



INTERIM REPORT

Inclusive Education in the Arts Faculty

2022-23



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“Inclusion should be at the heart of what we do in the Faculty. Every student should be able to feel that they can be themselves throughout their experiences of teaching and learning in the Arts. The need to tackle attainment and awarding gaps is central to our approach towards inclusion. We need to acknowledge that these gaps stem from a multitude of factors and we must therefore adopt a holistic approach across the Faculty.”

David Lees, incoming Deputy Chair of the Faculty of Arts

The University of Warwick aims at creating equitable opportunities for all students to achieve to the best of their abilities. In 2022, departments outlined their inclusive education goals and activities in action plans which going forward will be updated annually.

A particular focus of these action plans was on the following **four priorities**, namely:

- The reduction of the awarding and attainment gap between black and white students
- The reduction of the difference in continuation rates between disabled and non-disabled students
- The reduction of the difference in continuation rates between mature and young students
- The reduction of the difference in continuation rates between WP and non-WP students.

To address these gaps, it is essential to address a range of factors. Research suggests that these include: creating a sense of belonging and mattering, attending to students' emotional and material support needs, and recognising and building on the community's cultural capital; implementing transparent regulations and clear guidance; raising staff and students' understanding of conscious and unconscious bias and avoiding deficit models; as well as introducing inclusive assessment practices, curricula, and teaching methods.

Across five sections, this report addresses different aspects of inclusive education which have emerged through conversations with students and staff from across the university: **student co-creation projects, data analysis, accessibility, transitioning to university, and communication with students.**

The best practice examples and guidelines presented in this report are not intended to provide a rigid, one-size-fits-all solution to inclusive education. Rather, they are meant to **inspire, encourage, and push the conversation about inclusive education in the Faculty of Arts forward.** Each teaching context is unique. Ultimately, which inclusive education strategies are appropriate will depend on a department's student composition, the module and teaching methods, the educator's pedagogical priorities, and their students' individual needs. For this reason, we would like to emphasise the importance of embracing a **diverse set of approaches** and flexibly exploring what works and what doesn't in a particular context. We hope that this report can contribute some relevant insight to this process of exploration!

The Team of Authors, July 2023

Overview: Co-Creation Projects across the Faculty

Here's an overview of some of the co-creation projects that have been reported to take place in the Faculty of Arts in 2022/23.

Inclusive Education Toolkit

More than 40 students contributed to the design of the Faculty of Arts Inclusive Education Toolkit through a series of focus groups.

Data Analysis

The History Department recruited a PGR student to support their data analysis efforts, drawing on information from student-led focus groups.

Student-Led Networks

The School of Modern Languages and Cultures has instituted student-led networks for WP students, black students, disabled students and LGBTQIA+ students.

PG and Pizza Events

The Classics and Ancient History department has facilitated PG and pizza events, in which postgraduates share their experiences with WP undergraduates.

Anti-Exclusion Committee

The School of Creative Arts, Performance and Visual Cultures is addressing inclusion via a student-led body which will contribute towards its Anti-Exclusion Strategy.

This Report

This report itself is the outcome of a co-creation project involving four undergraduate students from different departments in the Faculty of Arts.

Best Practice: Student Networks

The School of Modern Languages and Cultures established four student networks to foster connection among underserved students, develop the student voice, and close feedback loops. The networks - the Disabled Network, LGBTQ+ Network, Widening Participation Network, and Black Students Network - are coordinated by a team of seven students. *By Maria Mallett, Lead of the Black Students Network*

Engagement Strategies

Network Leads used a range of strategies to attract members and share their message. They reached out to students via various communication channels, including **WhatsApp group chat, Facebook, and Instagram pages**. The Disabled Network contacted pre-existing disabled circles at Warwick such as Warwick Enable and Autism at Warwick. Similarly, the WP Network **collaborated with societies** that share the same values, such as the 93% Club.

More analogue methods were also used: **Posters** were distributed throughout the FAB and **in-person social events** provided an opportunity for further engagement. When appropriate, networks also held events together. Across all networks, **anonymous feedback** was gathered through online questionnaires.

