



**INCLUSIVE  
EDUCATION IN THE  
FACULTY OF ARTS**

# **BEST PRACTICE TOOLKIT REPORT**

**20**

**24**

**DSEP TEAM**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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**01**

**Executive Summary**

**02**

**Our Story**

**03**

**Co-creation as Methodology**

**04**

**The Toolkit Themes**

**05**

**Student Surveys**

**07**

**Student-Led Focus Group**

**12**

**Staff Interviews**

**15**

**Recommendations**

**20**

**Acknowledgement**

**21**

**Reference**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This Best Practice Toolkit is part of a series of inclusive education activities undertaken by the Faculty of Arts Directors of Student Experience Team during 2024. In this second year of the toolkit, the project team explored a fresh range of topics with a new group of student project officers and - through surveys, 1:1 meetings and focus groups - with a larger group of Arts students and staff.

Adopting an evidence-based approach, this report explores four thematic areas: interdepartmental communication, module choice, diversifying reading lists and accessibility of learning resources. The project has identified challenges to inclusive education in the Arts and created a series of student-led recommendations for improvements in educational practice.



“ There's always the institutional understanding of inclusivity, and then there's the personal one, and perhaps even the more private one as well.

-Jodie Kim

# OUR STORY



The Best Practice Toolkit project is part of a series of co-created inclusive education initiatives undertaken by the Faculty of Arts during 2024. The project extends the work of the [Toolkit Report of 2023](#). It has involved engagement with over 200 students and 30 staff members from across the Arts Faculty. The report aims to enhance inclusive education practice in the Arts and Humanities and to recommend the implementation of a series of changes to current practice to enhance the student experience.

The student project officers were encouraged to adopt a holistic approach to the notion of good inclusive education practice in the series of surveys and focus groups that they undertook as part of the project. Following the 2023 toolkit report, they focused on 4 themes in particular:

- **interdepartmental communication;**
- **module choice;**
- **diversifying reading lists;**
- **the accessibility of learning resources.**

The toolkit project is aligned with the educational goals outlined in the recently launched [Warwick White Paper](#) (Our Ambitions for Education and Student Experience in 2030). The project refers to the Inclusive Education Strategy proposed by the Dean of Students' Office. The outputs are designed not just for the Arts and Humanities, but for a wider University and HE audience.

# CO-CREATION AS METHODOLOGY

The co-creation methodological approach continues on from the partnership (student and staff) design of the 2023 toolkit project. Participants were invited to contribute their views on the four thematic areas through surveys, focus groups and interviews.

Ethical approval for the project outline and methodology was obtained from Warwick HSSREC.

The following table provides an overview of the objectives and key indicators for each research activity conducted for the toolkit project.

STUDENT SURVEY	FOCUS GROUP	STAFF INTERVIEW
A short anonymous questionnaire was sent to all Arts Faculty students (UG/PGT)	A series of 90-min student focus groups were led by project officers/the DSEP (online)	A series of 1/1 conversations were held with academic representatives
<b>203 valid questionnaires completed</b>	<b>4 student project officers led 7 focus groups with 36 students involved</b>	<b>12 interviews were held with 13 representative academic staff from across the Arts</b>
The survey produced an overview of students' rating of their current education experience	The focus groups elicited students' perception of good practices and of some of the barriers to their learning	The interviews provided insights from staff on inclusive education practice

# THE TOOLKIT THEMES

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This Toolkit Report focuses on four thematic areas of inclusive education, extending from the findings of [2023 Toolkit Report](#).



## 01 INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION

Lack of communication creates issues as it pertains to the policies and procedures of the university overall; the impact of poor communication alone can have lasting effects. (DiBartolomeo, 2023)



## 02 MODULE CHOICE

Module selection has been recognised as being intertwined with student satisfaction as it can affect students' engagement, learning behaviours, effort, peer groups, individual and group achievement and links to the job marketplace. (Hedges, 2014)



## 03 DIVERSIFYING READING LISTS

'Reading lists in higher education are representation devices, serving to reflect particular perspectives and knowledge. (Schucan Bird and Pitman, 2019)

