Inclusive Curriculum Module Survey: Guidance

7. Belonging and engagement

7.1 Learning outcomes and marking criteria are clear, measurable, and achievable for all.

When writing learning outcomes, try to avoid jargon and use plain English. Make sure they are measurable (e.g. 'student will be able to…' rather than 'student will gain an understanding of'). Always consider whether someone with a disability would be able to achieve your learning outcome/marking criteria in the way it is written, and if not, consider whether it could be measured in a different way, and amend if possible. (Examples of inadvertently ableist marking criteria may include: assigning marks for speaking clearly (what if the student has a speech impediment?), positive body language (what if they have cerebral palsy?) and good eye contact (what if they are visually impaired?) etc.).

7.2 Timetabling is carefully considered at programme level, with particular regard to: religious observance, inclusive assessment practices, work placements and field trips, teaching and exams.

When timetabling, consider:

- Key religious practices or festivals which may impact on your student's attendance, or ability to meet deadlines.
- Avoidance of assessment bunching at programme level (e.g. where multiple modules schedule assessments in the same week, causing serious stress to students).
- Providing sufficient time for open-book exams to allow equal opportunity for disabled students, carers, student parents etc.

7.3 Students are encouraged to build a sense of belonging and cohort cohesion, e.g. via icebreaker activities and mechanisms enabling them to provide support for each other.

Belonging is recognised as important to student success. A variety of activities recommended for student induction has been compiled by CIE. It's also important to encourage students to begin to work together as a community, e.g. by facilitating a module Q&A discussion board and encouraging them to provide support for each other by replying to questions posted there.

7.4 Class time is used to discuss study support available to students, including: academic study skills (KnowHow), and specialist English Language support (ELC).

Using a few minutes of class time (possibly at several points throughout the module) clarifies the importance of the support available, and normalises it. It's more effective in motivating students to engage with support than signposting in module handbooks or the VLE. KnowHow academic study skills courses are run by the library, while the English Language Centre (ELC) offer Insessional English classes and (for all students): Academic English classes.

7.5 An appreciation for diverse entry points around a particular subject is cultivated.

Each individual in your class approaches your subject from a unique perspective which relates to their identity and lived experience, e.g. race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality, social capital, etc. Rather than regarding your class as a homogeneous group, invite their differences into your classroom and offer space to share perspectives and learn from each other. This can be as simple as asking students to share their thoughts on a topic in pairs/groups and feedback, or via shared documents or PollEverywhere if your class is large. Acknowledging and appreciating diverse entry points allows your students to personally engage with their curriculum.

7.6 Module progress towards closing any differentials in participation, progression and attainment is monitored and addressed in the curriculum, working with students as partners to ensure that all students are encouraged, empowered, valued and find relevance in their curriculum.

It's important that we continue to address any gaps in participation, progression and attainment, recognising that the responsibility for reducing the gap does not lie with the students but with us as educators and our curriculum. We have a responsibility to ensure our curriculum teaches all students everything they need to know to succeed in HE and doesn't pre-suppose unspecified experience/knowledge (e.g. study skills etc.) which some students have and others do not. This is sometimes called 'the hidden curriculum'. Engagement is also key – consider UCL's 'why is my curriculum white?' campaign and the experiences of other minority students, and recommendations made in the #ClosingTheGap UUK/NUS report.