

Teaching toolkits

Inclusive teaching

UCL's student population is more diverse than ever. Different groups of students learn best in different ways and progress at different rates.

Teaching inclusively enables all students, whatever their circumstances, to enjoy the fullest possible learning experience.

It benefits all students because it values their individual strengths and contributions and makes the learning experience richer and more diverse for everyone.

Having a wider range of views and experiences in the classroom can lead to a more critical understanding of a subject. As teachers, it can challenge us to rethink what and how we teach, and to widen the materials we include on any given subject.

What inclusive teaching means

Inclusive teaching means teaching in a way that:

- respects the diversity of students
- enables all students to take part in learning and fulfil their potential
- ensures different students' learning needs and preferences are met, regardless of their backgrounds, learning styles or abilities
- removes any barriers that prevent students from learning.

Inclusive teaching also means not discriminating against students – directly or indirectly – because of their:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- sex
- sexual orientation.

Inclusive teaching is part of UCL's Equality and Diversity Strategy 2015–2020.

Putting it into practice

Before your first teaching session

Try to find out as early as possible who is going to be on your course. Ensure you know which students have extra needs and what specific reasonable adjustments you will have to make.

If you can, go to a UCL Arena session on equality and diversity to become familiar with the Equality Act 2010 and UCL's obligations within it.

If you can, familiarise yourself with UCL Disability Services, the support they provide and what we mean by 'reasonable adjustments'.

Setting ground rules and expectations

It can be useful to set informal ground rules to define 'inclusive behaviour' at the start of a course or session. Decide on these with your students.

Explain to students how being inclusive can benefit the whole class.

For example, by contributing to a group discussion, students will build their communication and critical-thinking skills. Discuss what you mean by terms such as critical thinking and analysis to ensure students understand what this means in practice.

Preparing teaching materials and activities

Put all your teaching materials on Moodle (UCL's online learning environment) well before your teaching sessions so that your students can access these and prepare themselves.

Ensure that all your handouts, presentations and online course materials are accessible and meet the E-learning baseline.

This means, for example, using:

- high-contrast text/ background colours
- legible fonts
- ensuring the text you write can be read correctly by screen-reading software.
- Guidelines on accessibility:

Try to be aware of your own biases when choosing teaching material – offer as diverse a range of opinions as possible.

Top tip

When organising group work, try allocating your students to groups rather than allowing them to choose their own. This will lead to a more diverse learning environment and will encourage all students to take part.

What to be aware of in your teaching

Be alert to practical issues, such as students with visual impairments, hearing aids or wheelchairs.

If possible, present content in different, more interactive ways. For example, using objects, images and video can be more engaging and accessible for students than always having text-based materials (see the toolkit on active learning on the Teaching and Learning Portal).

Make sure that all your students can be heard and are encouraged to participate.

Get every student involved through techniques such as group work and peer learning. Try to reduce the potential for discussion to be dominated by an individual or specific group of students (see the small-group teaching and large-group teaching toolkits on the Teaching and Learning Portal).

Consider using diverse assessment methods and help students to understand the standard of work they are expected to produce.

Check that the feedback you give is helpful to students, see the guide 'Enhancing and giving quicker feedback' on the Teaching and Learning Portal.

Consider using Lecturecast, a system for recording lectures and making them available online. Lecturecast reinforces learning by giving students 24-hour access to the taught components of their courses. This can benefit students who have English as a second language or learning difficulties.

The UCL Inclusive Curriculum Healthcheck can help you ensure that all students, regardless of background are able to participate fully and achieve at equal rates.

Check your progress

Check whether all students look engaged in teaching sessions and be alert to student behaviour that could indirectly feedback on whether your teaching is as inclusive as possible.

This could include, for example:

- changes in attendance
- distribution of grades throughout the group
- choices students pick for assessments (such as essay titles).

Ask students to feed back to you about whether they feel included.

For example, you could give out notes in class for students to anonymously write down what they think is working well or could be improved.

At the next session, you could follow up by suggesting some changes based on their feedback.

Where to find help and support

arena@ucl.ac.uk: contact the UCL Arena Centre

If you have an issue around inclusive teaching that you can't resolve by speaking to your students, there are several sources that can help.

- Ask a colleague if they would be willing to watch some of your teaching sessions and give you feedback. For more information, see the UCL Peer Dialogue Scheme on the Teaching and Learning Portal.
- For inclusion issues around disability, speak to UCL Disability Services.
- Attend a UCL Arena session. These provide an opportunity for colleagues across UCL to discuss issues and share approaches and best practice.
- Accessible teaching practices: providing access to all using Universal Design for Learning is a 3-hour Moodle course on creating accessible learning environments that support students with learning difficulties, disabilities and long-term health conditions.

bit.ly/InclusiveTeachingToolkit: to access this full online guide, including links and further resources.

Copyright notice

This guide has been produced by the Arena Centre for Research-based Education at University College London.

You are welcome to use this guide if you are from another educational facility, but you must credit the UCL Arena Centre.