Inclusive Teaching

A guide to teaching first-year university students from underrepresented backgrounds

DEVELOPED BY

UNSW SYDNEY

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Who is this guide for?

This inclusive teaching guide is for sessional, contract, or full-time educators or academics with teaching duties across any discipline. It offers principles and practical strategies to refine your inclusive teaching practices and improve your first-year students' learning. This guide will give you the tools to ensure your diverse student cohort, including those typically underrepresented at university, feel supported and valued in their academic journey.

After reading this guide, you will be able to:

- Recognise the diversity in your classroom and your responsibility for enacting and encouraging inclusive learning and teaching practices.
- Understand the principles of inclusive teaching and what they look like in action.
- Integrate inclusive teaching practices into your course, unit or subject to nurture positive, long-term academic success with a diverse student cohort, including practices that:
  - Guide students in developing academic literacies crucial for their learning at university,
  - Support students to overcome academic challenges and develop their confidence and self-efficacy, and
  - Support students to develop their capacity and confidence to access support when they need it

*Important guide information

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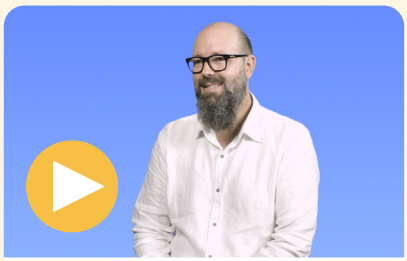
Understanding diversity

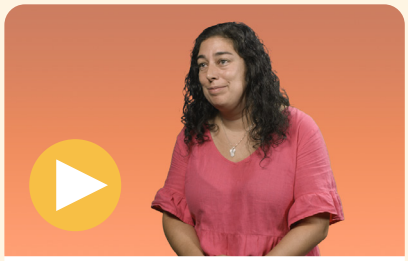
Australian universities will become increasingly diverse as students who have been historically underrepresented at university enrol in higher numbers. As university classrooms become more diverse, there's an urgent need to implement institutional changes and inclusive teaching practices to support all students to succeed.[1]

Historically underrepresented students are those who have been consistently and disproportionately less likely to enrol in and complete higher education compared to other groups.



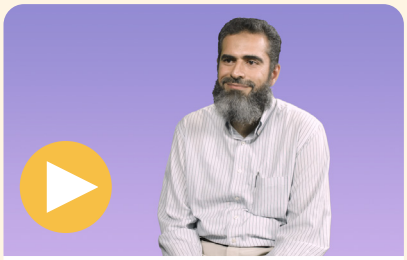
Dr Benjamin Miller, Lecturer, English & Writing

"Knowing about the diversity in your classroom will change your teaching practice."



Associate Professor Roxy Pebdani, Lecturer, Fundamentals of Disability

"Having people with diverse backgrounds in the classroom helps everybody see that we all bring different things to the table."



Dr Hazem El-Alfy, Lecturer, Computer Science

"I show students my tour of the world and this encourages students to show where they come from."

Hear from students

"Classroom diversity makes university a safe place"
Ellen

"Classroom diversity cultivates a rich tapestry of perspectives"
Priya

"Valuing diversity means creating a healthy space for lived experience to be share"
Isla

Increasingly diverse universities are on the horizon

Increasing the number of underrepresented students at universities has been a policy focus for many decades. Progress and challenges to date are outlined in the evolution of equitable access in Australian higher education timeline below.

In 2024, the Australian Universities Accord put the issue front and centre. The Accord was a comprehensive 12-month review of Australia's higher education system that proposed ambitious targets to ensure that students from traditionally underrepresented groups will be represented in higher education at levels that align with their proportions in the broader Australian community. The figure below shows the current underrepresentation of the three equity cohorts identified by the Australian Universities Accord.

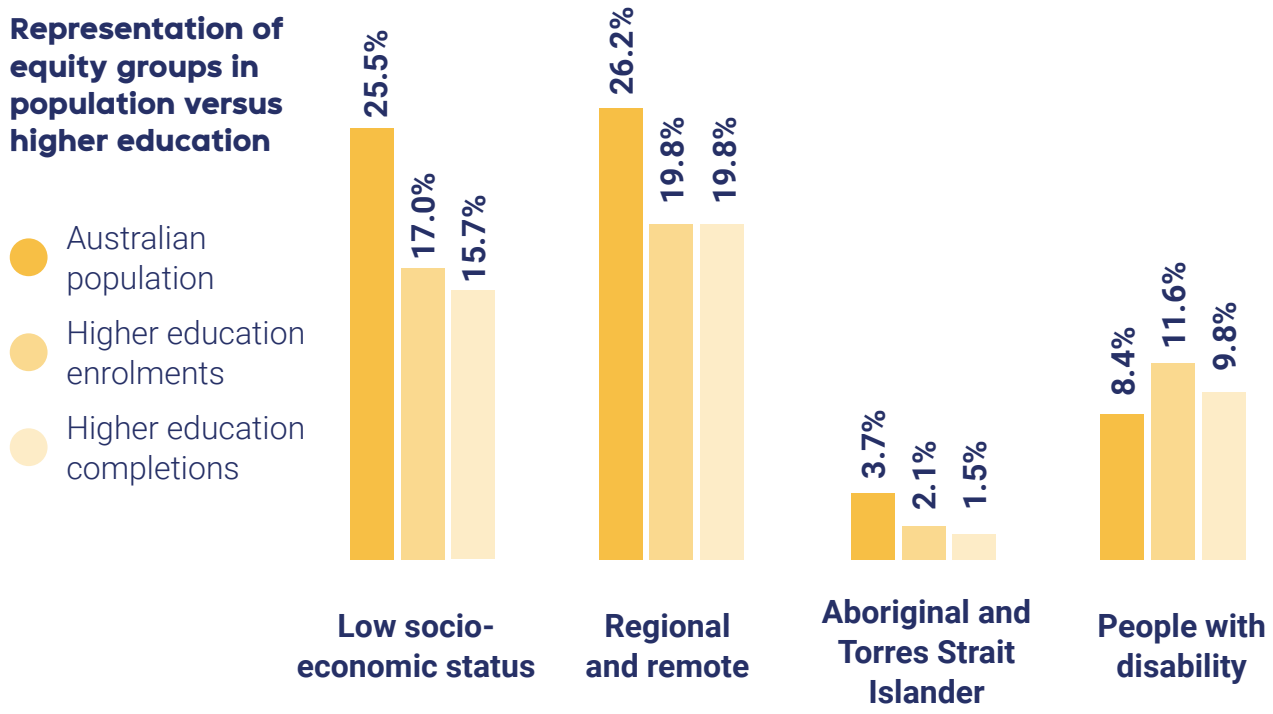


Figure from the Australian Universities Accord Final Report[2]

Historically underrepresented students

Students who have been historically underrepresented in Australian universities include:

- Students from low SES backgrounds
- Students from regional and remote areas
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Students who are the first in their families to attend university
- Students who attended socio-educationally disadvantaged schools
- Students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Migrant or refugee students
- Students with a disability
- Adult learners who delayed enrolment in higher education

Students may belong to multiple underrepresented groups simultaneously. Intersectionality, recognising the interconnected nature of these lived experiences and the cumulative impact they may have on a student's experience of university, highlights the need for nuanced and comprehensive approaches to fostering inclusivity.[3 4]

Students from underrepresented backgrounds may often face challenges with the academic and social transition to university. These students may have limited familiarity with the academic environment and expectations of university and limited access to resources and support within their networks.[5]

Financial restraints can significantly impact students' capacity to fully engage with learning and university life. Students from underrepresented backgrounds may also struggle to find a sense of belonging at university, which can impact their integration and engagement.

