

INCLUSIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING

Dr. Mary Roberts, Student Learning Support Service

What do we mean by diverse students?

- Maori students and staff
- Pacific students and staff
- Students and staff with disabilities
- Men or women in professions or areas where they are underrepresented
- Socio-economically disadvantaged students
- LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer)
- CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse)
- Mature students
- Diverse religious identities
- International students
- Refugee Background Students

Pragmatic

- At the moment, the university sets the bar for entry fairly low. It's fairly easy [for some students] to get into university with a level of preparation that means that you won't succeed unless you get significant extra support. This has costs for the students if they fail and costs for the standards of the university if the students pass when they are not truly up to standard. If we are going to continue to accept such students we need to provide significant extra support. ^{JB}

Social justice

- My own family background ... has made me aware of the considerable stresses faced by students coming to university from [poor communities]. They struggle financially and may well be living at home with no convenient place to do academic work, surrounded by family all the time, and working 20 or more hours a week – it can be exhausting. Many Maori and Pacific Island students are facing these kinds of challenges. ^{JB}
- I'm a strong supporter of the idea of MPI tutorials. I've got a background in Treaty of Waitangi research and I'm acutely aware of the history that means there is an unbroken line, a chain of cause and effect, that leads to the position of Maori and Pasifika students at NZ universities today. ^{TO}

Universal design

My course had lot of students with disabilities.
WHY?

- The powerpoint slides are available before the lectures,
- tutorial slides are available before the tute as well.
- no external exams
- for the class tests, they get the questions in advance so they have plenty of time to read and think about them.

These features were built up over time... and collectively seem to have made the course more accessible to a wide range of students. ^{CB}

Part of being a good teacher

- I place a lot of emphasis on my teaching and, for me, part of being a good teacher is being inclusive. ^{GM}
- I think teaching is all about creating an environment in which people with young minds can feel facilitated to learn and explore. That should be the nature of tertiary education and in order to do that facilitation, you have to be inclusive. ^{WM}
- I want students to respond to my teaching and to engage with the ideas and in order for that to happen, I need to be inclusive. ^{SK}
- For me, inclusivity is home, when I'm in that zone, I'm home. SM
- Yes it does take a lot of time to teach this way but I couldn't do it any other way. ^{CS}

How to teach inclusively

□ **Interrogate your own experience**

□ **Be reflexive**

What do students say? Communicate clearly

- **In China, I was afraid of the teachers, so I would never go and see them. New Zealand lecturers need to overcome this mindset of Chinese students and really emphasise that they are happy to see students. One of my lecturers put his timetable in the course outline, with when he would see us. That was very helpful.** [Rose, international student, from China.]
- **Hand writing needs to be clear and there needs to be a link between the comments and grades. ...I once got back an essay where the comments were "good", "good", "good" and the grade was 'C'. All those "goods" didn't help me understand what I needed to do to get a better grade.** [Rose, international student, from China]
- **Another area where both tutors and lecturers can make a big difference is when they give feedback on assignments. Comments on the assignment should help you understand why you received a particular grade. You should explain your feedback.** [RB student, 1st year at university, F]

What do students say? Exemplification

- **Chinese students need encouraging to talk and it's encouraging when the teacher uses examples from our country.** [Rose, international student, from China]
- **He was talking about all these European countries but when he talked about Niue it really made me sit up and take notice.** [Niuean student, female]
- **Even if your discipline doesn't touch on social issues, you probably still have to use examples drawn from social settings and it would be useful if this included LGBT examples.** [LGBT student, male]
- **Lecturers should use familiar stuff and modern day cases to help us understand unfamiliar material.** [Pasifika students, F]

What do students say? Personal Relationships

- **What made a difference was teachers who took an interest in me, who realised, and told me that I was capable and bright despite leaving school so early.** [working class, FIF, mature student, lesbian, PhD graduate]
- **A tutorial is bad if the tutor doesn't seem to make an effort or care about the students. A good tutor cares about the students and checks that they're understanding stuff.** [Pasifika students, all F]
- **Good lecturers are people oriented and friendly, they don't insist on their academic, "superior" status but treat students as though they're equals.** [learning disability, lower SES, M, 3rd year at university]
- **Be approachable, don't have an attitude of 'I'm a lecturer, I'm better than you' and use humour.** [Maori students, F]

What do students say? Know your students

- **It's important that lecturers get to know individual students. Although it's harder in large classes, it would still be really good. Lecturers and tutors need to be friendly and prepared to help students.** [RB student, female]
- **I really appreciate her openness, the way she acknowledges the variety of backgrounds in the class and the fact that she doesn't stereotype people.** [International PG student, Pacific region, M]

What do students say? Multimodal approach

- **We like lectures that are interactive.** [Pasifika male students].
- **I really like it when the lectures include pictures, graphs and YouTube clips. I'm a very visual learner, even at home in China I didn't like to get everything through reading and listening and here that's even more true because it's all in a foreign language.** [Rose, international student, from China]
- **Lecturers need to be flexible in their delivery. One size doesn't fit all. I found it really helpful when they used video and you tube.** [Mature student with learning disabilities]
- **It's really good if you can get a discussion going in the lecture, that makes it more interesting.** [Maori student, female]

How to teach inclusively

- Communicate clearly
 - Language, expectations, exemplification
- Develop good personal relationships with students
 - Be honest and open, use humour, be approachable, be available, be respectful, learn names
- Know who your students are
 - Banner, quick feedback, tutorials, CAD evaluations, conversation, class reps
- Multimodal teaching approach
 - Music, visuals, online, powerpoint

Above all.....

**HAVE
HIGH
and
EXPLICIT
EXPECTATIONS
OF YOUR STUDENTS**

Some Questions

- Do you agree with the definition of inclusive teaching given here? If not, how would you define it.
- Is the notion of inclusive teaching useful in the context of a university?
- Is the notion of inclusive teaching useful in the context of other tertiary teaching institutions?
- If you think it is useful, how can the idea be promoted?
- The notion on inclusive teaching usually centres on the concept of identifiable groups of students. Some people object strongly to this framework and want to focus on individuals, not groups. What are your ideas about this debate?

What is inclusive teaching?

Inclusive teaching

- Ensures that students are not marginalised or excluded from university education because of who they are
- Does not require students or staff to become or "pass" as mainstream in order to succeed at university
- Welcomes diversity and sees diverse students and staff as enriching the university
- Works to create a place where all students and staff can thrive
- Recognises that the playing field is not level and we need to take action to create a diverse and inclusive university.