

Inclusive Teaching

Guidelines for planning and delivering accessible
lectures and seminars

Guidelines for making teaching more inclusive

A. Introduction

The suggestions aim to develop more inclusive practice in the design and delivery of accessible lectures and seminars.

While the focus is on removing barriers to the curriculum for disabled learners, it is hoped that the outcome will be learning opportunities which are more accessible to all students.

Anticipating Requirements

Recent legislation and best practice encourage teachers to **anticipate** the requirements of disabled students rather than simply to be reactive to individual needs. The guidelines suggest actions which are anticipatory e.g. using a venue which is accessible not only to those with mobility impairments but where: there is an induction loop; good lighting; furniture that is arranged to enable participation by deaf learners who lip read; group work that can fully involve and be non-threatening to dyslexic participants; handouts that can be made available in other formats or in advance electronically to blind learners. This action would make sure that everyone can attend.

You may never teach a deaf student, but a venue which is organised in the ways above will benefit everyone and will be accessible to a student who is deaf or hard of hearing.

Approaches

It is a good idea at the outset to ask: How would this lecture, seminar, presentation, exercise, handout, or wording be experienced by a dyslexic student with reading difficulties; a deaf student who lip reads; a blind learner; a student with high levels of anxiety; a person with mobility difficulties; a learner with Asperger's syndrome? It can be daunting but eventually becomes an instinctive process.

Inclusive Provision

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) in a new leaflet on the Disability Equality Duty (in force from December 2006) defines the process of inclusion for public sector organisations:

...this duty is not necessarily about changes to your building or adjustments for individuals. It's all about weaving equality for all, including disabled people, into your culture in practical and demonstrated ways.

B. Planning a lecture or seminar

What expectations do you have of what participants will be able to do during and after the session?

- Make use of handouts and other print material?
- Watch videos?
- Follow a PowerPoint presentation?
- Use interactive technology?
- Work within small groups?
- Feed back in plenary?
- Work in pairs?
- Take notes?
- Contribute verbally within the whole group?
- Undertake further reading?
- Complete an assignment?

What can you do to anticipate that some of these activities might pose difficulties for some students?

Venue

- Ensure that the venue, its facilities and equipment are accessible
 1. Are there tables which are at the right height for wheelchair users?
 2. Is there a loop system and microphone?
 3. Do you know how to use it?
 4. Do facilitators know how to use it?
 5. Can furniture be re-arranged to facilitate group discussions/exercises?
 6. Can students easily tape the session?
 7. Is there a seating which provides good back support?
 8. Is there good lighting?
 9. Is signage clear?

Teaching Methods

- Plan for a mix of visual and oral presentations and exercises to allow for difference in learning styles and ways of understanding.

Presentations

- If using PowerPoint or overheads, design slides which accessibility in mind. Colour, contrast, amount of text, size and type of font all affect the legibility. Arial or Veranda minimum font size 30 mixed case and in bold rather than underlining or italics work effectively. Ensure a contrast between text and background and avoid using colour alone to convey meaning.
- The slides can still be inaccessible to some students, however many guidelines are followed. Making the slides available electronically beforehand allows a participant to read the presentation using adaptive hardware/software. End bullet points with full stops for ease of access through adaptive software.
- If you plan to use a video, check out whether it is captioned to assess its accessibility to deaf and hard of hearing students and its soundtrack to assess whether it is going to be useful to blind students. Having deaf or hard of hearing students and its soundtrack to assess whether it is going to be useful to blind students.
- Organise a glossary of any terms you will be using with which students may be unfamiliar. There may be no BSL sign for the term and the deaf learners who lip read may not recognise the word. Dyslexic students will value seeing the spelling of the word – and hearing it spoken in the session.
- It is best practise to give BSL/English interpreters a copy of any lecture, outline of the session and handouts in advance so that they know what they are interpreting.

Accessible Handouts

- Organise the availability of handouts in alternative formats: large print, Braille, on different colour papers, on disk. These can be made routinely available prior to or during the session. Cream paper is a preferred background colour for some dyslexic people as it reduces glare.
- Size 12-14 Arial, Comic Sans, or Veranda font can improve the accessibility of handouts for everyone. Use point 16 or above for **large print** information.
- Avoid block capitals in handouts.
- To emphasise words, either enlarge the print or put it in bold. Avoid underlining.

Small Group Work

- Plan small group activities so that all can be as fully involved as possible. Make part of the exercise the reading out of the tasks involved so that all will have understanding of what is required.
- Plan for alternative ways for participants to feed back from small group work. Offer choice.

Assessment

- Plan in alternative ways of assessing learning during and after the lecture or seminar.

Procedures for a seminar or small group activity

- Check with the student whether and/or how they would like the rest of the group to know about their requirements – if those requirements will have implications for the group members. E.g. a deaf learner working with an interpreter may want the rest of the group to know the ground rules for working through an interpreter.

C. Delivering a session

- If you have been told in advance that there is a disabled student, check out tactfully with them that everything is in place to meet their requirements.

Presentations

- Use a microphone when it is available as part of a loop system – however small the group or room.
- Face the group when presenting so that there is a clear view of you. If using PowerPoint, slides or notes, continue to face the audience. Try to maintain that stance throughout so that your lips are visible.
- Avoid standing with light directly behind you.
- Use focused lighting if the room is darkened for a presentation.
- Use clear, unambiguous language. If you are going to use acronyms, explain what they mean at the outset. If you are going to use or introduce terminology, write it down and give a definition or ensure the audience knows what it means.
- Speak clearly and deliberately to allow note-taking.
- Pause to allow clarification.
- Have short intermissions for review of material, individual reactions, questions.
- Describe diagrammatic materials or demonstrations.
- If working with a BSL/interpreter, allow time for them to translate your words.
- Lip reading is an exhausting activity; interpreters have recommended lengths of time for effective interpreting; students with short term memory difficulties would find long presentations challenging. Vary activities and have pauses between them.

Discussion

- Establish ground rules for discussion with the group members that will allow as full participation as possible by all group members.

Small Group Work

- Make the task clear both in writing and orally.
- Talk through with groups any practical difficulties that might arise from having a diverse group and ways of addressing those difficulties.
- If reporting back is part of the exercise, give the option of reporting back orally. Usually dyslexic students' oral skills are stronger than their writing. Their contribution to a group discussion would be much greater if they do not feel pressured to produce a written account of the discussion.
- Offer to take notes of the plenary and distribute them through Blackboard or other electronic means.
- If flip charts are used as one medium for feeding back, make sure you feedback orally.

Further Information and References

Newcastle University provides this content for information only as it comes from external organisations and individuals. The University accepts no responsibility or legal liability for errors, omissions or inaccurate information contained on these pages.

General

An excellent electronic resource developed at the Open University with very practical guidance.

<http://www.open.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching>

Planning a session

Access guidelines for planning an event produced by the Scottish Disability Team:

http://www.sdt.ac.uk/acc_environment.asp

Creating accessible lectures and tutorials/seminars for disabled students written by the Teachability team based at the University of Strathclyde:

http://www.sdt.ac.uk/acc_environment.asp

Delivering a session

Teaching deaf students: comprehensive documents with practical advice:

<http://www.wlv.ac.uk/teachingdeafstudents/>

Making videos accessible

Best Practice in on-line captioning:

<http://joelclark.org/access/captioning/bpoc/?axx>