Universities cannot expect students from underrepresented backgrounds to conform to existing institutional requirements if they are unfamiliar with universities' social practices, norms and discourses.[6] Academic culture must evolve to accommodate the needs of diverse student populations through genuine social inclusion. Inclusive teaching seeks to understand these students' circumstances, treat them as valued members of the learning community and support them to get the most out of their studies.

Equity cohort data in focus

The Australian Centre for Student Equity (ACSES) is an evidence-based research centre dedicated to enhancing student equity practices in higher education by providing tangible proof of effective strategies. They provide a Student Equity Data tool to explore how Australia's institutions compare to each other. You can also explore the meaning and origins of the term 'equity' and its practical implications.[7]

Teachers in many higher education institutions can also access anonymised data on the demographics of the students in their class, school, or faculty from their university. This data might include details such as gender, language background, degree (majors and minors), university entry marks, enrolment in disability support services and whether theywhether they belong to an equity cohort group such as low-SES, Indigenous, or first-in-family.

The benefits of diversity in the classroom [8 9]

Equity: Promoting diversity in higher education settings addresses historical and systemic inequalities, resulting in greater diversity across workplaces.

Broader perspectives: Diversity introduces a range of perspectives into the classroom, allowing students to learn from each other's experiences and viewpoints. This exposure helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills by challenging their assumptions and broadening their understanding.

Enhanced academic performance: Research has shown that diversity can lead to better learning outcomes. The exchange of diverse ideas can stimulate innovation and creativity in problem-solving and research initiatives.[3]

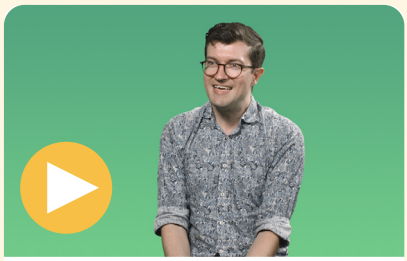
Improved cultural competence: Interacting with people from different cultures and backgrounds supports students to develop a deeper understanding and respect for other cultures. In our increasingly globalised world, students need to be able to interact and collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds.

Empathy and advocacy: Personal experiences with challenging circumstances can heighten empathy and foster a strong sense of justice and advocacy. A university education can enable underrepresented students to act as leaders and advocates and make positive contributions in their communities.

Improved campus culture: Diversity enhances the social fabric of the campus by fostering a more inclusive and welcoming environment. This can improve student satisfaction and retention rates.

Dr Michelle Mansfield, Lecturer, Sociology

"Don't be afraid of diversity. It enriches the experience for both you and your students."



Dr Tim Lee, Lecturer, Human Biology

"It's always important to talk about things respectfully, objectively and to listen."

The Evolution of Equitable Access in Australian Higher Education

1850

Australia's first university
The University of Sydney was established 'to promote useful knowledge and to encourage the residents of NSW to pursue a regular course of liberal education'. The University of Melbourne was established in 1853.

1883

First women graduate
The admission of women to Australian universities began in 1881, with Bella Guerin becoming the first woman to graduate from the University of Melbourne in 1883.

Post World War II

Australia's rapid population growth drove significant shifts in educational policies. The period saw education increasingly valued for economic and social mobility. Initiatives like the 1964 Wyndham Scheme expanded secondary schooling and emphasised technical and vocational education to meet workforce demands. The 1964 Martin Report marked the federal government's initial recommendations for tertiary education, shaping future educational development in response to national growth.

1949–1966

Robert Menzies' Government (Liberal Party)
Expanded the higher education sector by establishing new universities and increasing government funding for tertiary institutions.

1943

Financial Assistance for University Students Introduced:
Initially established to address the shortage of scientifically educated individuals needed for the war effort and economic recovery, marking the beginning of government support for higher education.

1951

Establishment of the Australian Universities Commission: This body was created to advise the government on funding and policy for universities, marking the start of more direct federal involvement in higher education.

1957

First Indigenous Australians matriculate: Margaret Williams-Weir and Geoffrey Penny become the first Indigenous Australians to matriculate to an Australian University. Charles Perkins is also recognised as one of the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals to graduate from an Australian university in 1966.

1974

1974 Tuition Fees Abolished and University Equity Pathways Established: The first open access free enabling pathways were introduced, along with free university education and a universal means-tested living allowance, significantly reducing financial barriers to access.

1977

Tertiary Education Commission established: Created to oversee and improve the quality and coordination of higher education.

1957

Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme Established: This scheme provided scholarships based on academic merit, including means-tested living allowances, expanding access to higher education for students from diverse backgrounds.

1972–1975

Gough Whitlam (Australian Labor Party)
Introduced free tertiary education and significantly increased federal funding for higher education.

1975

Australian undergraduate population = **273,000 students**

173,000 in **17 universities** and **100,000** in over **70 advanced education institutions**

1975–1983

Malcolm Fraser (Coalition)
Implemented budget cuts and austerity measures affecting university funding, with a focus on efficiency and accountability.

1983–1991

Bob Hawke (Australian Labor Party)
Reintroduced university fees but expanded university access and government support. Labour Education Minister John Dawkins transforms higher education to increase access and align it with Australia's economic needs, known as the Dawkins Reforms.

Share of population who hold a bachelor level degree or above in Australia.

1989 7.9% | 2005 19.6% | 2020 30%

1996

Partial Deregulation of University Fees: Allowed universities to set some of their own fees and introduced differential HECS rates,to promote competition and student choice in the sector.

2003

Commonwealth Learning Scholarships: Providing financial support to First Nations students pursuing tertiary education or vocational training.

1989

Introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS): Reintroduced fees through HECS, a system where students could defer their tuition payments via income-contingent loans, expanding access while sharing costs between students and the government.

1996–2007

John Howard (Coalition)
Increased university funding in some areas while allowing for partial deregulation of fees, to promote competition among institutions and increased student contributions shifting more of the cost burden onto students.

1990 'A fair chance for all'
Six equity target groups were identified by the Department of Employment, Education and Training as underrepresented in higher education.

1. People from socioeconomically underrepresented backgrounds (low SES)
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
3. People from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB)
4. People with disabilities
5. People from rural and isolated areas
6. Women in non-traditional areas (WINTA)

Turn of the century: A well-educated population is now considered essential for the social and economic well-being of countries and individuals (exacerbated by an ageing population, falling birth rates, and a decline in the school leaver age group). Higher education has transformed from an elite system to a mass education system.

2007–2010

Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard (Australian Labor Party)
Focused on increasing higher education participation and quality through initiatives like the 'Education Revolution' and targeted funding for universities.

2007

Australian undergraduate population = **772,000 students** across 39 public universities and private higher education institutions

2009

'Education Revolution' and Bradley Review Implementation: Increased funding for universities, focused on quality teaching, and expanded access, including uncapping university places to meet growing demand.

2010

Establishment of the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP): Launched HEPPP to improve access to higher education for students from underrepresented backgrounds through targeted support and outreach programs.

2011

Establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA): TEQSA was established to regulate and assure the quality of the higher education sector, including increased monitoring and mandatory reporting on the performance of equity cohorts.

2012

Demand Driven System for University Places: Fully implemented the demand-driven funding system, allowing universities to offer an unlimited number of Commonwealth-supported places, aimed at increasing participation.

2014

Proposed Fee Deregulation and Reforms (Not Implemented): The Abbott government proposed significant changes, including full deregulation of university fees, which were ultimately not passed by the Senate.

2017

Higher Education Reform Package: Introduced changes including a 2.5% efficiency dividend on university funding and lowering the income threshold for HECS/HELP repayment.

2022–Present:

Anthony Albanese (Australian Labor Party)
Committed to increasing university funding, addressing equity and access issues, and reversing some cuts to research and student support services.