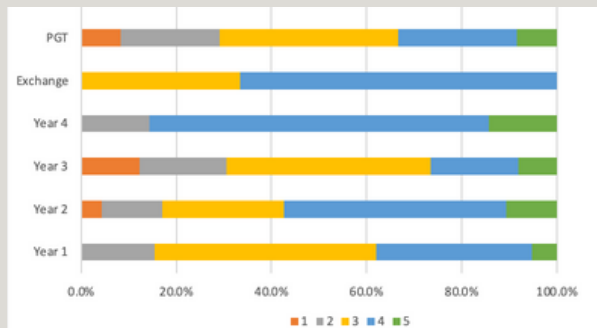


## 04 ACCESSIBILITY OF LEARNING RESOURCES

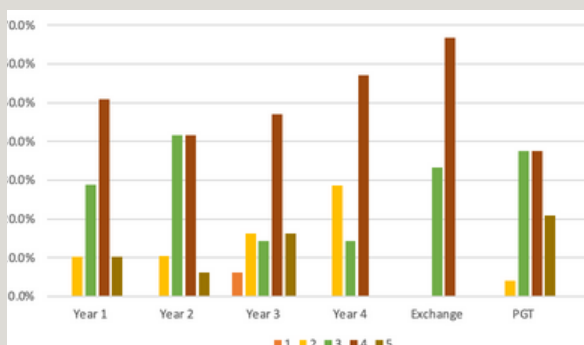
How can we think more broadly about accessibility in terms of the relationships between students, resources, and educational institutions? (Coughlan et al., 2019)

# Student Survey

1. Satisfaction with interdepartmental communication (by academic level)  
AR=3.26\*



2. Satisfaction with module choice (by academic level) AR=3.54

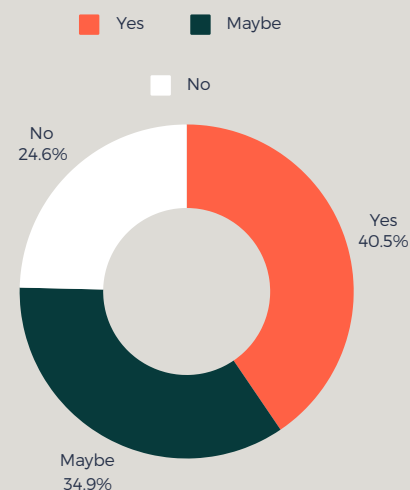


## SUMMARY OF THE SURVEY RESULTS

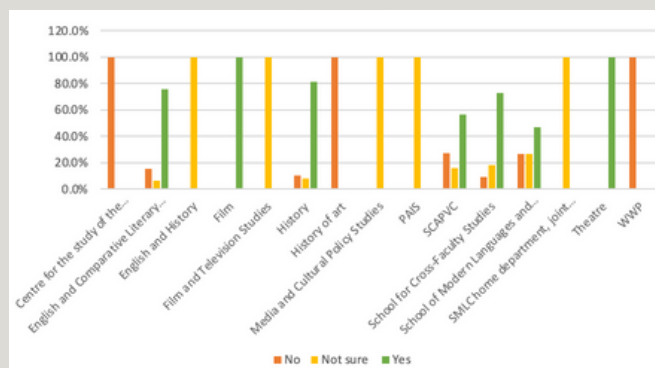
The survey of 203 responses indicated that:

- more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of participants surveyed were aware of inclusive education initiatives in their home department;
- interdepartmental communication is rated relatively low (3.26);
- students' awareness of certain key processes improves as they progress through their studies (e.g. module choice).

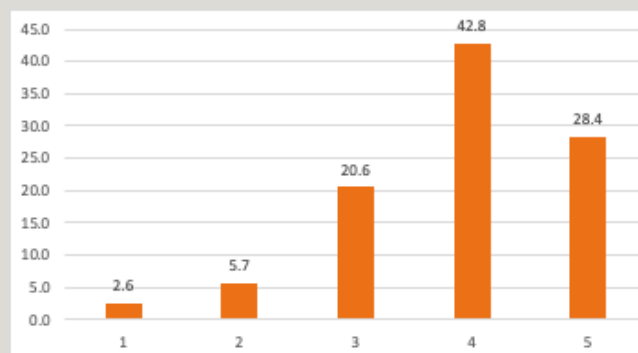
Have you encountered any information or resources related to inclusive education practices in your department?



