INTRODUCTION
This guide has been designed to help academic staff to create an inclusive curriculum and an inclusive classroom atmosphere with the intention of facilitating the best educational outcomes for all students at La Trobe University. While issues of equity, access and social justice are vital, and thus considered in this guide, the focus is on developing good teaching practices with a view to improving the quality of student learning through the implementation of inclusive curriculum.

DEFINITIONS
The mission of La Trobe University (LTU) involves a commitment to equity and access and to principles of inclusion and diversity. LTU has a diverse demographic of students in relation to differences of language, cultural background, gender, sexuality, age, attendance pattern, family responsibility, religion, and physical ability and disability. This feature of the learning environment at the University is to be valued, articulated and negotiated in terms of the content and processes of the curriculum.

All students come to university with unique life experiences and backgrounds. The same course will be experienced quite differently due to these diverse prior experience and expectations. Good teaching acknowledges and values this diversity in curriculum planning. Inclusion relates to increasing the participation and enhancing the quality of learning of all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures. The term ‘inclusive curriculum’ includes the teaching and learning environment, the course content, the processes of teaching and learning, and the assessment practices. Good teaching includes the design of a curriculum that addresses all these features.
An inclusive curriculum:

- recognises that prior experiences inform students’ expectations, and experiences of the course;
- acknowledges and values the culture, background and experience of all students;
- is inclusive of gender, cultural and socioeconomic background, age, sexuality, and differences related to ability and disability;
- is responsive and gives expression to the knowledge base of the students and staff in teaching and learning;
- acknowledges that any curriculum decision is a selection rather than a complete ‘truth’;
- makes explicit the rationales underpinning course design;
- makes clear the goals and standards, which include the key ideas or concepts of the discipline and the ways of arriving at an understanding of that discipline;
- provides fair access to and distribution of resources. (Sources: VU, UWA, CTLC, Ramsden)

Academics also bring a range of diversity issues to university teaching and learning contexts related to their own race, gender, age, ethnicity and cultural background, physical attributes and abilities and their own attitudes towards diversity. Your physical features and communication styles, and the extent to which these differ from the physical, cultural and intellectual backgrounds of students, will influence the students’ perceptions of the teaching and learning contexts and affect interactions in the classroom. An equitable way to manage diversity is to create a safe atmosphere in which your own, and the students’, diversity can be included, discussed and valued.

**GETTING STARTED**

If the concept of inclusive curriculum is unfamiliar and seems overwhelming, but you find the ideas in this guide useful, give yourself time to make changes to your teaching. The aim is to develop a coherent inclusive curriculum, taking into account the course and learning contexts, the approaches to teaching and student learning, and assessment practices. Start slowly, perhaps by focusing on curriculum design and content, and focusing on one or two considerations from your knowledge about your students and the course and department contexts. Seek advice from colleagues and people with expertise. Add new teaching strategies gradually. Take time to evaluate the changes you make.
INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Creating a comfortable, positive and equitable learning environment is a crucial factor in improving the quality of student learning and increasing the retention rate for students in university courses, particularly in first year courses.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

It is important to understand why you are designing or have designed your curriculum in the way that you have. Curriculum design involves thinking about what it is you want students to learn, how you can make these goals clear to them, and how their own experiences might advantage or disadvantage their capacity to learn. Include a statement in your unit / course aims in relation to recognition of student diversity and inclusive curriculum. Reflecting on the following might be useful during the planning or review processes.

- Value and build on students’ diverse prior learning, experiences and goals.
- Consider your students’ gender, sexuality, cultural backgrounds, learning styles, health and disability status, English language proficiency, numeracy skills, values and experiences.
- Make ‘assumed knowledge’ explicit in the stated prerequisites for the course.
- Include opportunities for a positive engagement with other cultures, practices and life expectations.
- Make sure that references and/or research you are associated with, or refer to, are culturally appropriate.
- Include materials such as texts and readings and on-line material that reflect a diversity of viewpoints and cross-cultural comparisons.

Keep in mind your students’ current experiences at home, work or in the community and the relationship to these of the shared experiences you will create in your curriculum.

