Inclusive Teaching Practice

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Plan for this session

As a *student* you have had to teach yourself. Tutoring means working with others with different backgrounds and experiences.

This session is about how we can teach to support a *diversity* of students and to make sure they succeed.

1. Inclusion, Diversity, Accessibility
2. Equitable access to learning
3. Inclusion anti-patterns
4. Strategies for inclusive teaching
5. Scenario discussions

Inclusion, Diversity and Accessibility

Inclusion, Diversity and Accessibility

Figure 1: Photo by Clay Banks on Unsplash

## Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility are different concepts

- **Diversity**: The mix of people in an environment and how they identify in terms of social and professional (academic?) identities.

- **Inclusion**: The mix of people in an environment working together so that everyone feels *respected*, *connected*, *contributing*, *progressing*.

Source: Diversity Council Australia, Inclusion Model, Sydney, DCA, 2025.

- **Accessibility**: "Assisting students to participate fully in their program of study by minimising the impact of *disability* and *disadvantage* on learning." ANU Accessibility Page

Membership of the ANU community means committing to our institutional values, including "being a standard-bearer for equity and inclusion". ANU Strategic Plan 2021-2025
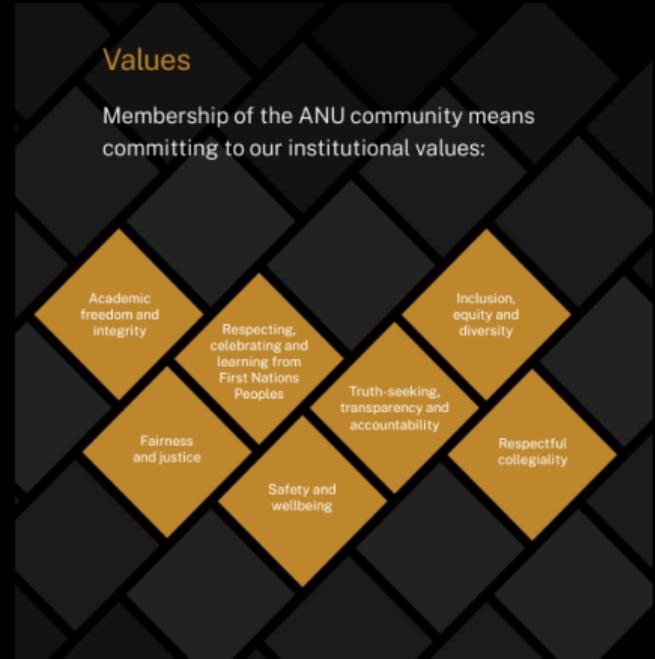
Figure 2: Inclusion, equity and diversity are ANU values.

Code of practice for teaching and learning

- *Respect diversity,* e.g., diversity of culture, religious belief, age, race, gender and other personal and group-based attributes.
- *Recognise* that *diversity* of student and staff backgrounds, opinions and views *is a valuable resource* for enhancing critical, motivated and dialogic teaching and learning.
- *Experience* an environment that is _equitable, collegial, and responsive to the diversity of individuals.
- *Contribute* to an environment *free from harassment, discrimination and bullying*, with access to complaint procedures which will facilitate *speedy and just resolutions.*

Guideline - Code of practice for teaching and learning

Accessibility and Inclusion are related but not identical

Accessibility: foundations

- **Barrier removal:** Eliminating specific obstacles to access learning materials and environments
- **Compliance-driven:** Requirements in law and ANU policy
- **Reactive approach:** Responds to found needs through accommodations (e.g., ANU EAP)

Inclusion: next steps

- **Belonging-focused:** Creates environments where all students feel valued, supported, and able to participate fully
- **Proactive design:** Intentionally shapes education to support diverse learners from the outset
- **Community-building:** beyond accommodations to support all students

Figure 3: Source: Image by Ciell via Wikimedia Common

- **Equality**: Everyone receives the same support regardless of need.
- **Equity**: Individuals receive the support they need to achieve the desired outcomes.

Task Diversity in the classroom

Think-Pair-Share:

Given that university classrooms are diverse, what opportunities and benefits does this provide?

1. Think individually (1 min)
2. Pair: discuss with a partner (1 min)
3. Share: present examples to the group (2 mins)

Figure 4: Photo by Shane Rounce on Unsplash

Barriers to learning

Figure 5: Photo by Nick Fewings on Unspalsh

Barriers to learning

- Barriers could be: physical, sensory, mental, emotional, cognitive, cultural, social.
- Factors may lead to challenges depending on context, or only some situations.
- They may be permanent, temporary, or situational for the individual
- Inclusive teaching can help individuals with specific challenges but the assistance can extend to others as well.

