autistic students.

15. Teaching and learning delivery

15.1 Teaching anticipates students with disabilities, and strategies or adjustments are in place to support participation. Examples: microphones or headsets, session outlines, accessible online tools, etc.

While it's essential to be familiar with the support needs of students taking your module (via their [Student Support Information Sheet](#)), and good practice to meet with any student requiring reasonable adjustments to discuss their support needs, the University also has an anticipatory duty to support students with disabilities.

Assume your class will include students with disabilities. In practice, this means things like:

- always use any microphone provided, or if online, use a headset (clearer audio).
- share learning materials in advance
- follow best practice for accessibility in presentations re. font, colour etc.
- provide a session outline so students are aware of any participatory elements coming up in your session (e.g. think, pair, share)

- offer thinking time before asking for responses (I'll just give you a minute to think about that).

Often, all students benefit from these measures, not just those with disabilities.

Also, following principles of [Universal Design for Learning](#), try to offer choice: multiple ways for students to access materials, participate, and express themselves.

Be mindful that not all students disclose a disability, and some students come from cultures or backgrounds which are not typically open about disability so may not share their support needs. Our anticipatory duty applies, regardless of disclosure.

15.2 The module is designed flexibly to consider: mature students, disabled students, parents, commuters, part-time students, and those who may be in a different time zone.

Your module fits within an existing or proposed programme, so there will be limits to how flexible you are able to be, but where you have options, aim to build in as much flexibility as you can. Flexible course design may include elements of:

- Self-paced learning – upload all module resources at the start of the module (still using a weekly structure, but without making students wait for content).
- Negotiated deadlines.
- Blended learning - mix of f2f and online learning.
- Different ways to participate (f2f, online, hyflex, synchronous, asynchronous)

15.3 Discipline-specific language is carefully introduced and supported, and the use of slang and cultural references, which can be difficult for international students to understand, is avoided or explained.

It can be particularly helpful to all students to outline any new terminology (e.g. academic or technical) at the start of a session, so that students have a better chance of recognising the words they are hearing. Another way to support this is via a co-created module glossary (e.g. in Canvas) where you and your students add new words or phrases as you encounter them.

A cultural reference is an example of something that only someone who understands a specific culture could understand. It might include pop-culture (e.g. referring to shared experience of watching a particular UK programme/channel) or an idiom (e.g. I'd be over the moon with that'). Where it's important to use these references, please clarify the meaning, so all students understand.

15.4 Gender-neutral language is used where possible. Students are invited to use their choice of pronoun (example: she/her/hers) and encouraged to restate this if incorrectly addressed.

Gender-neutral language means words such as chair/chairperson, police officer, spokesperson etc. – words which are not gender specific. In written documents, this could include replacing pronouns (e.g. he/she) with the person (e.g. 'the student'). The HR website contains [advice on pronouns and LGBTQ+ Allyship](#) and recommendations on actions which support LGBTQ+ students. Consider adding your pronouns to your email or Zoom signature, and if you are comfortable, include them when introducing yourself to help normalise their use (e.g. "Hello, I am Jane Smith and my pronouns are She and Her").

15.5 Students are given opportunities in their learning to widen their circles of contact or experience, and supported to work together inclusively via the use of a [group-work contract](#) or similar.

CIE has practical guidance on how to approach this in its [Spotlight Guide to Cultural Integration of Home and Overseas Students](#), and [Spotlight Guide to multicultural groupwork](#) and an excellent resource for students: [a group work contract](#). The group work contract supports inclusive group work via a structured opening conversation within the group. This establishes preferred ways of working together and keeping in touch etc. We recommend using class time for this initial conversation, with staff on hand to offer support if required. In addition, when setting up groups, we'd recommend encouraging students to work with people they don't usually work with.

If your students do not already study in a real-world context, seek opportunities to bring involvement in real-world projects in your module. This might include: working with local government, charities, or industry on a real-world problem (a genuine problem rather than something which has already been resolved) or the creation of a new resource. Your faculty careers team have great experience supporting this type of activity, which also meets many aspects of The Liverpool Curriculum Framework.