3. Do you think there should be a more intentional effort to diversify the reading lists in your department (by department)?



4. How would you rate the accessibility of learning resources (e.g., textbooks, online materials) provided by your department?  
AR=3.9



\*Satisfaction rating 1-5, 1 refers to the least satisfied and 5 refers to the most satisfied

# Student Survey (continued)

“

There could be more coffee sessions or hangout sessions held by the department for students to feel included.

”

“

Access to recordings of lectures and seminars for students who have to take brief periods of time out due to illness/physical and/or mental disability would make the course so much more accessible.

”

“

We need actively to strive for more racially diverse lecturers and seminar tutors; staff need more inclusion training that is compulsory not optional - especially concerning their trans students.

”

“

Information regarding accommodations for learning disabilities/neurodivergence could be made more widely available, particularly how to apply for it (e.g. extra time) and what the criteria are.

”

“

I appreciate the ability to extend the submission of our assignments especially when things get stressful. It has been very helpful to my classmates who are struggling with mental health and I think it makes the learning less competitive.

”

“

I'd like to have more information about Mental Health Support and interdisciplinary opportunities in the beginning of the course beyond the Welcomme Week. This would benefit international students.

”

## SUMMARY OF THE SURVEY COMMENTS

Students' open comments evidenced their concern for social and academic inclusion in the learning environment. They expressed their need for more social and community engagement opportunities. They also asked for more evidence of diverse and inclusive hiring practices with regard to faculty and that departments should actively strive to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

# Focus Group

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12 student project officers were recruited to assist with the series of inclusive education projects organized by the Faculty of Arts in 2024. 4 project officers were specifically recruited to the toolkit project. They led a series of focus group discussions on the four identified thematic areas.

The DSEP team designed and delivered three developmental workshops to equip the student project officers with the necessary skills (ethics, design, writing, digital project skills) in order to lead their thematic area of investigation. The four project officers recruited a total of 35 Arts students to participate in the focus group discussions on MS Teams. Each project officer then wrote up their own report summarising the issues raised in their focus groups and identifying student-led recommendations for action.

# Student Project Officers

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## 01 — Megan Thompson



I have gained deep insights into the academic and personal challenges of my peers and have actively worked to address and alleviate them. Through establishing rapport built on shared experience, I have developed as a young researcher.



## 02 — Daniella Okoli



I'm a masters student at the University of Warwick. Studying in the Arts faculty has been eye-opening from a research perspective. I've worked on SSLC for my course and being able to hear directly from students AND build dialogue with staff has aided me directly in conducting this valuable research.



## 03 — Ellie Soteriou



Facilitating the focus groups was a really rewarding process; writing a report to summarise the project also helped me to solidify my knowledge of the impact of reading lists in higher education and create a comprehensive document sharing the information I gathered throughout the project.



## 04 — Ella Buckingham



The process was definitely positive in developing my skills and understanding of the subject area. Having conversations about accessibility has been so enlightening in opening up student dialogue and recognising the diverse range of needs of Warwick students.

# Student Officer Reports

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## **BREAKING THE SILENCE: ADDRESSING INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN THE FACULTY OF ARTS**

**BY MEGAN THOMPSON**

This report unpacks how interdepartmental communications within the Faculty of Arts have impacted the students, specifically those on joint honours degrees, and points towards solutions to make the Faculty of Arts more inclusive in this respect. The discussion is driven by the findings of two focus groups, composed of students from an array of backgrounds. Each focus group was structured through open-ended questions. My findings suggest that interdepartmental communications within the Faculty of Arts have been insufficient, particularly affecting joint honours degree students both academically and personally.

This report therefore proposes a number of recommendations, namely; coordinating seminar and lecture timetables, cross-comparing department deadlines, widening module choices, elevating the role of the joint degrees coordinator and pluralising communications. I am optimistic that these changes will foster the culture of innovation that currently characterises the Faculty of Arts at Warwick and further create an inclusive environment where all students and staff feel welcome, heard and represented.