Some other barriers:

- cognitive: information processing, learning speed
- sensory: classroom environment, learning
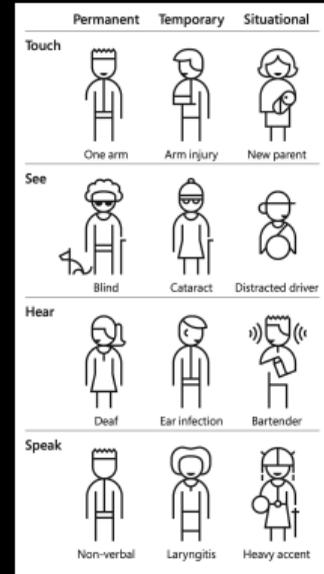
Figure 6: The Persona Spectrum, Microsoft Inclusive Design

Accessible Digital Content

- Digital content in your classes may not be accessible our students because of issues with formats, images, or structure.
- For example, folks who use screen readers or other assistive technologies.
- But also, folks looking at course sites on their phone or tablet (!)
- ANU has some advice about accessible digital content
- **Canvas** has built-in accessibility checkers
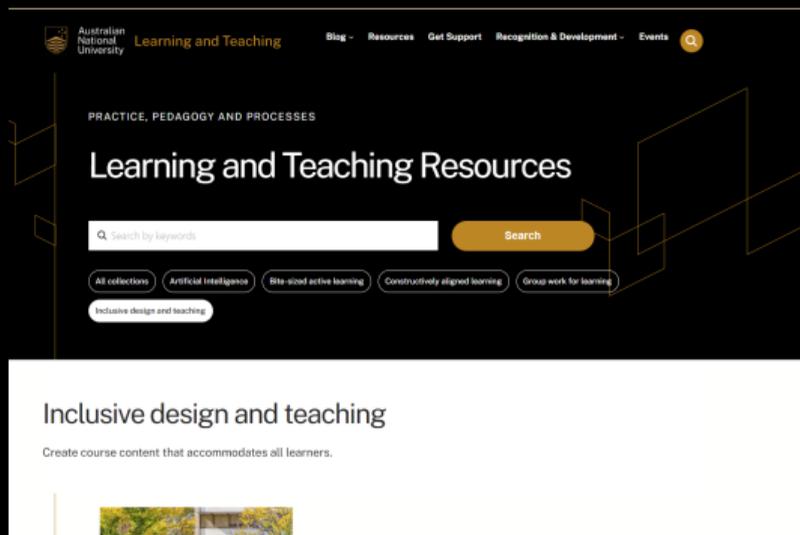
Figure 7: ANU's Learning and Teaching resources

Task: Identifying barriers to learning (5mins)

What's a barrier to learning that you have observed as a student? Is there something you have experienced or seen in action temporarily, or in particular situations?

1. Write down on some sticky notes barriers you can think of.

2. When everyone in your group is ready, explain your sticky notes to your group. Try to identify any common themes.

Inclusion anti-patterns

Inclusion anti-patterns

Sometimes our ways of working are not as inclusive as we would hope.

Figure 8: Photo by seabass creatives on Unsplash

Inclusive teaching is not automatic

- Our teaching is probably not inclusive enough.
- Some typical ways of working leave students out.
- We need to work hard to detect inclusion anti-patterns and to mitigate or eliminate the effects.
  Inclusive teaching is valued at CSS, that's why we are spending time on it today!

Task: Dangerous Patterns for Inclusion (5mins)

Can you think of any common teaching patterns that are dangerous for inclusion?

- Doesn't have to be actively hostile to be a bit less inclusive than we would hope.
- Some practices may be less-than-inclusive but necessary or desired (on balance)

Discuss as groups, and share an example from each table.

We supply the tools, it's up to the students to do the rest.
All students need to read and fully understand the exercises before attending class.
All third year CS students should be comfortable using Linux.
You won't get an extension without a medical certificate.
You can't use generative AI for any aspect of this course.
Students don't understand computers anymore.

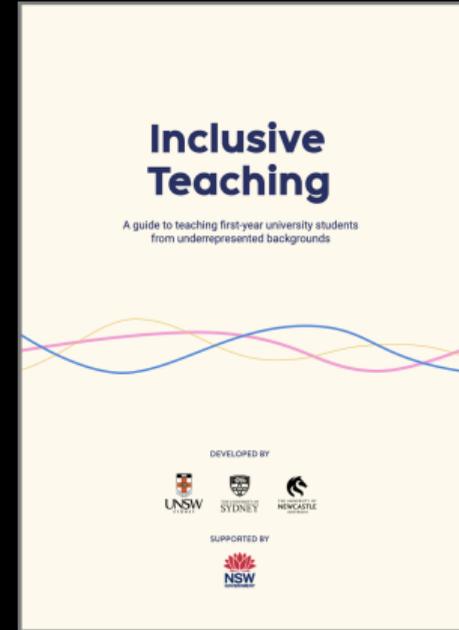How do these statements interact with the idea of *academic standards*?