2013–2022

Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull, Scott Morrison (Coalition)
Implemented reforms to the higher education funding model, focusing on sustainability, accountability, and increasing student contributions through fee deregulation proposals.

2020

Job-Ready Graduates Package: Restructured funding for university courses, increasing fees for humanities subjects while reducing fees for areas of national priority like Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM), aiming to align education with job market needs.

2024

2024 Australian Universities Accord Puts Student Equity in Focus: The Accord emphasises the need for a significant increase in tertiary attainment to meet future workforce demands, setting an ambitious target of at least 80% by 2050, and adds a fourth equity cohort—students with disabilities—to the existing categories of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, regional and remote areas, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Building an inclusive learning environment

Teachers who acknowledge their role in promoting inclusive practices are pivotal in creating a positive learning environment that supports all students.[10]

Inclusive teaching empowers students to actively engage in their education through student-centred learning. It tailors the learning experience to individual needs and interests, while also valuing diverse perspectives and contributions.

Inclusive teaching begins by recognising the importance of different experiences and knowledge and progresses by building upon students' existing concepts to facilitate new learning.

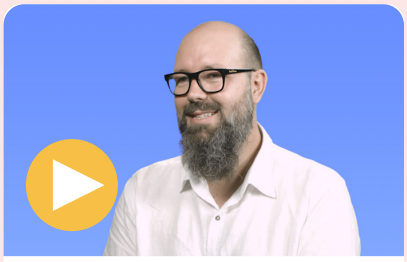
You can help build an inclusive learning environment by understanding the impact you can have in developing academic literacies, self-efficacy and help seeking in your students.

Associate Professor Anna Bennett, Director of Pathways & Academic Learning Support

"The most powerful approach to teaching inclusively is to view yourself as a lifelong learner."

Dr Michelle Mansfield, Lecturer, Sociology

"I believe that social interaction and social support creates a sense of belonging within the class."



Dr Benjamin Miller, Lecturer, English & Writing

"A great leap forward I was able to take in inclusive teaching was engaging with Universal Design for Learning."

Dr Tim Lee, Lecturer, Human Biology

"We are conscious that the whole experience of being at university may well be alienating for students."

Dr Jane Kerr, Lecturer, International Business

"In relation to teaching inclusively. Don't judge a book by its cover"

Hear from students

"It's comforting when our educators encourage us to actively overcome unconscious bias" Emily

"The tutor did an excellent job of discussing challenges without perpetuating stereotypes" Isla

Having a lecturer from a regional area was a very refreshing perspective" Priya

"Being told what our lives looked like with no acknowledgement felt very minimising" Isla

"I used to feel excluded a lot in my first year" Emily

"As a regional student as well as first in family, many people assumed that my background was of struggle" Sean

Academic literacies

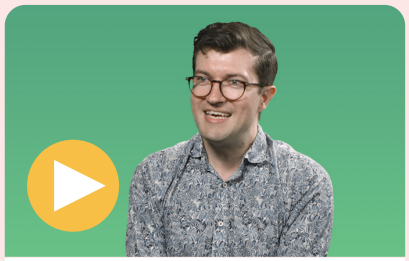
Academic literacies are the skills needed to effectively engage with, and succeed in, an academic environment. These literacies encompass understanding and producing academic discipline-specific discourse, such as writing styles, critical thinking, research methodologies, textual analysis and engaging in academic discussion.

Students from underrepresented backgrounds may not be familiar with the academic literacies needed for university. Additionally, the strategies that proved successful in pre-university studies may not align with university standards.

First-year university teachers often assume that students possess requisite academic skills upon arrival. By cultivating an understanding of how to support the development of academic literacies, you can enhance students' academic success and level the playing field.[11]

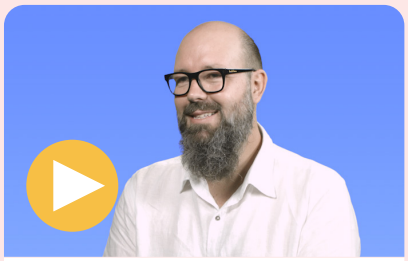
Associate Professor Anna Bennett, Director of Pathways & Academic Learning Support

"Student's having problems with how to write is really common."



Dr Tim Lee, Lecturer, Human Biology

"Scientific writing is an important part of a science degree. It's something that we find that students often struggle with most because it's quite a complex thing to do."



Dr Benjamin Miller, Lecturer, English & Writing

"One way to uncover where students are struggling at university is to survey them and ask them directly about their previous experiences of study. "

Hear from students

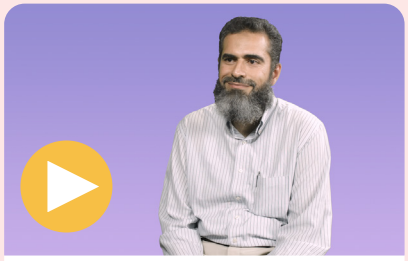
"I was expected to know how to actually study by the time I reached university, but honestly I'd never been taught how to study in high school" Sean

"In my first term law course, I was asked to do a case note but I had never heard of a case note before" Amina

"In first year, we were slowly eased into skills we would need to succeed" Emily

Dr Michelle Mansfield, Lecturer, Sociology

"Early low stakes assessments can flag students who are struggling with skills such as referencing or academic writing or even time management "



Dr Hazem El-Alfy, Lecturer, Computer Science

"To assist my students, I use techniques like short, unmarked quizzes or low weighted assignments."

Dr Jane Kerr, Lecturer, International Business

"We're a university. We have so many people who have the skills, [so we should] use them to help our students"

Academic self-efficacy

Academic self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to succeed in academic tasks like studying, learning, organising and taking actions towards achievement.

Students with high academic self-efficacy often come from supportive learning backgrounds, leading to better performance and greater resilience in overcoming challenges.

Conversely, students from underrepresented backgrounds may face negative experiences, resulting in lower academic self-confidence and self-efficacy. Limited resources, fewer opportunities and negative schooling experiences can undermine students confidence, fostering feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt.

Teachers are essential in nurturing academic self-efficacy by guiding students to acknowledge their learning achievements, empowering them to set personal growth goals, offering encouragement and constructive feedback and establishing a supportive, secure learning environment.

Hear from students

"The best confidence boosters are specific." Emily

"I felt supported and included because I could ask all the questions I had without feeling embarrassed" Amina

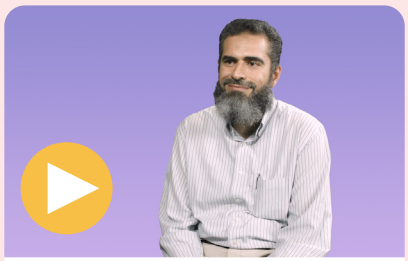
"Receiving good constructive feedback makes me feel motivated to continue to learn and improve" Sean

Associate Professor Anna Bennett, Director of Pathways & Academic Learning Support

"You develop self-confidence when you get that sense of belonging, when you get a sense of being valued and respected, and you go through incremental learning stages."

Dr Michelle Mansfield, Lecturer, Sociology

"Once students begin to understand one theory, it gives them confidence to tackle another theory and another concept."

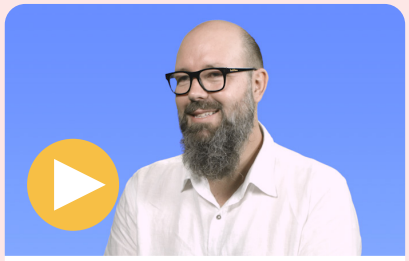


Dr Hazem El-Alfy, Lecturer, Computer Science

"Overcoming obstacles and developing a sense of self-confidence helps students not only succeed in school, but also in real life."