## **EXPLORING MODULE DIVERSITY WITHIN THE FACULTY OF ARTS**

**BY DANIELLA OKOLI**

This report investigates postgraduate students' perspectives on module diversity. The project aimed to explore module inclusivity and the alignment of course content with students' diverse needs, aspirations, and global contexts. The two student-led focus groups provided rich student voice, highlighting several themes. Students expressed a strong desire for greater diversity in module content, particularly incorporating global perspectives beyond Western and East Asian examples. Participants emphasized the need for modules that balance theoretical frameworks with practical, industry-relevant skills. Assessment diversity also emerged as an area for enhancement, with students suggesting alternative methods like video essays, debates, and portfolios to better reflect their learning.

Challenges included insufficient communication about module auditing opportunities and the lack of a structured process to explore available options. To address these, the report recommends creating a postgraduate module fair, increasing module diversity, and introducing transparent systems for auditing modules.

# Student Officer Reports (continued)

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## READING LISTS FOR ALL: IMPROVING STUDENT EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE DIVERSIFICATION OF READING LISTS

BY ELLIE SOTERIOU

This report outlines the key findings of a project investigating Diversifying Reading Lists in the Faculty of Arts. This project is a part of the Inclusive Education toolkit. The purpose of the report is to establish the importance of diversifying reading lists in the Faculty of Arts, based on student feedback and literature reviews. The report identifies issues students found regarding the diversity of their reading lists followed by proposed next steps and recommendations. The next steps and recommendations have been constructed through the analysis of the impact of reading lists on the student experience and how they are tied to the identity and interests of students, as well as the wider issues around inclusivity, diversity and student engagement. Overall, this report aims to explore the strength of pre-existing reading lists within the faculty, and address where there is room for improvement in order to implement the appropriate solutions. This report also illustrates the widespread interest from students within the Faculty of Arts for their reading lists to be diversified and the benefits they think can be achieved as a result of the proposed changes.

## ACCESSING THE ARTS: OVERVIEW OF ACCESSIBLE LEARNING RESOURCES IN THE FACULTY OF ARTS

ELLA BUCKINGHAM

The objective of this report is to highlight the ways in which the Faculty of Arts can improve accessibility for Arts students, with a particular focus on education resources that enhance students' university experience. The literature review highlights that there are still disparities within Higher Education that present barriers to students, with the majority of institutions still failing to recognise the significance of accessibility. Using this feedback collected from the student focus group shows that the Faculty of Arts could have taken more appropriate action to ensure that learning resources – both physical and online – are accessible for all students. The key recommendation from this report is that the Faculty begins to facilitate better two-way correspondence with students to address issues around cost of learning resources and less consistent content delivery raised in focus group discussion. The report also recommends that the Faculty of Arts Building should have more signs to guide students' navigation in the building. Students also expect that they could access staff members for support more easily.

# Students:

“

The reading list shows some diversity but not enough. It could include more minorities, more countries and cultures. In our feminist module, there's only feminist texts and theories from European societies. It's partial and insufficient.

”

“

I like the seminar discussion in the same smaller groups, feeling more consistent and relaxed. Really like seminar tutors going round and participating: such a helpful and accessible way of receiving feedback.

”

“

I'd like to draw on my work completed in the modules later on in job interviews. In this sense I am able to show the things I did at university. I would definitely like to have more 'practical' modules.

”

“

With optional modules, I would like to have at least a video of the lecturer explaining the module and the things that will be covered. It would help me to get to know the personality of the lecturer too, which is important.

”

“

I would like to have one representative of all aspects of each degree that is dedicated to be a point of contact for joint degree students. Not necessarily 2 personal tutors, but well informed points of contact that know about the joint degrees that the university offers.

”

“

I would like to have an event calendar that goes beyond the department, and even beyond the Faculty. It's sometimes difficult to know where the events are... We have to use chatgroups for that. Sometimes I get information about events with too short-notice.

