Supporting inclusive learning and teaching

The Disability Equality Duty came into force on 4 December 2006 and requires all public authorities, including higher education institutions, to actively look at ways of ensuring that disabled people are treated equally. The Disability Equality Duty will make a real, positive change to the lives of disabled people. This *SWAP Guide 1* has been produced to help you 'raise your Eq' and to support you in making your learning and teaching inclusive.

Top tips

✓ Always assume that you have disabled students on your course who have not disclosed their disability.

✓ Ensure you are aware of any known disabled students on your course; you may need to be proactive in finding out this information.

✓ Talk to disabled students about what is best for them.

✓ Seek advice from disability support staff.

✓ Provide module/course information in advance (e.g. aims and objectives, learning outcomes, programme of sessions).

✓ Provide an outline of teaching sessions in advance (electronically and as hard copy) so that students have some prior knowledge about material to be used.

✓ Provide all new terminology in advance (e.g. via an online glossary).

✓ Check out the accessibility and facilities of teaching rooms before using them.

✓ Provide clear instructions for any activities, indicating what you expect the students to do.

✓ Make sure all instructions are given both verbally and visually.

✓ Face students when you are talking and try not to cover your mouth with your hands as this makes it difficult for lip-readers to understand you.

✓ Provide suitable breaks during activities.

✓ Repeat questions asked by students so that everyone can benefit from the question and answer.

One of a series of short learning and teaching guides designed by **SWAP** to support learning and teaching in social policy and social work. Each digest includes some top tips, more detailed information on their application in practice and a list of further resources.

Further advice on making your teaching inclusive

Lectures

- Use sans serif font (e.g. Arial, Tahoma) on lecture notes (minimum 12pt) and PowerPoint presentations (minimum 24pt).
- Use coloured paper as it enhances contrast and thus may be preferable to white paper.
- Do not crowd your PowerPoint presentations with too much text and unnecessary visual gimmicks.
- Break up text with visuals (e.g. graphs, images, diagrams).
- Explain charts and diagrams both verbally and visually.
- Make lecture notes or a summary of each lecture available in advance (electronically or as hard copy).

> " Dyslexic students may need to spend more time deciphering written information and would appreciate verbal explanations. "
>
> (Dyslexic student, School of Community Health Sciences and Social Care, University of Salford)

Group work

- Discuss options and advise on adjustments with disabled students and other group members.
- Adjust assessment criteria and methods where necessary.
- Consider a subject mentor where appropriate.

> " Students will know most about their own disability and how to manage it. Identify "experts" within own dept/HEI for advice and don't be afraid to ask for guidance. "
>
> (Jane Wray, Research Fellow, Faculty of Health and Social Care, University of Hull)

Tutorials and seminars

- Provide discussion materials in advance so students can prepare themselves.
- Try to ensure that the seating arrangements allow all students to be visible to each other.
- Try to ensure that only one student speaks at a time and make reasonable adjustments if there are disabled students present (e.g. if there is a sight-impaired student present, it may be appropriate for everyone to say their name before making a comment).

Practice/work-based learning

- Ensure there is sufficient time for planning practice-/work-based learning for disabled students (you may require more time for placing a disabled student, so allocation for disabled students should be prioritised).
- Discuss the student's support needs with the practice- or work-based assessor/supervisor (with the permission of the disabled student).
- Incorporate details of adjustments or support offered to disabled students into placement agreements.

Inclusive learning, teaching and assessment practices are good for all students. They should be considered at the earliest possible opportunity. These are some suggestions for making your teaching more inclusive.

- Continually monitor the support provided to disabled students in their practice-/ work-based setting and ensure that adjustments are appropriate.
- Evaluate any adjustments afterwards to ensure that they were suitable and effective.

> [There is a] need for follow-up of adjustments, for example, are they working effectively?

(Disabled student, School of Community Health Sciences and Social Care, University of Salford)

Materials

- Use clear language and short paragraphs.
- Provide material in electronic format as this is most easily converted to alternative formats.
- Ensure there is reasonable space between each paragraph.
- Use left justification (not centre) so that spaces between words and letters are uniform.
- Use bold for emphasis rather than italics or underline.
- Provide glossaries where appropriate.
- Use styles in Microsoft Word (for headings, normal text, etc.) to organise your document; this can save a lot of work when documents are converted to alternative formats.
- Use a sans serif font (e.g. Arial, Tahoma) and reasonable font size (minimum 12pt).
- Use bulleted lists where possible (consider numbering long lists to make them easier to refer to).

Assessment

- Provide flexibility in the balance between assessed coursework and examinations.
- Enable students to demonstrate achievement in different ways, such as through presentations or oral exams.
- Provide flexible deadlines.
- Consider additional time allowances, rest breaks and rescheduling of exams.
- Be aware when the use of computers, amanuenses, readers and other support in exams is needed.
- Alert students to the provision of study skills support, covering essay writing and/ or dissertation skills.
- Request alternative rooms and invigilators for those using alternative arrangements.

The most useful changes to assessment methods are created by providing choice rather than an alternative. For example, allowing all students the choice of being assessed on a portfolio of written work, video presentation or poster.

> Inclusive education means teaching in such a way that anyone could join in. It is about all teaching being accessible rather than having to make adaptations for disabled students. Inclusive education is welcoming to all.

(Bob Sapey, Senior Lecturer in Applied Social Science, Lancaster University)

> You won't be able to do all of these straightaway and might feel overwhelmed, so pick out the ones that you think you can manage quickly and build up from there.
> (Marilyn Crawshaw, Lecturer in Social Work, University of York)

Further resources

Websites

- TechDis: www.techdis.ac.uk
  The leading educational advisory service in the UK in the fields of accessibility and inclusion, TechDis aims to enhance provision for disabled students and staff in higher, further and specialist education and adult and community learning, through the use of technology.

- Making Your Teaching Inclusive:
  www.open.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching

- Accessible Assessments – Staff Guide to Inclusive Practice:
  www.shu.ac.uk/services/lti/accessibleassessments

- Disability and Social Policy Links:
  www.uclan.ac.uk/facs/health/socialwork/socialpolicy/links/disability.htm

- Disability Equality Duty – Disability Rights Commission:
  www.drc.org.uk/employers_and_service_provider/disability_equality_duty.aspx

- Higher Education Academy Disability Section:
  www.heacademy.ac.uk/disability.htm

- Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities: www.skill.org.uk

Projects

- Staff-Student Partnership for Assessment Change and Evaluation Project (SPACE):
  www.plymouth.ac.uk/pages/view.asp?page=10494

- The Teachability Project:
  www.teachability.strath.ac.uk

- The Inclusive Curriculum Project (ICP):
  www2.glos.ac.uk/gdn/icp/gdlist.htm

- Premia – Making Research Education Accessible: www.premia.ac.uk/index.aspx

Publications

- Embedding Success: Enhancing the Learning Experience for Disabled Students, The Higher Education Academy, July 2006.
  www.heacademy.ac.uk/disability.htm

- Disability Legislation: Practical Guidance For Academics, Sue Cavanagh and Yvonne Dickinson, Equality Challenge Unit, 2006.
  www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/guidancepublications/DisabilityLegislation_practical_guidance.pdf

The Higher Education Academy
Social Policy and Social Work (SWAP)
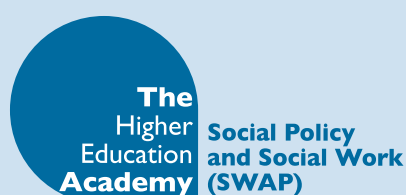
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