

Top tips for inclusive teaching

Faculty of
Engineering and
IT

Teaching and
Learning
Innovation



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Table of contents

Top tips for inclusive teaching	0
1. How to create an inclusive first lecture	2
2. How to create an inclusive LMS subject	3
3. How to create inclusive slides	4
4. How to create inclusive assessments	4
5. Where to find help	6
6. Resources	7
Websites	7
Communities	7
Books that may be of interest	7
Academic articles that may be of interest	7

1. How to create an inclusive first lecture

Sending signals

Signalling that you are an inclusive educator is an important way to put students at their ease. It can help students feel safe, which in turn will help you create the community of inquiry you need for effective teaching. Here are a few ways you can signal your inclusivity with students in the first lecture:

- Sharing your pronouns
- Wearing lanyards with motifs like pride flags or the Aboriginal flag
- Acknowledging Country.

If you're not familiar with the difference between a 'welcome' and an 'acknowledgement', check out the [Guidance from Murrup Barak](#).

If you're not sure which Country to acknowledge, or what wording to use, you can check out the [University of Melbourne Acknowledgement of Country](#) for details. It's important to practise the pronunciation of the relevant Traditional Owners.

Allowing students to remain anonymous

While it's great to signal inclusivity with your students, it's important to remember that not all students want their differences to be called out. Here are some ways we can allow students to remain anonymous:

- Allow students to volunteer whether they want to share their pronouns in tutorials or groups.
- If a student does share their pronouns, make an effort to use the pronouns they have shared without calling extra attention to it.
- If you believe that a student needs assistance to access the class or materials, check with them privately.
- If you believe a student comes from a particular culture (e.g., a First Nations background), allow them to choose whether to discuss it in class.
- If a student has a note-taker in a class with a participation requirement, you can introduce the note-taker as a student 'auditing' the subject. For example: "This is Ashley. Ashley's auditing this semester, so she won't actively participate."

Highlighting services

Some students are unaware of the services available to them, particularly in their first semesters. If you highlight the availability of these services in your first lecture, you are both signalling that your class is an inclusive one and helping students connect with the services they need. You may like to highlight:

- [Student Equity and Disability Services](#) ('SEDS'), who can assist not only students with a disability, but also students with cultural or religious observances, elite athletes and performers, reservists, emergency volunteers, and carers.
- [Counselling and Psychological Services](#) ('CAPS'), who can assist with 1:1 counselling, and who also provide resources on common conditions like anxiety.
- [Academic Skills](#), who can help students grow their English language skills and/or their study skills.
- [Murrup Barak](#), who support First Peoples at the University.

2. How to create an inclusive LMS subject

Students may interact with your LMS site before they meet you or even come to campus, so the LMS is another crucial place to make inclusive. It's also the place where students find essential information about readings and assessments, meaning that the usability of your LMS site can make or break whether students even have access to their materials.

If LMS content is not accessible, then it's not inclusive.

Here are our top tips for creating an inclusive LMS site:

- Make sure your [LMS materials are accessible](#). It's much more accessible to publish content directly in the LMS rather than PDF files, but it **is** possible to create [accessible LaTeX](#).
- Make all the content and assessment instructions available from the start of the term, as early as possible. Naturally, exams themselves don't need to be available, but disclosing the details and exam timeframes upfront is helpful.
- Share details of how to physically get to the classroom. For example, "Enter though the main doors at the front of the building, turn right and it is the fourth door on your left". This information can be crucial for students with some access needs, but it is also helpful to everyone starting out in a new semester. The site [maps.unimelb](#) is a helpful place to grab screenshots. It's also possible to share links to individual rooms from the site!
- Highlight the same support services you mention in your first lecture, such as SEDS, CAPS, Academic Skills and Murrup Barak.

Student support services







 <p>Visit the University's Academic Skills website for resources on studying and preparing assessments.</p> <p>Visit Academic Skills</p>	 <p>Access the University's equity and disability support team (SEDS), who can help with assessment arrangements, and help you access all learning materials.</p> <p>Student Equity and Disability</p>	 <p>Visit the Health and Wellbeing hub for resources, tips and tricks on maintaining your health while studying with the University of Melbourne.</p> <p>Visit Health and Wellbeing</p>
 <p>Visit the Careers website for support and resources in transitioning into a new career.</p> <p>Visit Career Support</p>	 <p>Visit the Murrup Barak website. Murrup Barak delivers a range of culturally safe services and specific programs to Indigenous students.</p> <p>Visit Murrup Barak</p>	 <p>The Safer Community Program provides support and advice to members of the University of Melbourne community about inappropriate, concerning or threatening behaviour.</p> <p>Visit Safer Community</p>

Figure 1. Once you create a Canvas Page with links to student support services, it's easy to copy it from subject to subject.

3. How to create inclusive slides

Creating accessible slides follows many of the same principles as creating accessible documents or accessible LMS subjects. Here are our top tips for creating accessible slides in tools like PowerPoint:

- When displaying charts or graphs, use patterns or symbols to differentiate different components ([not just colour](#)).
- Use the [built-in Accessibility Checker](#) to set slide titles, image descriptions and reading order. It may take 15–20 minutes, but it makes a big difference.
- Then, publish the slides in PowerPoint format rather than PDF. You can [reduce the file size](#) without converting it to PDF. If, however, you must use the PDF file type, then be sure to [tag it!](#)

What's wrong with PDFs?