”

## SUMMARY OF THE FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

The seven focus group sessions led by the student project officers helped to unpack the four thematic areas. They asked the participants to reflect on their learner experience and to suggest ideas and recommendations for ways to address barriers to inclusive learning and progression. The research methodology was designed to help participants to understand and be aware of diverse learning needs and teaching approaches.

# Staff Interviews

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12 Arts academic staff members participated in 1:1 interviews with the DSEP. They gave their consent to having their conversations recorded and analysed to generate ideas to improve inclusive education practice. During the interviews, staff expressed shared and individual views across 6 main areas.

## 1 Interdisciplinary Approaches and Collaboration



I think there's a tendency from within the university for a lot of stuff to be very siloed. This project strikes me as useful just in that sense of trying to get a handle on what people are doing across the Faculty.

## 4 Institutional Challenges and Support



If we accept a more incremental change strategy, it is creating culture change. If we can create momentum around culture change, we'll see more organic projects coming up, more organic interactions between people that create more inclusive environments.

## 2 Decolonising the Curriculum



So I am not just dealing with the usual examples from UK. No, I'm going to give the students a world view example. I feel like this is a more holistic approach.

## 5 Diverse/Representative Reading



I'm not just changing the nature of what we consider academic or theory. I'm also revisiting the texts that are canonical and conventional, and exposing these human, flawed and vulnerable works to the students, telling them we don't have to be afraid of these flaws.

## 3 Student Experience and Engagement



The goal of visibly scaffolding, an element of our pedagogy, is that students would be invited to reflect on what they were shown, and it would be demonstrated to them how all of the different components of the degree programme fit together.

## 6 Personal Connections and Communication



In a more ideal world, we would have, systems in place where students could meet across cohorts more informally.

# Varied Views

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Staff participants expressed a range of different perspectives on issues, such as student engagement and academic integrity. These were often influenced by factors such as departmental culture, student demographics, and teaching methodologies.

## 1. Approaches to Inclusive Education: Structural vs. Relational

- Some participants highlighted systemic and structural barriers, critiquing the dominant framing of inclusive education and advocating for dismantling power structures within the department, highlighting the need for comprehensive institutional changes.
- Other participants emphasised personal connections and individual encounters as the most effective means of promoting inclusivity. Their approach was more relational and focused on improving interpersonal interactions and communication within the department.

## 2. Handling of Curriculum Content

- Some participants criticised tokenistic efforts at diversifying curricula and argued that simply adding diverse materials did not address systemic issues or representation. They called for more profound changes in how curricula are structured.
- Other participants appreciated having full control over reading lists in their departments and discussed using personal teaching approaches to make content more relatable and inclusive.

## 3. Institutional Resistance and Practical Implementation

- Some participants pointed out institutional resistance to structural changes as a significant barrier to inclusive education. They argued that departments feel powerless due to shifting dynamics within the university.
- Other participants discussed practical issues like staff confusion regarding module choices and the need for centralised learning resources. Whilst they acknowledged systemic challenges, their interest was more on practical solutions within the existing framework.

## 4. Student Support and Accessibility

- Some participants emphasised the decline in academic support over the past five years and the need for more targeted and specific career support services for students.
- Other participants focused on immediate, tangible improvements in student resources and support systems. They highlighted the need for accessible learning resources including audiobooks and video content, and emphasised the importance of effective connections in supporting students.

# Staff Perspectives VS Student Views

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The comparison of the different staff and student perspectives below highlights some of the differences and shared perceptions as to how inclusive education practice is implemented and received.

- **Empowerment and Voice:** Both staff and students recognised the importance of having a voice in shaping educational practices. Whilst staff focused on enabling structures to support student feedback, students felt that they benefited more directly from feeling heard and valued.
- **Enhanced Understanding and Awareness:** Both groups emphasised the need for diverse perspectives in education. Staff focused on integrating these perspectives into the curriculum, whilst students felt they benefited most from a broader understanding and increased cultural sensitivity.
- **Educational Practices and Flexibility:** Staff aimed to provide flexible and inclusive educational practices, which directly benefited students by catering to their diverse needs and improving their learning experience, whilst student felt they also needed a centralised channel for communication.
- **Support Systems:** Both staff and students acknowledged the necessity of support systems such as mental health resources and financial aid. These services are crucial for creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment.
- **Professional and Personal Development:** Engaging in discussions and research on inclusive education was felt to be beneficial to both staff and students, enhancing skills and promoting personal growth and awareness.
- **Community and Collaboration:** The staff focus on collaboration and communication between departments was closely aligned with the students' recognition of the benefits of community building and networking.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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The following recommendations to improve inclusive education practice are clustered around the four thematic areas with individual goals.