Strategies for inclusive teaching

So we have discussed *barriers* but what can we do about it?

UniReadyToolkit Principles

Broadly adapted from UniReadyToolkit (link)
(Teague et al., 2024)

Figure 9: UniReadyToolkit (link)

Know your students

Seems straightforward, but is it?
- This will make it easier to see and respond to their needs.
- If you know your students you will *want* to help
- In many cases you will *know what to do when you see it*.

Figure 10: Photo by Mikael Kristenson on Unsplash

Design Inclusive Curricula

This is about the course content, structure and assignments. So what can *tutors* do about this?

- help convenor by communicating course and class structures.
- signpost difficult topics for students, help scaffold them during class.
- clarify expectations for assessments, one good way: "I can't help with the assignment but THIS exercise in the lab is directly related and I CAN help with that".
- help understand *rationale* for assessments.
- provide actionable feedback (within reason)

Embed Academic Literacies

This is about being explicit in the skills needed to complete and demonstrate learning.

- Explicity teach academic conventions
- Encourage active engagement in academic texts
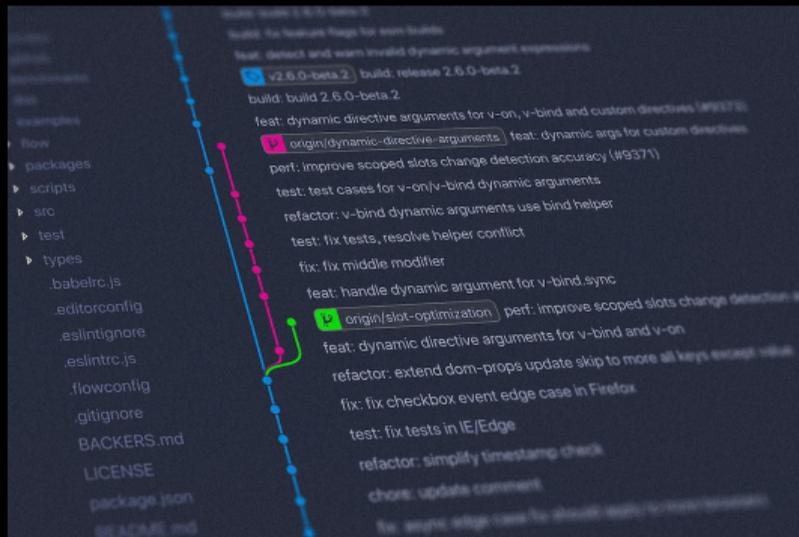- Explicity teach information literacy skills


Figure 11: Photo by Yancy Min on Unsplash

Use diverse teaching strategies and resources

- Help students interact and engage: how can we increase collaboration and belonging in our classes?
- Incorporate real-world applications:
- Integrate accessibility into your teaching.

Create an inclusive classroom environment

- Cultivate a positive and inclusive classroom culture
- Support goal setting and achievement
- Encourage self-reflection
- Promote positive role models
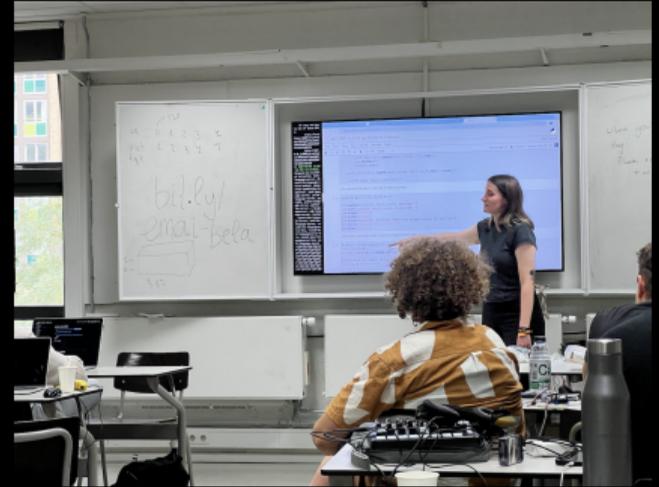
Figure 12: Teaching at a workshop

Embed support systems

- Incorporate help seeking into classes
- how can we encourage questions?
- Direct students to available support resources

Figure 13: Photo by Matthew Waring on Unsplash

Facilitate continuous reflection

- Reflect on the effectiveness of your teaching strategies
- Elicit feedback from students.

Task: Applying one strategy ✨

At your table:
- Choose a strategy that you could apply in a class you are teaching or have previous taken.
- Discuss concrete actions you could take to implement that strategy.
- What would the benefits be? Would there be any drawbacks?

We'll bring the room together to hear some ideas.