Many PDFs are impossible to access with a screen reader, and long PDFs can be challenging for students to navigate unless they have been tagged. It is possible to create an accessible PDF, but it takes extra work. We created a fully accessible Word document with headings, text, lists and images. Our accessibility tool, Ally, gave the document a 100% accessibility rating. When we printed the document to PDF, however Ally gave the resulting PDF file **an accessibility score of 6%**.

It took us about 15 minutes to restore the 4-page PDF document to the same level of accessibility as the original.

But aren't PDFs a safer way to share content?

Unfortunately, it's quite easy for a sighted user to pull content out of a PDF with free online tools.

4. How to create inclusive assessments

Three features that will make any assessment more inclusive are:

1. Clarity
2. Support, and
3. Options.

Clarity

To achieve clarity, it helps to make the assessment details easy to find in a consistent place. Consider setting up a standard with other subject coordinators in your program for assessment details (due dates, weighting, word limits, and submission formats) to be in the same place in every subject. For example, you might decide to put all of your assessment details in Canvas Assignments, which are usually more accessible than PDF documents, and start each Assignment with the assessment's name, due date, weight and word count. Include a single line about how to submit each assessment, and a single line about when students can expect feedback. See Figure 2 for an example.

Assessment 1: Sample written assignment (xx%) [▲]

Published


Edit



Weight: xx %

Length: xxx words (+/- 10%)

Due: Sunday of week x, 11.59pm AEST/AEDT

Submission: Submit your assignment by uploading a file on this screen and following the prompts. ([Step-by-step guide here](#) )

Feedback: Feedback will be provided within one week of the due date

Introduction

For this assignment, you will

By completing this assignment, you will develop and demonstrate your ability to

Instructions

1. xxx
2. xxx
3. xxx
4. Cite your references and include a reference list in **xxx** style. Your reference list is not included in the word count, but the in-text citations are. See the University's [re:cite guide](#) for assistance with referencing.

Figure 2. A simple assessment template for your course can make it easier for students to find essential details in every subject.

It's also helpful to check the clarity of your instructions. They might seem clear to you, but check with a colleague or a friend – is it immediately obvious to them what they need to do? One simple way to encourage yourself to write clear instructions is to number the instructions, and start each numbered item with a verb. For example, “1. Select a topic; 2. Research and write a report on your topic; 3. Cite your references in APA style...”. You may feel that some steps are obvious. However, breaking tasks down into their component steps helps everyone, particularly neurodivergent students.

Support

If you are breaking tasks down into component steps, you are already providing support to your students.

Additionally, you can support students by explaining the relevance of the task. What skills are the students building with this assessment? Are these skills important for future study? For work in industry? For their ability to interact critically with the world?

A third way to support students in assessments is to provide a descriptive rubric, with criteria aligned to the relevant intended learning outcomes. If you would like support for your rubrics, you can [request support from Learning Environments](#).

During the semester, opportunities for practice and feedback – such as practice presentations in tutorials – are an important mechanism of support.

Options

Finally, provide your students with options wherever possible. Play a mental game with yourself: What intended learning outcomes does this assessment relate to? What are some alternative ways someone can

demonstrate achievement of the same ILOs? ([A learning designer can help you](#) with this process.) For example, a student with dyslexia might struggle with a written report, but they could easily explain the same concepts to you verbally, which might be suitable as long as the learning outcomes aren't about the written format.

Having options 'at the ready' can take the pressure off you finding an alternative for a student with an Academic Adjustment Plan (AAP) in Week 12. It might even be possible to amend the handbook so that the options are available as a default.

We have drawn on UDL principles to create these tips. If you're interested, you can find out more about [the UDL guidelines](#) on the CAST website.

5. Where to find help

I need help with an Academic Adjustment Plan

Check with the student in the first instance to see what would meet both their needs and the needs of the subject. If the student provides express permission, you may liaise directly with SEDS to come up with a solution.

Making reasonable adjustments for students' disability needs is a legal requirement, so it's important that we work together to find solutions where we can.

I need help with learning technologies, with accessibility, or with rubrics

Learning Environments is here for you! For troubleshooting or short consultations, you can [request support through ServiceNow](#). For large-scale collaborations or [custom training sessions](#), have a chat with the Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning, who prioritises requests from the Faculty of Engineering and IT.

We also run [regular workshops](#) for the university community.

I'm interested in peer review of teaching, or collaborating on educational research

The [FEIT Teaching and Learning Lab](#) run regular [events for teaching and learning](#), and can collaborate on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) research.

[Melbourne CSHE](#) has a number of [resources for teaching and learning](#). They also run regular [teaching practice seminars](#), and host a [peer review of teaching program](#).

I have a proposal for improving diversity and inclusion at the Faculty of Engineering and IT

We welcome staff to raise ideas through our [Diversity & Inclusion committee](#).