Network leads participated in workshops where they were able to deliver presentations and **provided practical guidance to staff members** on matters

relating to their networks.

This engagement also extended to the wider university community when the Black Student Network **collaborated with the library** to provide an intersectional BAME reading list, in response to network members' concerns about representation. **This collaboration shows the potential power and capabilities that can begin in these networks but can stretch to have a wider impact beyond.**



Co-Creation from the Student Perspective

In collaboration with one of the Faculty of Arts Directors of Student Experience and Progression, a group of Student Project Officers set out to develop an Inclusive Education Best Practice Toolkit. As part of the project, they organised focus groups and workshops. In the section below, two members of the team reflect on their work in this co-creation project.

“ When describing the co-creation project, the first thing that comes to mind is the blending of both worlds.

As a project officer, I had multiple encounters with students who supported the cause and were pleased with the initiative of having student officers for a change. The focus groups provided an opportunity to have a meaningful discussion about the similar situations faced by the students, and as a project officer, I was responsible for keeping the conversation smooth and flowing. The blend of UG, PGT and PGRs was a unique experience as there were clashes of ideas or opinions which had to be handled tactfully so that each voice remained heard. The students expressed a desire to remain connected and informed about the project's updates. I strongly felt that this platform is necessary and ideal for creating an atmosphere devoid of hierarchy, thus facilitating the co-creation of better solutions." - *Ayushi Rakesh*

"I participated in a co-creation project with the objective of interacting with my peers about the experiences they have had in terms of inclusion and diversity. The focus groups were extremely productive and helped us identify prospective pedagogical methods that could foster inclusivity in the classroom. The lively discussions, brainstorming sessions, and interactive icebreakers helped me gain perspective and highlighted the efficiency of student collaboration.

I was continuously impressed by my peers' ability to articulate their experiences into solutions that could help the group.

Open communication and teamwork strengthened our final aim, and the shared purpose motivated the group to explore complex concepts with vigour. I am truly grateful for this opportunity, and I am certain that it has helped me grow on a personal and professional level."

- *Sunehar Aneja*

Navigating Challenges and Limitations

Co-creation projects are invaluable tools for promoting student engagement and creating inclusive and supportive teaching and learning spaces. At the same time, it's important to reflect on how to navigate their potential challenges and limitations. In recent conversations across the Faculty of Arts, the following three challenges were discussed repeatedly.

Common Challenges

It can be **challenging to engage students** due to a number of reasons, including financial constraints, academic workload, extracurricular activities, and personal commitments

Particularly when dealing with nuanced and sensitive issues, some students may face challenges due to their **relative lack of specialist knowledge and professional experience**.

Long-term co-creation projects will inevitably experience a **high turnover in student members** as they graduate or transition to other roles. This can disrupt the continuity of the project, making it difficult to maintain long-term goals.

Potential Responses

Students have emphasised the importance of **being paid for their contribution** to co-creation projects. Dividing up responsibilities in a **flexible** way can also help ease the workload. Finally, co-creation opportunities should be **accessible and inclusive** themselves.

Student members of co-creation projects may benefit from being **assigned a staff member who can provide ongoing support** and give advice if necessary. This provision should be clearly communicated to the students.

There are several strategies for ensuring continuity, from setting up a **handover period** to creating **guidance documents**. In addition, sometimes new student members can be recruited from existing focus group, workshop, or survey participants.

Overview: Accessibility Measures across the Faculty

Compared to the other two faculties, the Faculty of Arts has the highest number of students identifying as disabled. Departments have launched a number of activities aimed at addressing inaccessibility and improving the inclusion of disabled students, a selection of which is presented below.

Disability Officer Roles

The School for Cross-Faculty Studies (SCFS) has created the role of Disability Officer which complements the personal tutor role. The Disability Officers have worked towards clarifying accommodations and other services for students.

Online Learning

SCFS has created short courses (MOOCs) which can be taken online and offer a more accessible way of learning for students, in particular those who might be limited in terms of the time they can invest in their studies.