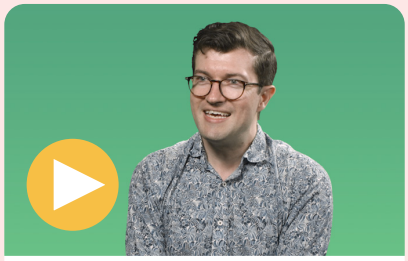
Dr Jane Kerr, Lecturer, International Business

"I think self-efficacy is critical for our students if they're going to feel like they belong at university."



Dr Benjamin Miller, Lecturer, English & Writing

"One strategy to support self-efficacy is shifting the focus from the product of learning to the process of learning."



Dr Tim Lee, Lecturer, Human Biology

"We have assessment with multiple iterations where students can build on their skills each time, leading towards a final exam or skills test. "

Help-seeking

Help-seeking is a proactive process where students identify a need for academic, emotional, or social support and seek assistance from available resources. This can include approaching teachers or peers or using institutional services like tutoring centres, mental health services, and academic advising.

It involves students recognising challenges and taking proactive steps to address them through appropriate channels, ultimately taking initiative in their academic and personal growth.

Students navigate academic challenges more effectively when they cultivate the habit of seeking help early in their university careers. This empowers them and fosters both resilience and a proactive approach to their education and personal development.

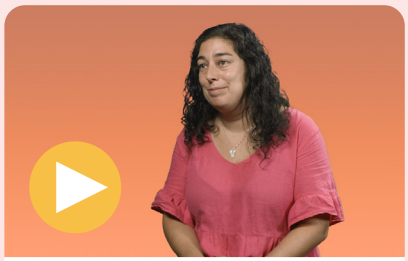
Effective help-seeking is particularly important for first-year university students from underrepresented backgrounds as it can bridge the gap in academic preparedness.[12]

Help-seeking is also closely linked to a sense of belonging in the university environment. When students feel accepted and valued, they are more comfortable seeking assistance from professors, tutors, advisors, peers, or support services. Help-seeking behaviour also promotes further integration into the university community, helping students build vital networks with peers and faculty, which can, in turn, further enhance their sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation. [13]

Teachers who encourage a sense of belonging and well-developed help-seeking behaviours in their students can contribute to promoting academic success and overall wellbeing in their students.

Associate Professor Anna Bennett, Director of Pathways & Academic Learning Support

"Encouraging students to seek help when they need it is really important."



Associate Professor Roxy Pebdani, Lecturer, Fundamentals of Disability

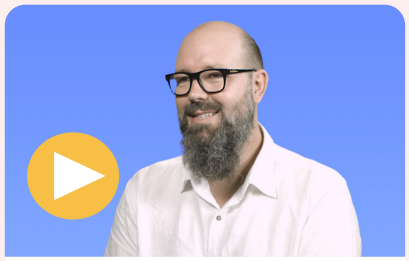
"Asking for help is one of the hardest things."

Dr Michelle Mansfield, Lecturer, Sociology

"I think it's important to be explicit about where students can seek help."

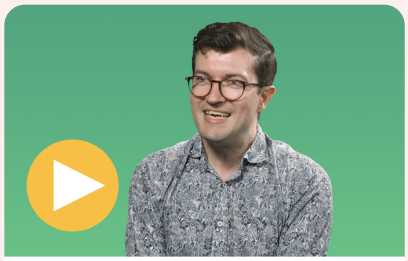
Dr Jane Kerr, Lecturer, International Business

"Our student's most popular channel of seeking help is our discussion board."



Dr Benjamin Miller, Lecturer, English & Writing

"I post anonymised versions of emails that I receive so students can see that other students are asking for help."



Dr Tim Lee, Lecturer, Human Biology

"I see a lot of barriers for students to reach out for help. "

Hear from students

"The best way a teacher can support me to find the right academic support is to be specific" Emily

"It helps when teachers say that seeking support when you need it is part of being a good student" Amina

"Having feedback sessions in some of my courses has helped me feel confident that I will get my questions answered" Ellen

Inclusive teaching roadmap

Inclusive teaching is an ongoing, cyclical practice that can be continually enhanced.

1

Step 1: Read and assess

Read this guide and assess your current inclusive teaching practices.

2

Step 2: Set achievable goals

Set specific goals, such as introducing one new inclusive teaching approach or activity per term.

3

Step 3: Collaborate and connect

Engage with colleagues, support services, learning designers and librarians to support your implementation of inclusive teaching practices.

4

Step 4: Implement and reflect

Put changes into practice and actively reflect on whether these new teaching strategies are working as intended.

5

Step 5: Seek feedback and evaluation

Collect feedback from students and peers and evaluate the impact of your inclusive teaching strategies.

Principles of inclusive teaching

Know your students

Know your students

Knowing more about your students will help you respond better to their learning needs and create a more inclusive classroom. Providing a platform for this information to be shared among students also allows them to identify with others and develop their understanding of diverse backgrounds, cultures and interests and to enhance a sense of connection and belonging.

Tip: Explore the demographics of your institution and your classroom using the ACSES Student Data Equity tool and any other tools or data sources provided by your institution.

Inclusive teaching in action: See the examples of **student insights** and **geography of us.**

Design inclusive curricula and assessments

Provide a clear unit structure

A clear outline of the course or unit structure will support students to understand what to expect and allow them to plan their term/semester effectively. Outlining why you have designed the course in the way you have can increase student motivation and engagement. Be explicit about the themes, topics, skills and competencies that make up the building blocks of the curricula, and the sequencing rules that govern the order in which students will develop these. Structure it logically and include key dates, times and places, information on critical junctures (e.g census date, hurdle tasks), workload intensity and academic norms such as what is expected in a tutorial discussion. Ensure that students can easily navigate to important information on your learning management system.

Tip: Use diagrams to illustrate the intended learning outcomes and the pathways to achieving these. For an example see 'Getting started' guide.

Provide consistent class structures

Structured classes, combined with active learning, have been shown to narrow the gap between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more advantaged counterparts.[16] This is because predictable structures in the classroom make procedural aspects of learning more familiar and less intimidating.

Tip: Try using consistent opening and closing activities during each class or creating familiar routines.

Ensure a manageable and evenly spread workload

Students may find transitioning to the increased workload of university challenging, particularly when they have other significant demands on their time (like work or family commitments). By spreading the workload evenly across the semester and avoiding peak periods, you can support students to stay on top of their workload and allow assessments to more effectively build students competencies and confidence. Consulting with colleagues running courses that your students are likely to be taking at the same time as yours can create a more balanced workload. When high workload periods are unavoidable, ensure you warn students at the beginning of the course to allow them to plan accordingly.

Tip: When setting course readings, consider what is necessary reading and what is optional.

Scaffold difficult concepts

It is helpful for teachers to acknowledge when concepts or tasks are intentionally challenging to help maintain students' academic confidence. Consider scaffolding concepts or competencies that students usually find more difficult than others, particularly if they are threshold concepts or competencies required for learning to progress. Break down the concept or competency into incremental steps, beginning with high levels of support before slowly reducing the amount of support.

Tip: Dedicate lecture or tutorial time to the concept or competency, then apply it in group tutorial activities before students work on a task individually and receive peer and teacher feedback.

Include early, low-stakes assessments

Receiving feedback early in a course can support students to better understand their strengths and areas for development and identify strategies for future success.[16] Setting assessments early in the course for a small number of marks provides students with an opportunity for early constructive feedback, while supporting them to build academic literacies and time management skills. Early, low-stakes assessments also enable teachers to identify gaps early and provide timely support, contributing towards future student success in larger, end-of-unit assessments.

Tip: Feedback tasks before census dates can provide students with information to help them make enrolment decisions.