6. Resources

Websites

Depending on your curiosity, you might be interested in:

- [Creating an accessible LMS site](#) – A ‘top tips’ guide written for UoM academic staff
- [Accessibility site at UoM](#) – A wealth of resources about captioning and web accessibility
- [Designing for Diverse Learners](#) – A printable poster with basic web accessibility tips
- [IncludED: A guide to designing inclusive assessments](#) – Guidance from University of Oxford’s Centre for Teaching and Learning
- [Introduction to Disability Awareness](#) – Training module on TrainME. Email diversity-inclusion@unimelb.edu.au for an accessible version
- [Trans-Affirming Workplaces](#) – Training module on TrainME. Email diversity-inclusion@unimelb.edu.au for an accessible version.
- [UK government accessibility posters](#) – Several printable posters with accessibility tips for different user groups
- [Universal Design for Learning](#) – Self-enrol link for a UDL training module in Canvas.
- [Whose Country am I on?](#) – A resource on the AIATSIS site.

Communities

- [Pride in Action Ally Network](#) – A network for University of Melbourne students and staff
- [The Neurodiversity Project](#) – A network for University of Melbourne students and staff.

Books that may be of interest

Ajjawi, R., Tai, J., Boud, D., & Jorre, T. J. de S. (Eds.). (2022). *Assessment for Inclusion in Higher Education: Promoting Equity and Social Justice in Assessment*. Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003293101>

Brabazon, T. (2015). *Enabling University: Impairment, (Dis)ability and Social Justice in Higher Education*.

Springer Cham. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-12802-3>

Holmes, K., & Maeda, J. (2018). *Mismatch: How Inclusion Shapes Design*. MIT Press.

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unimelb/detail.action?docID=5525574>

Academic articles that may be of interest

Edwards, M. (2019). Inclusive learning and teaching for Australian online university students with disability: A literature review. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 26(5), 1–16.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1698066>

- Gallop, C. J., & Bastien, N. (2016). Supporting Success: Aboriginal Students in Higher Education. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 46(2), 206–224.
- Gernsbacher, M. A. (2015). Video Captions Benefit Everyone. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 2(1), 195–202. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732215602130>
- Grimes, S., Scevak, J., Southgate, E., & Buchanan, R. (2017). Non-disclosing students with disabilities or learning challenges: Characteristics and size of a hidden population. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 44(4), 425–441. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-017-0242-y>
- Grimes, S., Southgate, E., Scevak, J., & Buchanan, R. (2021). Learning impacts reported by students living with learning challenges/disability. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(6), 1146–1158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1661986>
- Kent, M. (2016). *Access and Barriers to Online Education for People with Disabilities*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Curtin University. <https://www.acses.edu.au/publication/access-and-barriers-to-online-education-for-people-with-disabilities/>
- Kent, M., Ellis, K., Latter, N., & Peaty, G. (2017). The Case for Captioned Lectures in Australian Higher Education. *TechTrends*, 2(62), 158–165. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-017-0225-x>
- Reedy, A. K. (2019). Rethinking online learning design to enhance the experiences of Indigenous higher education students. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 35(6), Article 6. <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.5561>
- Stone, C. M. M., & O'Shea, S. E. (2019). My children... think it's cool that Mum is a uni student: Women with caring responsibilities studying online. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 35(6), Article 6. <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.5504>
- Xiao, J., & Wilkins, S. (2015). The effects of lecturer commitment on student perceptions of teaching quality and student satisfaction in Chinese higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 37(1), 98–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2014.992092>
- Tai, J., Ajjawi, R., & Bearman, M. (2022). Re-imagining exams: How do assessment adjustments impact on inclusion? *National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education*. <https://www.acses.edu.au/research-policies/assessment-adjustments-impact-inclusion-2/>
- Tai, J. H.-M., Dollinger, M., Ajjawi, R., Jorre de St Jorre, T., Krattli, S., McCarthy, D., & Prezioso, D. (2023). Designing assessment for inclusion: An exploration of diverse students' assessment experiences. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 48(3), 403–417. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2022.2082373>
- Tai, J., Mahoney, P., Ajjawi, R., Bearman, M., Dargusch, J., Dracup, M., & Harris, L. (2023). How are examinations inclusive for students with disabilities in higher education? A sociomaterial analysis. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 48(3), 390–402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2022.2077910>
- Tan, D. W., Rabuka, M., Haar, T., & Pellicano, E. (2024). 'It's a symbolic violence': Autistic people's experiences of discrimination at universities in Australia. *Autism*, 28(6), 1344–1356. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613231219744>

The University of Melbourne

Grattan Street, Parkville, Victoria 3010 Australia

t 13 MELB (13 6352)

+61 3 9035 5511 (International)

unimelb.edu.au

This document was created from an accessible Microsoft Word template using accessible content principles. The document was checked for accessibility and is verified as being accessible to users of assistive technology. Its intended use is in print and electronic formats. If you experience any issues accessing the content contained within this document or have usability feedback you would like to share, please contact the author by email on anderson.a@unimelb.edu.au.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE