Inclusion: Small changes that can be made to improve your students' learning experiences.

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What does inclusion or inclusive learning mean?

The notion of inclusion used to be mainly associated with issues of accessibility and focused on needs of students with learning disabilities and additional needs. Recent literature is not restricted to these student populations anymore (Hocking, 2010). Inclusion focuses on all students and it puts emphasis on student agentic engagement opportunities and empowering learning systems that foster academic progress for all. Researchers encourage us to create lesson plans that give all students (Naraian, 2019) better chances at learning despite gender, race, language, preferred learning style, cognitive maturity, disability or difficulties (if any) (Linder, 2015, Rendón, 1994). The best way to achieve inclusion of a wider-range of student populations is the proactive identification of learning needs and conditions that favor accessibility, engagement and progress of all students within the academic community.

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Inclusive education is often associated with key principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which promote flexibility in teaching and learning and are directed towards the largest possible student population, thus decreasing the need for individual adjustments to big audiences. This inclusive approach offers the students:

-multiple means of presenting new input and knowledge
-multiple means of verifying knowledge and learning outcomes
-multiple means of increasing motivation and active participation of students in line with their interests and needs (Meyer, et al, 2013).

Inclusive education also embraces principles of differentiated teaching and learning that takes varying learning preferences or challenges into account (Jørgensen and Brogaard, 2021). Differentiation is more effective when we differentiate the learning procedure rather than the expected results (Katsaboxaki-Hodgetts, 2020).

Another important parameter of inclusive pedagogy is the feeling of "belonging" to one or more communities (discourse community, community of practice, learning community). Active participation and social learning (Felten and Lambert, 2020) increase this sense of "belonging", especially when instructors design activities with student diverse needs in mind (Sanger, 2020).

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Some practical ideas:

Identify student needs:

- ☐ Announce from the first lecture that your class intends to include all students and invite them to share potential challenges and concerns. Start an activity using an identity map and ask students to discuss in groups which 'identity' they identify the most with. (Avraamidou and Schwartz, 2011).

- ☐ Organize individual meetings (or small-group meetings) during your office hours.

- ☐ Engage in anonymous research or a reflective writing activity to better understand previous knowledge or difficulties of your students. Share the information you gained with your students, so they all understand that everyone has different perspectives, difficulties, preferences or level of comprehension.

- ☐ When you assign group activities, allow the more experienced students to guide the less experienced ones.

- ☐ Create anonymous reflective opportunities (conversations or writing activities) which encourage students to think how their previous knowledge has been reinforced or evolved during lessons. In order for students to have learning gains, these exercises should not be graded.

A key principle of every inclusive pedagogy is the point at which student diversity i.e. the individuality of every student, is recognized (Florian and Spratt, 2013). In fact, "Inclusive pedagogy is a teaching and learning approach which responds to the individual differences between students [so as to] avoid marginalization that may occur when certain [students] are treated differently" (ibid:119).

The development of a pedagogy without exclusions or labeling is a continuous process. Even the most experienced professors need to adapt their teaching practices (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009) with the purpose of adapting broader inclusion strategies for ALL students.

More practical ideas:

☐ Provide auxiliary material which corresponds to every week from the first day of the semester.

☐ During the presentation of new material (syllabus), incorporate spoken, visual and textual representations of new input. Explain technical terms (either orally or as supplementary material) and give many examples in every lecture.

☐ Create activities during the lecture where students can support each other while using different skills. According to research study, support from peers is not only important for the emotional and social transition of students to university, but is also a very important factor of academic success (Zhao and Kuh, 2004; Felten and Lambert, 2020). Activities you may use include:

I. Think-Pair-share (Mundelsee, Jurkowski, 2021)

II. Jigsaw Activities (Jainal and Shahrill, 2021)

III. Team Based Learning (Michaelsen and Sweet, 2008)

IV. Problem based learning (PBL) (Amador et al., 2006)

V. Research based learning/(IBSE) (Khalaf and Zin, 2018).

☐ Use different educational activities and means of expression of students (Sanger, 2020):

a. Lectures with **visual aids** like pictures, graphs or videos provide an effective combination of multimodal education.

b. Lectures with **interactive tools**, like socrative, padlet, kahoot and PollEverywhere encourage students to understand the content and make decisions, while they simultaneously strengthen their perceptiveness.

c. Informal conversations in a subject chosen by the lecturer or the students help them think and communicate with others **"thinking strongly" and listening to different opinions**.

d. Writing in real time on a chalkboard or a whiteboard from the lecturer or the students can boost and clarify what is being said during a conversation. Writing can take many forms, such as lists, *diagrams* or concept maps.

e. Writing in real time on an online whiteboard projected on a screen gives chances for anonymous participation in conversations, which can be useful, if students are

not familiar or confident enough to share their opinions with the rest of the class.

f. Reflective writing exercises not shared with peers can be used as a private, more personal exercise to boost their analytical and critical thought, allowing students to take risks without being afraid "they may ask a silly question" and of losing face.