Implement flexible assessments

Using different types and formats of assessments creates equitable opportunities when there is a range of abilities and allows students to demonstrate potentially unrecognised skills. If possible, allow students to choose a submission format that aligns with their preferences, such as audio production rather than writing, making rather than speaking, or demonstrating rather than describing. Ensure that assessments across the course showcase learning in a different form. These assessments should support students to attain the learning outcomes of the course and not simply assess test-taking or instruction-following capabilities. Consider if flexible submission dates could be beneficial for students from underrepresented backgrounds.

Inclusive teaching in action: For an example see **empowering choice in assessment**.

Provide clear expectations

Setting clear expectations around assessment helps students understand what is required of them and builds their confidence. This might include constructing a clear marking rubric, explaining it to students and providing examples of assessments that do and don't meet the criteria. Students may be unfamiliar with assessment terminology (e.g. rubric, mark, grade, formative, summative etc), so clarifying terminology and allowing room for questions can also help alleviate student stress.

Tip: Describing the rationale behind each assessment task can increase engagement as it enables students to understand why developing these competencies is important.

Give constructive feedback

Early and regular feedback is crucial for clarifying expectations, building student confidence and supporting the development of academic literacies and discipline-specific skills. Effective feedback methods could include written and verbal feedback, peer and self-assessment, rubrics, formative and summative assessment, digital feedback tools and personalised feedback sessions. Incorporating a variety of feedback mechanisms throughout the course ensures that all students can understand, engage with and act upon feedback. Students may have had negative experiences with feedback in educational contexts so providing supportive and constructive feedback can play a critical role.

Inclusive teaching in action: For an example, see **generic, individual and peer feedback** and **checklist for providing good feedback**.

Embed academic literacies

Explicitly teach academic conventions

Students will have differing levels of exposure to the academic conventions used at university, such as citation styles, the structure of academic papers and the formal tone and vocabulary used in scholarly work. By explicitly teaching academic conventions and integrating opportunities for students to practice using these conventions, you can level the playing field for students coming from underrepresented backgrounds.[14 15]

Tip: Create a glossary of academic language used in your course.

Inclusive teaching in action: See the example **building towards a research report** and **academic reading support**.

Encourage active engagement in academic texts

Active engagement with academic texts can bridge gaps in prior knowledge and skills, foster a deeper understanding of complex concepts and build students' confidence to actively participate in academic discourse. You can support students to understand and engage with the academic texts you set as reading by providing summaries or annotations or conducting activities that help students deconstruct and engage with the texts.

Inclusive teaching in action: See the example **academic reading support**.

Explicitly teach information literacy skills

Teaching students how to find, evaluate and use information effectively supports students who may not have had the opportunity to learn these skills. This includes teaching students to navigate library databases, assess source credibility and understanding the ethical use of information, including the responsible use of AI.

Inclusive teaching in action: See the example **academic skills workshops** and **integrating generative AI into the classroom**.

Use diverse teaching strategies and resources

Offer course materials in a variety of formats

Students' engagement and information processing are influenced by their unique backgrounds, experiences and abilities. The Universal Design for Learning framework outlines the importance of representing information in different ways to support student learning. To cater to a diversity of learning needs and abilities, include accessible multimedia resources such as visual materials like diagrams, videos, presentations and infographics alongside auditory resources like lectures, podcasts, group discussions, and audio recordings. Offer a variety of ways for students to respond to information they are given, by using interactive multimedia like simulations and online quizzes.

Tip: Offer the option to process the material alone or in a group discussion.

Inclusive teaching in action: See **multiple ways of representing information**.

Include readings and articles from diverse authors

Including diverse authors ensures that students encounter a range of perspectives, experiences and voices in their learning. This encourages students from underrepresented backgrounds to identify with diverse authors and therefore be able to project themselves into future roles.

Inclusive teaching in action: See the example **review your course reading list**.

Provide structures that help students interact and engage

Encouraging students to collaborate and engage in active, dialogical learning promotes engagement and a sense of belonging and, as a teacher, allows you to gauge their understanding of the content. Interaction between students also encourages them to recognise and appreciate each other's strengths and perspectives, boosting their sense of value and confidence and preparing them for success in diverse workplaces.

You can encourage students to actively engage by including activities like class discussions, group work, hands-on activities, peer teaching, debates, think-pair-share routines, case studies, role playing, interactive polls, quizzes and brainstorming sessions. Try to structure class discussions to support equitable interactions and ensure the voices of more confident students do not crowd out others. Guide students in turn-taking with a focus on both talking and listening and establish principles of inclusive discussion.

Inclusive teaching in action: See the examples **geography of us**, **academic reading support**, **personal strengths and learning goals**, **academic skills workshops**, **peer feedback** and **integrating generative AI into the classroom**.

Incorporate real world applications

Real-world applications make academic content more relevant to students' lives, their communities and their future careers, helping to maintain interest and motivation. Incorporating real-world applications into your teaching can also highlight the diverse ways in which different communities and cultures solve problems.

Tip: Support students to see the relevance of their assessments to their vocational or educational goals by linking them, where possible, to real world applications.

Integrate accessibility into your teaching

Accessibility not only upholds ethical and legal responsibilities, it promotes inclusivity and enhances usability. All students, including those with diverse learning needs or disabilities, should have access to the tools and resources they need for effective communication and expression. This means that as a teacher you should create accessible documents, ensure presentation slides are compatible with screen readers and optimise learning management system content for full keyboard navigation.

Tip: ADCET is a great resource for creating accessible content.

Create an inclusive classroom environment

Cultivate a positive and inclusive classroom culture

A positive environment where students feel safe to experiment, make mistakes and seek support, promotes a sense of belonging and encourages active engagement in learning. Providing opportunities for students to share their understanding, while validating the broad range of experiences in your classroom is an important way to foster this sense of belonging. Set the tone for your course by modeling openness and respect. This starts with learning your students' names (with correct pronunciation). Using inclusive language and recognising diversity respects cultural differences, enriches learning experiences and equips students with essential skills for global citizenship. For example, using "we" and "us" can help *all* students feel like the curriculum is for them. Opening discussions about different perspectives and cultures further fosters mutual understanding and student wellbeing.

Tip: Telling a story from your own life to convey a relevant concept can foster a sense of trust with your students.

Support goal setting and achievement

Supporting students in setting achievable goals and clearly outlining the steps to reach them not only clarifies the learning process but also fosters a sense of competence and motivation. Celebrating achievements reinforces student's belief in their capabilities and encourages continued effort. Teachers can do this by recognising individual efforts and improvements in assessment tasks or class contributions or celebrating collective achievements, such as improved collaboration or contributions to discussions compared to previous weeks. It's also important to acknowledge students' attentiveness and engagement.

Inclusive teaching in action: For an example see **personal strengths and learning goals**.

Encourage self-reflection

Promoting self-reflection helps students develop self-awareness and a proactive approach to learning. By assessing their own progress, identifying strengths and recognising areas for improvement, students become more independent learners. Fostering a growth mindset encourages students to view challenges as opportunities for growth, cultivating resilience and a love for learning.

Inclusive teaching in action: For an example see **generic, individual, and peer feedback**.

Communicate with students regularly

Communicating regularly with students supports their understanding of the course they are studying and its expectations, as well as positioning you as accessible and approachable. It's wise to plan your communications in advance of the term/semester to ensure information will be shared in an accessible way at the right time. This may include a welcome message to students, connecting them to the course and providing practical information. It could also include reminders of upcoming assessment deadlines, how to apply for any special consideration processes available to them and timelines for receiving their marks and feedback. Always outline the required action from students. For instance, email students who have not submitted their first assessment after the deadline to check if they are okay, remind them of any late submission penalties and any special consideration processes available and offer support.

Tip: Avoid communicating with students about assessments after hours or on weekends when they may not be able to find support if they need it (it's also important for teachers to disconnect out of working hours, but ensure you are clear about expected response times with students, ie: 48 hours for email).