Knowledge-Sharing Workshop

The Department of Classics and Ancient History has suggested conducting a workshop for neurodivergent students where they can share their experiences and develop strategies for managing their studies.

Disabled Student Network

An initiative at SMLC has centred around creating a departmental disabled student network, which in coming years will seek to introduce a mentoring scheme for its members and hold workshops on disability issues.

Neurodiversity Working Group

The Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies has created a working group on neurodiversity, which aims to develop guidance for supporting staff and students.

The Reverse Mentoring Initiative

The School of Creative Arts, Performance, and Visual Cultures runs a reverse mentoring initiative in which members of staff can learn from students with disabilities.

Best Practice: Reverse Mentoring Scheme

In this scheme, neurodivergent students from Theatre and Performance Studies work with staff to share their experiences of teaching and learning and help create more accessible teaching practices. Participating students will be remunerated via Unitemps. In the section below, Bryony White gives an overview of the proposed scheme, which is currently still in its planning phase.

“ I wanted to actively involve students in helping staff to think about the way they design their seminars.”

What will the Reverse Mentoring scheme entail?

“The Reverse Mentoring scheme will involve neurodivergent students working with staff members to explore what works for them in the seminar room. This will involve offering key tips and skills for teaching staff to better understand what helps when it comes to neurodivergent students in the classroom.”

What inspired you to develop the scheme?

“Reverse Mentoring is currently taking shape in quite a unique way. As part of the anti-exclusion working group at Warwick, we have been discussing ways that we can work productively with students to think about questions of neurodiversity, learning differences, access, and disability in the seminar room. One of the things we came up

with as part of this is the Reverse Mentoring scheme, which I am currently developing with students. As I am based in the Theatre and Performance Studies department, I think we would hope to trial this scheme in our department before then rolling this out with other departments in the school.

In the TPS department, we already tend to work in quite interactive ways in seminars but it became clear to me as part of the anti-exclusion group, that there were clear and straightforward methods to help neurodivergent students feel more included in the classroom. Part of the project will be actively working with neurodivergent students to outline and work out what works for them in seminars, lectures, and workshops and, also, crucially, what doesn't.

We hope to then compile a working document of different tips, methods, and examples that students can introduce staff to, working with and mentoring staff on their own unique experiences of learning in HE. We hope this will provide an empathetic two-directional learning experience for staff and students, whilst also providing on-the-ground tips and tricks.”

Accessibility from the Student Perspective

"There are many improvements necessary to make university more inclusive to disabled students, but there are three main points to reduce dropout rates and awarding gaps: improving support, implementing reasonable adjustments, and recruiting more disabled students." *By Seven Standen*

“When we think about accessibility, we need to consider neurodivergence – but also other disabilities, including invisible ones, mobility impairments, and chronic illnesses.

Adequate wellbeing support is needed for disabled students. The wellbeing of disabled students is likely to be lower for several reasons: Attending university removes the support networks they have at home, they struggle to fit in with other people, 'everyday' tasks are more challenging, and there is a stigma around being disabled and needing help. Additionally, disabled people are more likely to experience mental illness and burnout. Due to all these factors, disabled people need more wellbeing support than the average student. However, in my experience people trained in mental health and wellbeing aren't equipped to work with disabled people – neither are most university staff.

Reasonable adjustments should be implemented correctly. The support students receive can vary drastically between departments and even staff members. Many students must advocate for themselves, challenge staff members directly, and fight for their adjustments – this should not be the case, as these adjustments are supposed to make university life easier.

Overall, there seems to be little guidance for staff on how disabilities might affect a student's work and how to implement adjustments. Therefore, mistakes made due to disability often aren't forgiven the way they're supposed to be, or adjustments aren't provided at all. Furthermore, the majority of adjustments are in relation to exams, which are often irrelevant to Faculty of Arts students. Instead, it would be useful to implement adjustments for seminar participation grades.

Finally, better outreach programmes are needed to recruit more disabled students. Up to 70% of disabled students do not attend university in the UK. Disability-friendly recruitment programmes can help address this, such as specific Open Days and contextual offers for disabled students."