Improving accessibility

Make sure the fonts on screen are accessible to everyone.

Use formatting that fits programs of screen reading (for students with vision impairments). For example, do not use old photocopied material that you have converted to a pdf. Rewrite your input so that online readers can 'read' it.

Provide recorded material and use captions/subtitles wherever possible.

Provide your material in advance (in university platforms) to allow your students to adapt the content and make it more accessible.

Update any changes well in advance (e.g timetables, lecture hall).

Boosting Student "sense of belonging"

Share clear targets and learning results on each lesson.

Describe the content of subjects and how they are connected with evaluation, in advance.

Provide a word-book with basic terms (ideally every week).

Create "options" in activities or evaluation wherever possible, e.g.individual/ pair /group presentation or blog, video, etc.

Provide a reading list (in order of priority readings) to help the students focus on the most important material first.

Ask students to write down anonymously what they do not understand, what they struggle with and what suggestions for improvement they can make.

Providing cognitive support

Provide coherent and detailed information so that students do not need to come to you for more explanations.

Before moving on to new input, check if the previous input was understood by

students.

Differentiate tasks/ activities so that they correspond to a variety of cognitive skills other than comprehension (See Bloom's taxonomy, 1956 in Anderson et al. 2014).

Provide written and oral instructions for every activity to ensure that the students understand what you expect them to do. In your descriptions, use metadiscourse such as: Step 1, Step 2 etc

Provide a conceptual map, image or graph to help the students connect pieces of information together.

Check the pace of your presentation, make pauses and allow breaks for rest.

As well as bullet points and textual or oral input, use pictures/ diagrams to support "double" learning (the combination of words/pictures is more effective than words by themselves).

Summarize and recap key points in all your lessons.

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It was also created under the supervision of the University of Crete's deputy rector Georgios Kossioris and after the participation of coordinator Kallia Katsampoxaki Hodgetts in the Mutual Teaching Thematic Peer Group (ΑΘΟΕ) (2021 – 2022), for the "Equal Access and inclusion" which is led by Deputy Rector of Academic Affairs and Student Welfare DUT, Zoe Gavriilidou.

*The present material was uploaded on the website of TOTT (https://tott.uoc.gr) for the first time on March 2022.

You can also watch the webinar by Mrs. Abigail Osborne and Mr. Robert Eaton, who will speak about inclusive education and corrective actions for higher education [Inclusivity / inclusion in Higher education]. The speakers highlight how inclusiveness courses can be organized in order to be useful and interesting.

/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXiecmx7WwE&list=PLGJrJunhpMg0pRDwdahAi84HpPcua7rvL

In the second part, Ms. Paraskevi Koutsaidi will speak for 20 minutes on the value of including students with disabilities (SwD) in university education and what sort of adjustments contribute to the best possible inclusion of these students.

Short bios of the lecturers:
(**σημείωση:** τα βιογραφικά σημειώματα στα Αγγλικά, με κάποιες μικρές αλλαγές, βρέθηκαν αναρτημένα στην Αγγλική σελίδα του σεμιναρίου https://en.uoc.gr/announce/tot2021.html)

Mrs. Abby Osborne currently works at the Centre for Learning and Teaching at the University of Bath. She has experience of curriculum development across a range of subjects and has a particular interest in supporting staff to develop inclusive teaching and learning practice. Abby has extensive experience in supporting learners with Special Educational Needs. She also works as an Inclusive Education Consultant and Trainer for Cambridge Assessment International Education. Abby is particularly passionate about developing solution-focused, practical approaches to inclusive teaching and learning which are embedded and are sustainable for teachers.

Mr. Robert Eaton leads the Curriculum Development team within the University of Bath's Centre for Learning and Teaching, supporting academic staff across all disciplines in the design and development of their courses, as well as the implementation of innovations in learning and teaching practice. Robert is passionate about education, stemming from initial training as a primary teacher, before moving into the area of political sociology, with his PhD examining the nature of UK education policy reform. He has experience in a range of Higher Education roles, and his current interests involve working with staff and students to embed new approaches to assessment, inclusion, and sustainability within the curriculum. Robert is also a member of the University of Bath's International Centre for Higher Education Management, contributing to teaching and supervision on their unique DBA research programme for higher education leaders.

Ms. Paraskevi-Konstantina Koutsaidi graduated with a distinction from the Department of French Language and Literature of the Kapodistrian University of Athens, with a major interest in translation. She studied for a semester at the University of Avignon in France, under the "Erasmus + Studies" program. Since 2012, she is a member of the Greek mission of ICC Camp (International Camp on Communication and Computers for blind and partially sighted youth), initially as a participant and now as a staff member. As part of the ICC Camp, she has presented workshops on "Studies abroad for students with visual impairment" and "Language exchange". Professionally, she is involved in the teaching of French as a foreign language and translation.