Promote positive role models

Positive and relatable role models demonstrate to students that achieving their educational and career goals is possible.

Tip: Teachers who model the behaviours and attitudes they wish to see in their students set a powerful example, inspiring students to adopt these qualities and strive for their best.

Embed support systems

Incorporate help seeking opportunities into coursework

Making space for questions normalises help-seeking and helps you understand what your students know or have concerns about. You can do this during lecture and tutorial time or anonymously using online platforms, which may help students feel safer to ask questions. In addition, embedding opportunities in your course or unit for students to seek feedback and support from each other builds a supportive community that they can carry with them beyond uni.

Inclusive teaching in action: For an example, see **peer feedback**

Direct students to available support resources

Foster a sense of support by letting students know about the support services available at the university early in the course. Encourage students to reach out to you or the support services when they face challenges and set clear expectations that seeking support is a normal part of a student's academic journey.

Tip: Embedding links to these support resources in your learning management system, lecture slides and assessment briefs - and actively referring to these support systems in the context of their learning - can normalise help-seeking and create a supportive environment.

Offer out-of-class support

An automated booking system for one-on-one appointments may be less intimidating than emailing you to request an appointment. You could try offering informal group drop-in sessions too. Students may find these group sessions more accessible and less intimidating and discover that others have similar questions or challenges. Advertise the support available during lectures and tutorials and highlight the fact that sessions are informal and welcoming and designed for students to get their questions answered.

Tip: Use descriptive and inviting language (e.g. Exam prep drop-in) and include online and in-person options.

Collaborate with academic support services

University support services specialise in providing guidance, personalised support and resources that enhance students' academic skills and confidence. Consider how you could invite library or academic support services to offer relevant, embedded workshops and resources for your students within your classes.

Inclusive teaching in action: For an example, see **academic skills workshops**.

Facilitate continuous reflection

Reflect on the effectiveness of your teaching strategies

Reflecting on teaching practices enables teachers to better meet their students' needs, keeping them engaged and learning effectively. Self-reflection makes teaching more focused and intentional and guides you to make informed decisions about curriculum and instruction based on your experiences. Reflecting on classroom interactions also helps you understand student's needs, preferences and feedback, strengthens student-teacher relationships and fosters a more supportive and positive classroom environment where students feel heard and valued.

Tip: Set aside time throughout the course and at its conclusion to reflect and consider what you might do differently. If you run a teaching team, set meetings to discuss observations about what is working and what is not.

Elicit feedback from students

The best way to assess the effectiveness of your inclusive teaching practice is to seek feedback from your students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. Gather feedback through surveys or discussions with students and peers and continuously monitor the effectiveness of your practice using a continuous feedback cycle. It is important to communicate with your students about how their feedback is being used and explain the reasoning, even if no changes are made, to ensure students feel their voices are heard and valued.

Inclusive teaching in action: See this example of a **stop, start, change survey template**.

Inclusive teaching in action

Student insights

Small groups or tutorials

Know your students

Create a positive and inclusive classroom culture

Supplementing information on student demographics available from your university with direct surveys (via online survey tools or forms) of your students can provide additional insights that will allow you to tailor your teaching to better meet the unique needs, backgrounds and interests of your students and make it easier to create authentic learning experiences they can connect to. Share the collective, anonymous results to help students appreciate the diversity of their classmates without revealing individual identities.

Here are a few questions you might ask to gather information about students' previous writing experience:

My experience with academic writing before starting this class has been:

a. Pretty limited, I'm new to this
b. I did some writing in high school but not a ton
c. I've done it in a few other college courses
d. I have some experience from outside of school as well

I have received feedback on my writing before from:

a. High school teachers
b. University lecturer/tutor
c. Peers or classmates
d. Writing tutors or writing centre staff
e. I haven't got much feedback on my writing before

Three types of writing assignments I have worked on in the past include:

a. Short reflection papers
b. Research essays
c. Lab reports
d. Literary analysis
e. Persuasive essays or argumentative papers
f. Other_____

When it comes to the university's writing resources or support services:

a. I use them often and find them really helpful
b. I've used them a couple of times and they were useful
c. I tried them but didn't find them very helpful
d. I know about them but haven't used them yet
e. I didn't know our university offered writing support

Geography of us

Large groups or lectures | Small groups or tutorials

Know your students

Provide opportunities for students to share and discuss their backgrounds and experiences in ice-breaker activities, as this nurtures a sense of belonging within the classroom community.

Present an interactive map where students can pinpoint their places of origin or current residences. Whether it's the place they call home or where they live whilst attending university, this activity encourages students to share their geographical roots. At the end of the activity, prompt students to reflect on what they've learned and how it has impacted their understanding of diversity.

Create a positive and inclusive classroom culture

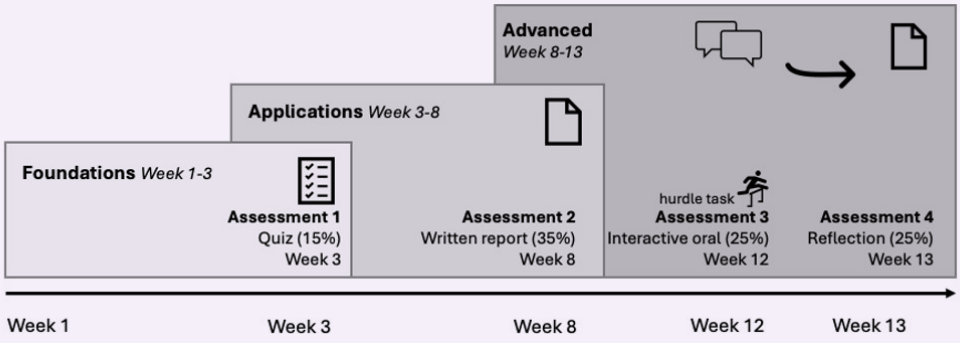
For online classes, foster engagement through a discussion board where students can share their locations along with fun facts from their respective areas. Alongside the interactive map, consider incorporating visuals such as photos or short videos of the student's hometown or current city. Encourage students to respond to at least one classmate's post to promote interaction, dialogue and enable students to learn more about each other and build a community within the class.

'Getting started' guide

Large groups or lectures | Small groups or tutorials

provide a clear unit structure

Before the semester starts, develop a 'getting started' document for your students, which provides an outline of the course including key milestones, maps and directions to physical locations and details about how students will learn together and how to prepare for classes each week. Link to this document at the top of the homepage of your learning management system and send a copy in a welcome email to enrolled students. Include diagrams, like the example below, which indicate key points in the curriculum, such as threshold concepts, hurdle tasks or difficult topics and demonstrate how concepts tie together. This diagram can be revisited throughout the term/semester in tutorials and lectures to remind students where they are in the structure of the course and illustrate how far they have come.



Example unit structure diagram.[17 18]

Building towards a research report

Small groups or tutorials

Embed academic literacies

Include early, low-stakes assessments

Scaffold difficult concepts?

Assessment task

This assessment task can be used early in the term/semester to build students skills and confidence ahead of an end-of -term/semester research report.

1. Students are tasked with writing a one-page "rationale" for a scientific or humanities study. Provide students with the details of an invented study, or one that students can conduct themselves or in groups through the course of the term/semester. Their task is to complete background reading and build a written rationale for the study, outlining what is already understood in the field, what are the gaps in understanding and how this study will contribute to the field.
2. Provide students with a detailed assessment guide which clearly outlines the expectations, due dates and the criteria they need to meet the assessment task.
3. Spend time in a lecture or tutorial class outlining how to write a rationale for a study. Arrange students into groups with an example of a good rationale and have them identify the key aspects you've outlined.
4. Students submit their short rationale and marks are awarded based on the effectiveness of the argument and proper referencing. Students are provided careful, constructive feedback both on what has been done well and what could be improved.
5. Later in the term, students receive the study's results and are tasked with composing the complete research report as a second or subsequent assessment.