The Principles (Teague et al., 2024):

1. know your students
2. **design inclusive curricula and assessments**
3. **embed academic literacies (e.g., hidden curricula)**
4. use diverse teaching strategies and resources
5. create inclusive classroom environment
6. embed support systems
7. **facilitate continuous reflection**

Questions: Who has a question?

Who has a question?
It's time to head home! Happy to take questions now or hear from you over email anytime...

Figure 14: Time to head home, see you out there teachers!

Scenario discussions

Scenario discussions

Each group will have 10 minutes to work through a scenario and formulate a response to share with everybody.

- **Consider** the scenario and **think** about your response.
- **Pair** with *another group member* to share and discuss your thoughts.
- **Share** and **discuss** your preferred solutions with the group.

Scenario 0 (Everybody)

Think-Pair-Share:

You are teaching in an older building on campus. One of your students requires a walking stick for mobility purposes. In the first week, you have observed that to attend the class they have to climb three flights of stairs, as there is no lift available.

Discuss:

- What do you do?
- Who do you contact?
- What factors need to be considered here?
- What is a short-term solution?

Scenario 1

- Your classes have many international students who are in their first semester of studying in Australia. In Week 3, the students are asked to form groups for a team-based assessment task. You notice that some of the international students are struggling to form teams with the domestic students. This leaves them without a group.

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- **Extension:** As part of the assessment task, students submitted a rating of peer contribution. These peer ratings affect the mark allocated to individuals within the group. You note that overall, the international students have consistently received much lower ratings than the domestic students.

Scenario 2

- It is week 4 of semester, your tutorials are running well, and your students are thoroughly engaged in the interactive group tasks that you use in each tutorial. However, one student is always late to the tutorials, which disrupts the class as you must repeat the lesson instructions. They tend not to engage in the tasks and don't interact with the other students in their group.

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- **Extension:** You take the opportunity to have a chat with them after the week 4 tutorial. They share that they are autistic and have extreme anxiety. They arrive on time for the tutorial but then struggle to enter the room. They feel overwhelmed by the challenges of university.

Scenario 3

- You plan to discuss the changing roles of women in IT. As the topic might be challenging, you have included two 5-minute breaks in the hour-long tutorial to allow processing time and a break if the debate gets heated. Initially, the discussion goes well. Then, however, one student repeatedly expresses the opinion that women should not be working in the IT industry. You notice many of the female students progressively disengage from the discussion.

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- **Extension:** There is an assessment task requiring students to respond to statements related to gender roles in the IT industry in the LMS discussion forum. Over the weekend, the same student from the last scenario has written a lot of content that is sexist in content and aggressive in tone.

Scenario 4

- You are teaching in an undergraduate program. You have noticed a change in one of your students. Initially the student was showing up to tutorials on time, neat and tidy and engaged. It is now week 7 and they are arriving late, looking fatigued and not engaging much in tutorial activities.

Scenario 4

- You are teaching in an undergraduate program. You have noticed a change in one of your students. Initially the student was showing up to tutorials on time, neat and tidy and engaged. It is now week 7 and they are arriving late, looking fatigued and not engaging much in tutorial activities.
- **Extension:** You talk with the student after the tutorial and the student discloses to you that this is their first time living away from home which is a small town in far west NSW. They are feeling very isolated and sad. They have no family or friend support close by so spend a lot of time messaging and talking to their family and friends back home. They are considering not continuing with uni after this semester.

Scenario 5

- Your first class is set up and ready to go. To help you remember students' names, you have printed name tags based on the class roll for correct spelling. One student has arrived early and told you that they hate to be identified by the legal name on their name tag. Other students are arriving, and the session starts in 2 minutes.

Scenario 5

- Your first class is set up and ready to go. To help you remember students' names, you have printed name tags based on the class roll for correct spelling. One student has arrived early and told you that they hate to be identified by the legal name on their name tag. Other students are arriving, and the session starts in 2 minutes.
- **Extension:** You wrote their preferred name on the back of the name tag and told the student that you would fix it for next week. During the class, the student is withdrawn and obviously not happy. After the class they disclose to you that they are transgender, and they are finding it difficult to have their name changed. The university bureaucracy is especially frustrating, given that the university says it is supportive of the LGBTQI+ community.

References

References i

Teague, M., Head, K., Osborne-Crowley, K., Ridolfo, H., Jellema, L., Fitzsimmons, D., Turnbull, K., Robertshawe, E., Odewahn, S., Bennett, A., Mansfield, M., Clarke, S., Denham, R., & Bridgeman, A. (2024). *Inclusive teaching: A guide to teaching first-year university students from underrepresented backgrounds*. UNSW - USyd - UoN. https://unireadytoolkit.com.au/sdm_downloads/inclusive-teaching-guide/