## 01 INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION

- Establish clear communication channels;
- Foster a culture of collaboration and shared objectives;
- Improve organisational awareness;
- Create more informal spaces for communication.



## 02 MODULE CHOICE

- Expand the range of module offerings.
- Ensure modules cater to diverse student interests and learning paces.
- Improve transparency in module information and prerequisites.



## 03 DIVERSIFYING READING LISTS

- Broaden the range of perspectives and voices in reading materials.
- Ensure reading lists reflect global and diverse viewpoints.
- Engage students in the selection process.



## 04 ACCESSIBILITY OF LEARNING RESOURCES

- Ensure all students have equitable access to learning resources.
- Improve the availability and quality of digital resources.
- Address disparities in resource allocation.

# Interdepartmental Communication

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## IDENTIFIED ISSUES

- Lack of regular communication between departments;
- Lack of shared goals or interests;
- Insufficient understanding of the governance structure in the Faculty causing confusion;
- Need for more informal spaces to share ideas and good practices.

## PRIORITIES

- Establish clear communication channels;
- Foster a culture of collaboration and shared objectives;
- Improve organisational awareness;
- Create more informal spaces for communication.

## PRACTICAL ACTIONS

- **Create Interdepartmental Working Groups :** Form dedicated working groups with representatives from various departments to focus on inclusive education practices. These groups need to meet regularly to share ideas, resources, and best practices;
- **Implement a Centralised Communication Platform:** Use a centralised platform (e.g., Microsoft Teams, Slack) to facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration. Ensure all relevant staff members are trained to use it effectively;
- **Develop Shared Goals and Objectives in Informal Spaces:** Organise informal sessions across Arts departments to develop common goals and objectives to join up the Faculty. Ensure these goals are aligned with the University's overall mission to enhance organisational awareness.

# Module Choice

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## IDENTIFIED ISSUES

- Limited module options often due to resource constraints;
- Students struggle with the accelerated pace of some modules;
- Misalignment between student interests and available modules.

## PRIORITIES

- Look at creative ways to expand the range of module offerings;
- Ensure modules cater to diverse student interests and learning paces;
- Improve transparency in module information and prerequisites.

## PRACTICAL ACTIONS

- **Increase Interdisciplinary Module Options:** Encourage departments to collaborate on developing interdisciplinary modules and to share resources. Encourage departments to open out elective choice beyond their own department in order to widen overarching student choice [Faculty Elective Module Fair];
- **Flexible Learning Paths:** Introduce flexible learning paths within courses that allow students to choose modules that best fit their interests and career goals. This could include elective modules from outside their department or faculty;
- **Enhanced Module Briefings:** Provide detailed module briefings, including prerequisites, assessment methods, and expected learning outcomes. Offer recorded presentations and in-person Q&A sessions to help students make informed choices;
- **Student Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement regular feedback mechanisms (e.g., surveys, focus groups) to understand student preferences and needs regarding module offerings. Use this feedback to adjust and improve module choices.