CONTENT

Provide examples of how you intend to recognise diversity in your course content, such as the examples you use, the voices represented in materials, and activities that draw together
different experiences, perspectives and strategies. Think about ways in which you can plan the content so that you can:

- use examples/case studies that acknowledge and reflect the diversity of knowledge, experience and cultural values of your students. Are they free of negative stereotypes or assumptions;
- include examples and applications that are equally accessible to both female and male students;
- include materials in which women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities, people from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, and people with diverse sexuality are made visible and represented positively;
- examine the implications of diversity as part of the theory or practice being studied;
- contest a uniform view of knowledge and encourage students to recognise and understand different experiences, perceptions and ways of knowing.

INCLUSIVE TEACHING

There is a relationship between the way you make sense of your topic and present unit material, the way you conceive of and approach your teaching, and the way students experience learning in your classes. Good teaching encourages students to relate to, and actively engage with, the unit material.

During the teaching process, whether face to face or on-line, ask yourself how you can ensure that your teaching:

- both responds to, and builds in, student diversity as an educational resource for all students;
- facilitates equal and possible differing participation of all students in the required learning activities;
- avoids advantaging or disadvantaging particular individuals or groups of students;
- provides students with a range of learning opportunities to meet the needs of different learning styles;
- encourages students to relate their learning to their personal experiences and
perspectives and use their backgrounds as a learning tool;

- responds to difference in English language levels and support the development of all students’ language skills to meet course requirements;
- avoids using negative or potentially offensive stereotypes or assumptions;
- provides opportunities for students to access knowledge and skills that are assumed in the course;
- establishes ground rules for mutual respect in the classroom;
- encourages students to know and listen to each other;
- encourages collaborative work between students;
- actively encourages all students to take responsibility for learning.

APPROACHES
Incorporate different teaching techniques and strategies to accommodate the different ways students might process information in order to learn and then apply it, for example, visual learners prefer to look at models and pictures, aural learners listen closely in lectures and work well in discussion groups.

- Include activities that promote interaction, collaboration and shared reflection among students.
- Be clear and explicit about your goals, expectations, traditions, and administrative practices.
- Use plain English, explain acronyms and avoid unnecessary colloquialisms.
- Anticipate issues that might arise from some of the ‘invisible’ diversity in your classes.
- Take a flexible approach to teaching to increase the opportunities for students to access supportive resources such as teaching notes, audiovisual materials, recorded lectures and on-line teaching and learning materials.
- Think of your students as individuals rather than as representatives of particular groups. Do not ask a student to speak for a whole group. Don’t make remarks that perpetuate stereotypes.
- Try to get to know your students. Learn their names, and take time to pronounce them properly. Encourage students to get to know each other. You could create an email list
or website for interaction.

- Actively discourage language or behaviour which is racist, sexist, and homophobic, culturally offensive, or which demeans people with disabilities. Do not let damaging statements pass without comment.

- Allow students to disagree with you or others, but within the guidelines that promote a safe learning atmosphere in the classroom.

- Let students know that you are prepared to respond to student feedback. (Sources: UWA, VU, CTLC)

**INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT**

Assessment is about getting to know your students, their strengths and weaknesses, their potential, and the quality of their learning (Ramsden, 1992: 181). Students at LTU have diverse experiences, learning agendas, contexts, learning styles and differing expectations of assessment. Consider issues of student choice and independence. How can these be factored into assessment? When planning your assessment to be inclusive of student diversity you might consider different ways in which students could demonstrate their learning that might be equally effective and equitable. Consider the ways in which your assessment practices are, or could be:

- explicit about what you expect, and about the criteria you will use to assess and grade the work;

- able to assess your stated objectives and intended learning outcomes validly, reliably, and practically;

- flexible and equitable enough to assess the learning outcomes of diverse students while designed to avoid advantaging and/or disadvantaging any one group of students;

- structured to allow students choose assignments and learning styles with which they are comfortable;

- designed to take account of diverse values, goals and experiences and to allow for the articulation of diverse perspectives and understandings about knowledge;

- designed to diagnose misunderstandings during the learning process, structured to provide students with appropriate feedback when needed, and supportive of students assessing their own work

- free of culturally or gender biased examples, and responsive to different language levels.

Is it in plain English and free of unnecessary colloquialisms and acronyms? Are students
whose first language is not English given time to read the questions in exams?

**SUPPORT**

- **UQ** – Universal design and inclusive practice
- **Deakin** – Inclusive teaching practices
- **VicGov** – Culturally inclusive curriculum
- **UTAS** – Inclusive practice
- **Universities Australia** – National best practice framework for Indigenous cultural competency in Australian universities

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