15.6 Teaching methods offer diverse and anonymous ways to contribute views and participate in discussion, supporting minority voices. Example: polling software.

Not all students are able or confident to speak in class, so offer multiple ways for students to participate. There are a variety of centrally supported collaborative tools you may wish to investigate (e.g. PollEverywhere, discussion boards, collaborative documents, online chat, etc.). Consider permitting anonymous participation, particularly if discussing sensitive or contentious issues or issues relating to personal identity.

19. Assessment and feedback

19.1 Assessment is inclusively designed to anticipate and remove barriers to student attainment. Examples: skill development, sensitive scheduling, increased student choice.

Things to consider include:

- Student skill development & safe practice opportunities.
- Whether you can improve equality and reduce the need for reasonable adjustments when using a format (example: permitting digital pre-recorded presentations, or offering a choice of format).

Where you have control over scheduling, consider:

- 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.
- Key religious practices or festivals which may impact on your student's attendance, or ability to meet deadlines. (Examples: not setting assessment deadlines on significant national holidays, such as Chinese New Year).

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

19.2 Formative assessment opportunities are provided, to prepare students for successful summative assessment.

Formative assessment is a Liverpool Curriculum Framework principle. It's excellent for equality, as it allows students to gain key skills and/or experience without the risk that their marks are significantly affected when trying something for the first time. Ideally, formative and summative assessments are linked in your module (and are preferably linked at programme level across modules). This provides an opportunity for students to engage with feedback on their formative assessment before creating or submitting a summative assessment. Practical advice is available in the [CIE Spotlight Guide to Formative Assessment.](#)

- UoL student feedback suggests a 'mid-way check-in' about assessment would be very helpful.

19.3 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies permitting, a range of assessment types is offered across the module.

Offering a variety of assessment formats enables students to work to their strengths.

Where a Professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) does not currently permit a choice of format, we recommend you speak to the appropriate person in your department to ask whether this can be requested of the PSRB. Many PSRBs are actively looking to promote equality.

19.4 Assessment enables students to focus on their area of particular interest within your discipline.

Engagement is key when working to address awarding/attainment gaps. Allowing students to negotiate some areas of choice in their curriculum has a very positive impact on engagement, which in turn affects attainment & progression positively ([Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic student attainment at UK universities: closing the gap \(UUK/NUS\) report, 2019](#)).

In assessment, this might include allowing students to negotiate to follow up an aspect/area that particularly interests them. For example:

- Research and analyse a particular case, problem, dataset, individual, event, or artefact.

You will need to design marking criteria with care to ensure that learning outcomes and marking criteria are applicable regardless of student choice of topic – there is guidance available in the [Spotlight Guide to Rubrics](#).

19.5 Assessment literacy is supported via in-class activities. Examples: working with rubrics, sample assessments, discussion, peer review, whole-class feedback etc..

Practical advice, together with a summary of the research underpinning this recommendation, can be found in CIE's [Spotlight guide to teaching students to work with feedback & rubrics](#)

19.6 Guidance on marking and feedback for students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) is followed, with an emphasis on marking for content, ideas and critical thinking.

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.

19.7 Feedback/feedforward is linked directly to the marking criteria and rubric, and is timely, compassionate, constructive and specific.

A rubric enables students to understand what excellence looks like and how they currently measure up. If you are new to rubrics, practical advice on rubrics and marking criteria can be found in CIE's [Spotlight guide to teaching students to work with feedback & rubrics](#) and [CIE Spotlight Guide What are rubrics?](#)

- Timely – students need to receive feedback/feedforward in good time to implement recommendations for their next assessment.
- Compassionate: Don't assume poorly presented work represents a lack of effort. When offering constructive criticism make sure the focus is on 'your work', rather than 'you'.
- Constructive and specific: e.g. 'here's where I think you have the greatest potential to improve'.