

Policy on Inclusive Practice in Teaching and Learning

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Key points

The University has approved the policy on Inclusive Practice in Teaching and Learning that provides greater clarity and emphasis to its commitment to an inclusive approach, as already set out in the Curriculum Framework and the Teaching and Learning Strategy. This Policy aims to increase the accessibility and inclusivity of Reading's learning and teaching practices by embedding key adjustments, which will:

- benefit all learners;
- reduce the need for adjustments to teaching materials for individuals;
- help to enable all learners to participate fully in their learning.

Expectations for all academic programmes that the University is working towards include:

- inclusive assessment practices;
- accessible presentations and handouts;
- key resources provided to students at least 48 hours in advance of a taught session.

The full policy can be found below.

Information on the policy is being communicated to academic staff across the institution as are training and support resources to help enable the successful implementation of the policy. An Implementation Group is working with Schools and Services to ensure effective implementation, including monitoring its impact. Briefings have also taken place with student course reps. Students' active support for their teaching staff in delivering an inclusive teaching and learning environment is welcomed, so do talk to your tutors if you have any concerns over inclusive practice on your programme or module.

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that we at the University of Reading provide an accessible and inclusive learning environment which offers our learners the opportunity to maximise their academic potential. Our legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled learners requires that we anticipate likely needs and take positive steps to remove potential barriers to learning. While inclusive teaching and learning practice is relevant to all students and covers a wide variety of diverse characteristics, there are specific challenges in the area of disability that provide the rationale for specific attention to this area of inclusivity. These challenges include:

- a long established body of equality legislation in relation to disability that means that legal risk in this area is higher than in many others;
- specific Government funding has been attached to meeting disability needs in Higher Education, which has not been the case in other areas of diversity. This funding is now being reduced;
- there is a link between learning and disability to a much greater extent than for many other types of protected characteristics, with the largest single group of disabled students being those with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD).

This Policy aims to increase the accessibility and inclusivity of our learning and teaching practices by embedding into standard practice a number of key adjustments which will benefit all learners. This will reduce the need for individual adjustments; help to eliminate stigma; and help to enable all learners to participate fully in their learning. The Policy will operate within the wider Curriculum Framework, which includes a clear commitment to inclusive teaching and learning.

2. Policy

2.1 The Policy covers teaching and learning materials and practice, and is relevant for all University of Reading students. All materials produced by the University of Reading in support of its teaching and learning activities should be accessible to as broad a range of learners as possible. The term ‘learners’ covers students and also staff who may be undertaking internal CPD and training. This Policy applies to all learning materials provided by the University, unless there is a justified pedagogic or professional reason for not doing so. Exemptions, beyond those outlined in the Policy Guidance, must be fully justified, discussed with the Disability Advisory Services, and approved by the relevant Teaching and Learning Dean.

2.2 The expectation is that the Guidance in support of this Policy will be followed by all staff engaged in teaching and learning. The University of Reading ‘Engaging everyone’ website is a useful starting point, at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/engaging-everyone/inclusive-resources/ee-creating-accessible-teaching-and-learning-materials.aspx> and there is also more explicit guidance available on supporting disabled students at:

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/Studentswithdisabilities.pdf>

2.3 The University is committed to an end-to-end process of engagement with inclusive teaching and learning through:

- curriculum and programme design;
- preparation of learning materials;
- teaching delivery;
- student empowerment.

2.4 The specific minimum expectations that the University of Reading is working towards are:

2.4.1 Curriculum and Programme design

2.4.1.1 All learning outcomes must follow inclusivity guidelines.

- (a) Every assessable learning outcome must create an output that is measurable, so that students can be tested on the extent to which they are meeting the outcome.
- (b) Wherever possible, assessable learning outcomes should allow students to demonstrate their ability to meet the outcomes in a variety of different ways, as appropriate.
- (c) The creation of inclusive learning outcomes automatically gives more scope to be more creative with assessments, and to test students' learning in various different ways.

2.4.1.2 All programmes must use inclusive assessment practices that meet legal requirements and follow University guidelines.

- (a) An inclusive assessment regime allows an entire cohort of diverse students to demonstrate their ability to meet the learning outcomes of their programme. A student's background, race, religion, gender, sexuality, age, marital status or disability should not impact on their opportunity to learn and to evidence that learning.
- (b) When developing a programme or a module, academic staff should anticipate potential problems when planning assessments. Inclusive assessments prevent these problems arising or at least keep them to a minimum.

2.4.2 Preparation of learning materials

2.4.2.1 Course content must be presented in an accessible manner on the relevant virtual learning environment (VLE) and in the classroom.

- (a) Paper copies of resources handed out in class can present a barrier for some students. Materials must be uploaded to the VLE at least 48 hours

before the relevant teaching session. This provides time for students to access the materials using assistive technologies, e.g. screen-readers, where required. It also provides flexible access to learning content so that all students have time to prepare and think critically about the subject material prior to class.

2.4.2.2 All learning materials, including documents, presentations and multimedia, must be produced following appropriate guidance to maximise their accessibility.

- (a) All presentations should be easy to read (with a font large enough to read by all when displayed on the screen) and with numbering to aid access for students. There is an Accessibility Checker built into PowerPoint.
- (b) The 'Styles' feature of MS Word can be used to structure documents, making it easier for students to navigate and use other assistive software. Handouts should be in 12-point font as a minimum size (ideally 14 point)
- (c) Alternative approaches to learning materials can include pod- or screen-casts as well as other forms of multimedia.
- (d) Pod- and screen-casts should, ideally, be accompanied by a transcript, unless (in the case of a screen-cast) it is obvious from the image on the screen what is being explained verbally.

2.4.2.3 Reading lists must be provided on the University's online reading list system, Talis Aspire, which is designed to be accessibility compliant, and should be made available in advance of the module (or equivalent) beginning.

2.4.3 Teaching delivery

2.4.3.1 Teaching and learning methods used on all programmes, including each module, must enhance student engagement and inclusivity, and will be monitored through standard QA processes, e.g. Periodic Review.

2.4.3.2 Students must be permitted to make audio recordings of lectures except under exceptional circumstances and may request permission for visual recording. Any recording must be in accordance with existing University policy.

2.4.4 Student empowerment

2.4.4.1 All relevant information materials concerning the programme of study (e.g. programme and module handbooks) should be accessible to students in advance to help them better engage with the learning and to highlight any specific challenges linked to their disability

2.4.4.2 A variety of approaches must be used to engage student feedback and to incorporate the student voice into programme design and development.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Fulfilment of the requirements of this policy will be monitored and evaluated through the University's quality assurance processes, including Periodic Review.

4. Support and Resources

Guidance and training, including relevant web resources, will be provided for staff to help enable the implementation of this approach and this will be reviewed and revised as appropriate.

There is a variety of useful resources already available to staff, while further training and support materials, including case studies and communities of learning sessions, are in development.

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Keeper: CQSD

Reviewed: Every year

Approved by: UBTL

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