# Diversifying Reading List

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## IDENTIFIED ISSUES

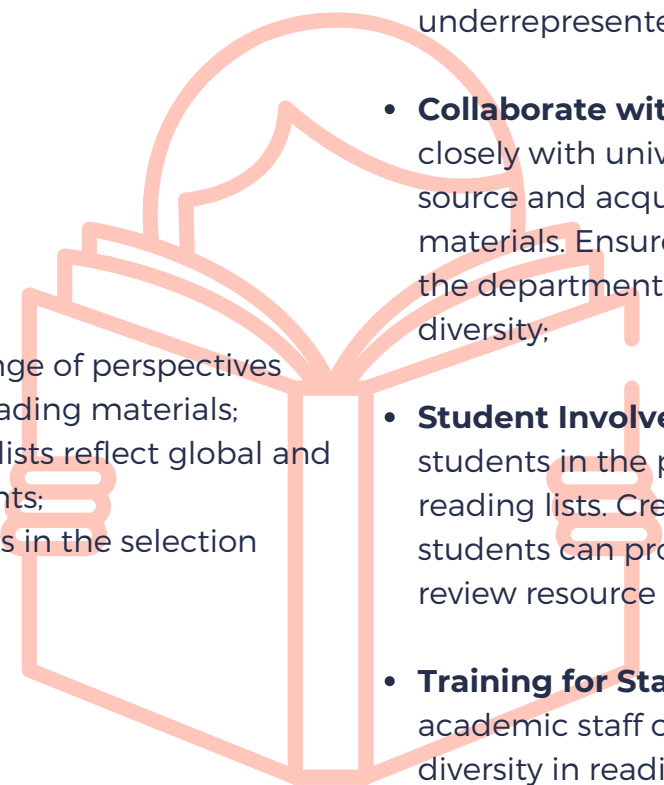
- Lack of diversity in reading materials;
- Overreliance on traditional, Western-centric sources;
- Students express dissatisfaction with the cultural representation in reading lists.

## PRIORITIES

- Broaden the range of perspectives and voices in reading materials;
- Ensure reading lists reflect global and diverse viewpoints;
- Engage students in the selection process.

## PRACTICAL ACTIONS

- **Audit and Revise Reading Lists:** Conduct regular audits of reading lists to identify gaps in diversity. Actively seek out and include works by authors from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups;
- **Collaborate with Librarians:** Work closely with university librarians to source and acquire diverse reading materials. Ensure librarians are aware of the department's commitment to diversity;
- **Student Involvement:** Involve students in the process of diversifying reading lists. Create channels where students can pro-actively suggest and review resource materials;
- **Training for Staff:** Provide training for academic staff on the importance of diversity in reading materials and how to integrate diverse sources into their curriculum effectively.



# Accessibility of learning resources

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## IDENTIFIED ISSUES

- Students face challenges accessing learning resources;
- Limited availability of digital and physical resources;
- Variation in resource accessibility across departments.

## PRACTICAL ACTIONS

- **Enhance Digital Libraries:** Lobby the university library to expand its digital library collections. Ensure that essential textbooks and resources are available in electronic formats that are accessible to all students;

## PRIORITIES

- Ensure all students have equitable access to learning resources;
- Improve the availability and quality of digital resources;
- Address disparities in resource allocation.

- **Resource Availability Audits:** Conduct regular audits to identify and address gaps in resource availability. Ensure that core materials for all modules are readily accessible, either digitally or physically;

- **Lecture Capture and Recording:** Standardize the practice of recording lectures and making them available to students. Ensure recordings are accessible and expire after a set period to encourage timely engagement;

- **Financial Support for Resources:** Provide financial support for students who need assistance purchasing textbooks and other learning materials. This could include means-tested aid or University bursaries specifically for learning resources.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This report could not have been completed without the Dean of Students' Office who funded the Inclusive Education Projects in the Faculty of Arts. We would also like to register our appreciation for the contributions of all the students and staff participating in the focus groups who shared their views so generously. We are grateful for the contributions of the staff members who advised and co-created this project: Heidi Ashton, Youn Affejee, Nicholas Bernards, Alison Cooley, Oihane Etayo, David Fearn, Reece Goodall, Marta Guerriero, Leticia Villamediana Gonzalez, Marie Greene, Sacha Hepburn, Victoria Hill, Jodie Kim, David Lees, Qian Liu, Feng Mao, Rachel Moseley, Jay Ignatius-Osakwe, Robert O'Toole, and Diana Stonefield. The completion of this report could not have been achieved without the support and assistance of the Executive Office team in the Faculty of Arts. The final credit should go to the dedicated student project officers for their fantastic contribution to inclusive education at the University of Warwick.

Bing Lu, Director of Student Experience and Progression, Faculty of Arts

**We thank you for your continued support to  
inclusive education in the Faculty of Arts.**

## Contact

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