Academic reading support

Large groups or lectures | Small groups or tutorials

- Support students to understand academic texts
- Encourage active engagement in academic texts
- Integrate group work
- Scaffold difficult concepts

Enhancing reading comprehension and critical thinking

Help students engage with and understand a reading by summarising key points succinctly and generating discussion around its key points. This approach encourages active engagement with the material, helps students understand and digest complex academic readings and promotes critical thinking and discussion skills.

1. Preparation: Before the class, assign a reading from the course material. Ask students to read the material and come prepared to summarise the reading in a Twitter-style post (280 characters or less) or to prepare three key points about the reading.
2. Activity: Begin the class by having students share their Twitter-style summaries of 3 key points on the board or screen. Discuss the points briefly to ensure everyone is familiar with the reading content.
3. Generating discussion: Write an essay question based on the reading content on the board. This essay should be open-ended and encourage critical thinking e.g. "Discuss the impact of [topic discussed in reading] on [relevant area of study]. Support your answer with examples from the reading. Encourage students to discuss the question in small groups or pairs initially to generate ideas and perspectives.
4. Whole class discussion: Facilitate a whole-class discussion based on the essay question. Encourage students to use the content of the reading to support their arguments and engage in a constructive dialogue.
5. Wrap-up: Summarise the main points discussed and emphasise any key insights gained from the reading and discussion.

Enhancing reading comprehension with summaries

Support students in understanding academic texts and managing a large reading load through summaries - you may wish to use AI-generated summaries. This approach helps students grasp the main ideas and themes of complex academic texts, assists them in managing a large reading load by providing concise summaries and prepares them for meaningful discussions and engagements during class.

1. Generate AI summaries of assigned readings to your desired length. Review the AI generated summary and make necessary edits to ensure it accurately captures the key ideas of the text. Include these edited summaries alongside the assigned readings.
2. Emphasise the importance of this prework to enhance student's understanding and preparedness. Encourage students to read through the AI-generated summaries before class to familiarise themselves with the key concepts.
3. Ensure that students understand the AI-generated summaries are a tool to aid understanding and should be supplemented with a close reading of the full text. Encourage students to discuss the summaries with their peers to deepen their understanding and perspectives.

Personal strengths and learning goals

Small groups or tutorials

- Create a positive and inclusive classroom culture
- Know your students
- Integrate group work
- Encourage active participation
- Give constructive feedback
- Incorporate help-seeking opportunities into coursework
- Support goal setting and achievement
- Encourage self-reflection

Strengths and goals

This activity on strengths and goals can support students to identify their own individual strengths, recognise the diversity of strengths in their cohort and become more comfortable working with groups of unfamiliar students. It also encourages self-reflection and goal setting while helping students recognise that they are not the only ones who may need to develop competencies in a certain area.

1. At the beginning of the term/semester, ask students to articulate one existing strength and one personal goal related to the subject, first assessment, or their broader undergraduate study aspirations. For instance, a strength might be "proficiency in creating engaging PowerPoint presentations and public speaking" and a goal might be "improving report writing". As the teacher you should also add a goal and strength for the course too. Have students write these down individually in class, or on a collaborative platform such as a whiteboard or shared online document.
2. Arrange for students to contribute suggestions on their peers' goals. These might include practical steps like "schedule a session with academic skills support" or "consider joining the law society speaking club" or personal anecdotes about how they reached a similar goal. Students can do this activity in person, in groups, or online by replying to their peers' posts.
3. Provide clear instructions for these interactions to ensure inclusive discussions. For example, for in person discussion: each speaker has one minute to speak, no speaker should be interrupted, and each group member must respond to each person's input to develop the conversation. Facilitate guided discussions that emphasise the value of diversity in teamwork and how different strengths contribute to overall success.

Generic, individual and peer feedback

Small groups or tutorials

Create a positive and inclusive classroom culture

Incorporate help-seeking opportunities into coursework

Give constructive feedback

Generic and individual feedback:

Providing generic feedback can help improve individual performance by assisting students in assessing their progress and encouraging them to become independent learners.

1. When assessment or an activity is complete, describe the overall strengths and weaknesses of your students' work, highlighting what was done well as a group and what needs to be improved. Provide the feedback to your students both orally and in writing and allow them to ask questions.
2. Ask your students to evaluate their own work in the light of the generic feedback and write a self-assessment with action points for future work.
3. Provide individual feedback to your students which builds on the earlier generic feedback.

Peer feedback:

This activity can support students to foster a collaborative environment and equip them with the skills to give each other constructive feedback.

1. Introduce the importance of peer feedback and the characteristics of good feedback, including being specific, constructive, balanced and respectful. Show examples of good and bad feedback and discuss why each example is effective or ineffective.
2. Early in the term/semester, have students develop a short piece of writing, such as a proposal for an end-of-term assessment.
3. Assign each student two other students in the cohort to provide feedback. Use a structured feedback form to guide their comments. The form should include sections for positive comments (praise), questions (areas of confusion) and suggestions for improvement (polish).
4. Students' peer feedback can be submitted and assessed. Students are allocated marks for the quality of the feedback they provided.

Multiple ways of representing information

Large groups or lectures | Small groups or tutorials

Offer course materials in a variety of formats

Engaging with different materials

Multiple means of representing information is an important tenet of the Universal Design for Learning framework. It supports students with diverse learning strengths to engage with material in different ways. Here are some examples of multiple ways of representing information in different fields:

- In Psychology, Katie uses diagrams and concept maps to visually represent cognitive development theories.
- In Business, Jane uses comparison charts to highlight differences between traditional and reengineered processes, focusing on performance metrics, costs and time savings.
- In In Art Theory or Visual Arts, Ethan incorporates virtual tours of art galleries and museums allowing students to explore artworks up close and learn about the artists.
- In Sociology, Michelle uses a podcast where sociologists discuss theory in practice, offering students a deeper understanding through real-world examples.
- In Engineering, Ji-eun includes interviews and talks from industry experts, providing insights into real-world applications, challenges and innovations.
- In Computer Science, Youssef uses recorded problem-solving sessions where instructors discuss coding challenges and solutions.
- In Medicine, Minh uses simulation software that allows students to practice and refine their injection skills in a safe environment.
- In Biology, Jihan uses online quizzes and polls for self-assessment, helping students review and reinforce their knowledge of scientific concepts and terminology.
- In Law, Natalya uses annotated, interactive eBooks featuring case law, statutes and legal commentary to help students study and navigate legal texts more effectively.

Empowering choice in assessment

Large groups or lectures | Small groups or tutorials

Implement flexible assessment

Allow students to choose the format they submit their assessment in. This creates a more inclusive and fulfilling learning experience that recognises and accommodates the needs of a diverse student cohort. To achieve this you will need to create an assessment rubric that applies to a range of formats. Format examples could include:

- **Video Submission:** Create a video presentation of your assignment. You can use Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or any other video recording software to record yourself presenting your work. Ensure that your video is clear, well-paced and covers all aspects of the assignment.
- **Audio Submission:** Record an audio presentation of your assignment. You can use voice recording apps on your smartphone or computer to record yourself discussing your work. Ensure your audio is clear and audible and you cover all required components of the assignment.
- **Presentation:** Prepare a slideshow using PowerPoint, Google Slides, or Prezi software. Your presentation should effectively convey the content of your assignment, including key points, visuals and any relevant media. You can record your voiceover narration if desired.
- **Written Submission:** Write a traditional written assessment, such as an essay, report, or reflective paper. Your written submission should adhere to the formatting and citation guidelines provided and address all components of the assignment prompt.

