IncludeAll – Enhancing Practice: Introduction

Inclusive design based on principles of equity, collaboration, flexibility and accountability allows us to adopt a proactive, anticipatory approach which benefits both staff and students (Morgan, 2010).

What students say: *'I have to be very persistent and proactive to get what I need and this is sometimes uncomfortable.'* (Student with sight loss, ECU Sensory Access in HE)

Although it is good to remove barriers in delivery and content, it is also important not to make assumptions about the abilities or requirements of particular students. Talk to individual students to determine what strategies work for them. Getting to know students as individuals, their likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, also helps, although of course this is easier in some teaching contexts than others. With large cohorts and lectures this is of course much harder and certainly so at first. Designing and delivering in such a way that particular individual learning needs do not become a highlighted issue, but are simply catered for in the way things are set up, helps enormously.

We try to avoid pigeonholing students into specific groups with predictable, fixed approaches to learning, however, it is sometimes useful to consider common themes to improve practice and address the potential inequalities. For instance Thomas and May (2010) use the following:

Educational – examples – level/type of entry qualifications; skills; ability; knowledge; educational experience (not necessarily UK); life and work experience; learning approaches.

Dispositional – examples – identity; self-esteem; confidence; motivation; aspirations; expectations; preferences; attitudes; assumptions; beliefs; emotional intelligence; maturity; learning styles; perspectives; interests; self-awareness; gender; sexuality.

Circumstantial – examples – age; disability; paid/voluntary employment; caring responsibilities; geographical location; access to IT and transport services; flexibility; time available; entitlements; financial background and means; marital status.

Cultural – examples – language; values; cultural capital; religion and belief; country of origin/residence/; ethnicity/race; social background.

This approach recognises similarities, for instance, between the educational needs arising from English not being a student's first language, because they are an International student, or arrived in the UK part way through their primary/secondary

education, and those arising with a student whose first language is BSL (British Sign Language). Their needs and the solutions are very similar, as indeed will those of someone who has Asperger syndrome – clear, concise communication, explanations of requirements, written materials in advance and so on.

For disabled students, while the aim should always be to minimise the number of individual adjustments by removing barriers, some individual adjustments will of course be necessary. Some may conflict – for example the needs of a visually impaired student and a wheelchair user. As information around disability is confidential, you may only be aware of what adjustments are needed and not why. The most common conditions you may potentially come across have been included, but many of our disabled students have multiple conditions to be considered. Your Faculty Disability Coordinator and the Student Enabling Centre can help with background information.

What students say: *'I don't like to draw attention to my deafness. I also do not want to be seen or treated as disabled I want to be able to take part and do things the same as everyone else does.'* (Student with hearing loss,

This section on Enhancing Practice has used current 'labels' for certain groups of students to help provide background knowledge and provide some understanding of the issues faced. However, it must always be borne in mind that these are artificial groupings and all of us have individual, multiple identities.

References and background reading

Action on Access (2009) *Induction and Disabled Learners*. Ormskirk: Action on Access.

ECU (2009) *Sensory Access in Higher Education: Guidance Report*. London: Equality Challenge Unit.

ECU (2010) *Disability Legislation: Practical Guidance for Academic Staff*. 2nd ed. London: Equality Challenge Unit/ York: HE Academy.

Hocklings, C. (2010) *Towards Inclusive learning and Teaching in HE.* York: Higher Education Academy.

Morgan, H. and Houghton, A. (2011) *Inclusive Curriculum Design in HE.* York: Higher Education Academy. (Contents - Section 1: Introduction and overview; Section 2: Generic considerations of inclusive curriculum design; Section 3: Subject specific considerations; Section 4: References and resources). [online]. Available from: www.heacademy.ac.uk [accessed August 2015]

Nicolson, D. (2008) Feedback from d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students. *Inclusive Learning and Assessment Practice*; Issue 2, summer; p34-43.

SCIPS (Strategies for Creating Inclusive Programmes of Study) - covers 21 subject disciplines; search by disability, key skills or subject [online]. Available from: www.scips.worc.ac.uk/

Thomas, L. and May, H. (2010). *Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. York: Higher Education Academy.

This document is part of an inclusive practice 'toolkit' - *Include*All. The whole Toolkit, as one complete document or as separate documents, can be found on the University website at www.staffs.ac.uk/inclusivepractice .

It is split into four sections: Core Concepts; Inclusive by Design; Enhancing Practice; Checklists for Self-reflection.

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