

What is inclusive curriculum?

Inclusive curriculum draws on, recognises, accommodates and values students' diverse ways of knowing and learning. Such curricula acknowledge and respect that students are members of diverse communities and possess a range of individual learning experiences and needs so that teaching practices need to be inclusive.

When planning for inclusive teaching, think about your own cultural and learning background. It is important to acknowledge and challenge your own assumptions, biases and experiences. What you may take for granted and consider 'normal' could be an unquestioned part of your teaching style and behaviour that might impact on the curriculum.

Why does inclusive curriculum matter?

- Our global society is diverse; education should reflect, promote, and respect this.
- Inclusive curriculum and practice is more likely to result in good teaching and positive learning experiences for all.
- Inclusive curriculum relates directly to social justice and addresses issues of privilege and marginalisation that have excluded people from participation in education.
- In our attempts to make higher education thoroughly inclusive, it is vital to seek out, listen to, and act upon the views of students with a diverse range of abilities.

Indicators of Inclusive Curriculum

1. Diversity is used as a resource for learning.
2. The unit/course is designed after consultation with or consideration of relevant stakeholders.
3. The unit/course increases the knowledge of cultures and cultural practices apart from that which is considered the majority or main practice. Variety in examples and case histories reflects that diversity.
4. The unit/course seeks participation from people who have expertise to assist in the development of inclusive practices, which may include students. Invite Elders, industry representatives, alumni and guest speakers into the learning space. Consider online delivery as an option as videos, podcast and audio interviews can also provide a valuable resource for all students to access when it suits them.
5. The teacher understands and accommodates for variety in groups of students and the possibility of different learning styles, capabilities and a range of learning needs. Variety in teaching methods and styles of presentation appeals to students with different learning requirements.
6. Inclusive ground rules that safeguard against racism and harassment and other forms of exclusion are established. The use of inclusive language and examples is modelled and encouraged.
7. Students gain knowledge of other cultures and ways of knowing. Links and distinctions are made between different ways of knowing and students learn to recognise these.
8. The implications of cultural difference are examined as part of the theory/practice being studied. For example, different cultural perspectives on illness will create different requirements of a health care practitioner.
9. Critical self-reflection by both academics and students on their personal biases and worldviews is integrated into teaching practice.
10. Unit and course reviews include an analysis of how the curriculum demonstrates inclusiveness.

Students fall along a continuum of learner differences and share similar challenges and difficulties. Adjustments you make in consideration of the diversity of students' needs such as well-structured study guides which include both text and graphics, instructions given in writing as well as recorded audio, presentation slides put online, and variety and flexibility in forms of assessment, are good teaching and learning practices and will be of benefit to all students (Healey, Bradley & Hall, 2006).

At-a-glance

Inclusive curriculum draws on, recognises, accommodates and values students' diverse ways of knowing and learning.

Resources

Southern Cross University (SCU) has developed a toolkit to support an inclusive approach to curricula and teaching. Informed by the voices of SCU staff and students, the toolkit resources are organised by the **SCU Model for Inclusive Curricula and Teaching** which promotes success for all students. Access the toolkit resources for strategies informed by research and scholarship from the Centre for Teaching and Learning website.

Sources

- Healy, M., Fuller, M., Bradley, A. & Hall, T. (2006). Listening to students: The experiences of disabled students of learning at university. In M. Adams & S. Brown (Eds.), *Towards inclusive learning in higher education: Developing curricula for disabled students*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
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- Wlodkowski, R., & Ginsberg, M. (1995). A framework for culturally responsive teaching. *Educational Leadership*, 53(1), 17–21.