Academic skills workshops

Large groups or lectures | Small groups or tutorials

- Collaborate with academic support services
- Explicitly teach information literacy skills
- Explicitly teach academic conventions
- Encourage active participation

Collaborate with academic support services and library services at your institution to create academic skills workshops relevant to your course. These should be embedded in your course rather than optional sessions, so as not to disadvantage students from underrepresented backgrounds who may benefit the most. Consider including the following elements:

1. A demonstration of how to access and use the universities library databases and how to use reference management systems.
2. A hands-on activity where students find five sources relevant to an upcoming assignment in groups.
3. Discuss the academic conventions of your discipline explicitly, including the structure of essays/reports and citation styles.
4. In groups, students practice paraphrasing a key idea from the 5 articles they identified and correctly referencing them.
5. Conduct a quiz to test what students have learned about the academic conventions discussed. This will help the students reflect on their understanding and will help you identify where further instruction is needed.

Integrating generative AI into the classroom

Small groups or tutorials

Encourage active participation

Scaffold difficult concepts?

Encourage active engagement in academic texts

AI as a learning tool

Generative AI and large language models will be important tools of the future and first year is a great time for students to learn to use them effectively and ethically to support their writing. AI writing programs can level the playing field when it comes to getting started with academic writing as some students have had more exposure to academic writing than others. When used effectively in the classroom, these tools can provide support to students who have less experience with academic writing.

1. Students come to class having read an assigned reading such as a journal article or textbook chapter.
2. Students choose one key idea from the reading and ask a generative AI tool to produce a summary or an argument on the topic.
3. In groups, have students critically analyse one AI-generated output. You could provide a framework for critical analysis including criteria such as relevance, coherence, accuracy and bias.
4. Individually, have students revise their initial generative AI response, correct inaccuracies, restructure the content for better flow and add original insights or counterarguments. Students mark up in a different colour the changes they made and use comments to explain their additions or changes.
5. Alternatively, you could have students use subsequent prompts to have the generative AI tool make the changes the student thinks are necessary.
6. Students submit their edited and annotated summary or their chat log with a short reflection on the benefits and drawbacks of using AI for academic writing.

Review your course reading list

Large groups or lectures | Small groups or tutorials

Include readings from diverse authors

Curate diverse readings

Conducting a review of your course readings to ensure they represent diverse perspectives is essential for fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment.

1. Review the diversity of authors in your reading list in terms of gender, cultural background and socio-economic background.
2. Check if authors represent a range of perspectives or come from different theoretical or methodological traditions within your field.
3. Identify any gaps and seek out readings to fill them.
4. Solicit feedback from your students about the reading list.
5. Ensure you don't set too many readings and review your reading list to ensure that only the most relevant and useful readings on a topic are included.

Stop, start, change

Large groups or lectures | Small groups or tutorials

Elicit feedback from students

Student surveys

Use the survey template below to collect feedback from your students at the end of the term/semester.

Dear Students,

We value your feedback and want to improve your learning experience in this classroom. Please take a few moments to share your thoughts by completing this survey. Your responses will help us identify areas for improvement and make necessary changes.

Instructions:

- For each category (Stop, Start, Change), please provide your suggestions or comments.
- Feel free to be honest and specific in your responses.
- Your feedback will remain anonymous.

Stop:

1. What classroom practices or activities do you think we should STOP doing because they are not helpful or effective for your learning?

Start:

2. Are there any new classroom practices, activities, or resources we should START implementing to enhance your learning experience? Please provide details.

Change:

3. Are there any existing classroom practices, teaching methods, or assignments you think we should CHANGE or modify to support your learning better? Please explain.

Additional comments: Is there anything else you want to share or suggest to improve this unit?

Thank you for your valuable input.

Another framework you can use is

"Yes – What did you like about the course?"

"Hmm – What were you unsure about?"

"No – What needs improvement?"

"Boost! – What aren't you seeing enough of and want to dial up?"

Checklist for providing good feedback

Large groups or lectures | Small groups or tutorials

Give constructive feedback

- ☑ **Normalising feedback**: Making feedback a normal part of learning encourages students to develop positive habits around seeking feedback and coping with the emotional elements of receiving feedback.
- ☑ **Timeliness:** Provide feedback as soon as possible after the assessment, so that the learning from the feedback can still be connected to the assessment content. It's also important to make clear when and how students can apply the feedback.
- ☑ **Constructiveness:** Feedback should be critical but supportive, encouraging students to confidently scrutinise and improve their future work. Balance critical feedback with notes on what students are doing well to help build their confidence and understand their next steps.
- ☑ **Relevance:** Relate feedback directly to learning outcomes and assessment criteria, making clear what was expected and what will be expected in the future.
- ☑ **Depth:** Feedback should go beyond simple edits (grammar, spelling, presentation) and address broader learning outcomes. Common editing feedback can be given through a feedback tick list.
- ☑ **Respect:** Provide feedback with care and respect for diversity and individuality. Emphasise that feedback is about the work rather than the student.
- ☑ **Clarity:** Ensure students understand that the feedback they receive is intended to improve their learning and should be taken seriously.

Summary: What does inclusive teaching look like?

Know your students

Having an inclusive teaching practice means you actively seek to understand students as individuals and to respect their contributions, diverse experiences and feedback.

Embed academic literacies

Inclusive teaching means effectively supporting students to build familiarity with academic conventions, academic texts and research and critical thinking skills.

Use diverse teaching strategies and resources

Flexible and accessible content that accommodates different capabilities and offers alternative formats ensures that all your students can engage with the material.

Create an inclusive classroom environment

A positive environment where students feel a sense of connection to their teachers and peers and feel safe to make mistakes and ask for support promotes a sense of belonging and encourages active engagement in learning.

Design inclusive curricula and assessments

Providing students with clear expectations and consistent structures around their learning supports them to succeed no matter how unfamiliar with university learning environments they might be. Flexible, early and low-stakes assessments supports students to build the skills they will need to succeed and receive timely feedback.

Embed support systems

Teaching inclusively means supporting students to build the capacity and confidence to seek help when they need it. Effective help-seeking early in university study can bridge academic skills gaps.

Facilitate continuous reflection

Reflecting on teaching practices and seeking feedback from students enables teachers to better meet their students' needs, keeping them engaged and learning effectively.

Where can you get support?

Internal Resources:

- Teaching and Learning Centres
- Mentoring Programs
- Communities of Practice
- Teaching Teams
- Faculty Workshops and Seminars
- Peer Observation and Feedback

External Resources:

- Professional Associations
- Conferences
- Workshops (offered outside the institution, e.g., pedagogy, curriculum design, assessment strategies)
- Formal Qualifications/Certifications in Higher Education Teaching

Further reading

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- Motta SC, Bennett A, (2018) 'Pedagogies of care, care-full epistemological practice and other caring subjectivities in Enabling Education', Teaching in Higher Education, 23, 631-646.
- Visit ACSES for the latest research and publications on Equity Cohorts and Higher Education.

Pause for reflection

- How aligned are your current teaching practices with the principles of inclusive teaching outlined in this guide?
- How diverse is your student cohort? How will understanding who is in your classroom impact on your teaching practice?
- What new strategies might you adopt to make your teaching practice more inclusive?

Support your students with Uni Ready

Uni Ready is a free digital toolkit developed by students, for students to make the transition from high school to university study easier.

Uni Ready is a research-based resource supported by the NSW Department of Education and developed by UNSW in partnership with the University of Sydney and the University of Newcastle.

Students will discover a wealth of engaging and interactive content covering:

- the differences between high school and university study,
- note-taking methods and practical study tips,
- strategies to excel in university assessments and
- the importance of critical thinking for university study

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