Overview: Transition to University

The transition to university is a crucial stage which shouldn't be overlooked when considering inclusive education in the Faculty of Arts. This period is highly stressful for most students and can result in a lack of continuation at university. Notably, many students who drop out of university often do so during the first few weeks of term.

SMLC Student Networks

Student Networks can help ease first-year undergraduates' transition to university and create a sense of community and belonging.

Essential Skills Module

Film and TV Studies' Essential Skills Module helps students develop their scholarly skills and orient themselves at university.

Study Skills Workshops

In Classics and Ancient History, undergraduate students are invited to attend study skills sessions.

Welcome Week

In the upcoming Welcome Week, the Faculty of Arts runs a range of events to help ease students* transition, including a drop-in Study Café.

Challenges and Strategies

Students can be supported in transitioning to university by creating a sense of belonging and by receiving help with adjusting to new teaching and assessment methods.

When it comes to creating a sense of belonging, students have flagged up issues around feeling welcome and included. Some of them reported facing microaggressions or hypervisibility, and suggested revising curricula and developing more guidance on inclusive classroom behaviour. They also emphasised that student networks and personal tutors can be important points of contact for students transitioning to university.

Secondly, students may have difficulty adapting to the teaching and assessment methods at university. While anyone can benefit from study skills workshops and modules, it is often particularly important for WP students, and disabled, mature, and international students.

Best Practice: Film and TV Studies Essential Skills Module

Preparing first year undergraduates for their studies can be an effective means to support an inclusive learning experience. Film and Television Studies sought to do this through the creation of a compulsory study skills module designed to develop scholarly skills and encourage active participation in seminars.

The module has been part of a strategy to respond to three things in particular: improving undergraduates' preparedness for work and responding to the employability agenda, developing work around transition from school to university and from Year 1 to Year 2, and supporting students to become able independent researchers. It runs throughout the first year across all terms, and while it is not assessed, attendance is mandatory. Topics include how to use the library, referencing, writing, and notetaking, the various support services available at Warwick, and possible career pathways open to them during and after their studies.

Below, module leader Tom Hemingway reflects on his experiences.

In what ways have you seen undergraduate students benefit?

"The majority of students found the module helpful, singling out workshops on how to use the library, how to write your first essay, and how to reference in academic work as being particularly useful. Students also benefitted from the opportunity to speak to current second year students about living off campus, managing exam revision and prep, and the differences between first and second year."

What advice would you share with other departments who may be considering offering a similar module?

"We have tried to time sessions, so they are most useful and impactful for students at the time they are being delivered. For example, here is usually a session on how to use the

library and how to engage in seminars within the first few weeks of term. This is followed by sessions on how to write an academic essay and referencing in the middle of term, when most students are beginning to write their first assessed piece of work.

“ Be sure to communicate with students consistently throughout the module about why you are providing them with certain sessions and workshops.

Sometimes if this isn't explicitly stated, they don't always understand why they are being told something, even if it is ultimately very useful."

Best Practice: Student Equity Survey

In 2021, the School for Cross-Faculty Studies conducted a Student Equity Survey to find out more about students' experience with diversity and discrimination at university. They collected quantitative and qualitative data from 80 students, which is approximately 18% of SCFS students. Following the survey, a range of focus groups and interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the student experience. The findings of this project will inform the ongoing activities of the School's Equity and Inclusion Committee as well as their Inclusive Education Action Plan.

Survey Questions

Students were surveyed about their concerns regarding transitioning to university, their satisfaction with teaching and the diversity of the curriculum, the approachability of staff, their sense of belonging, and the School's overall culture. In addition, the survey asked students to share information on their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and any disability they might have.

Outcomes

In response to the survey results, the School ran staff training on building a trans-inclusive university, appointed a Disability Officer, and invested in ongoing work for supporting international students. The full report can be found on the School's website.

Lessons Learnt

One of the strengths of the Student Equity Survey is the **continuous involvement of and consultation with students**, e.g., in the Equity Committee and the Student-Staff Liaison Committees.

By gathering **both qualitative and quantitative data**, the School was able to build a rich picture of the needs and concerns of their students, so that the findings could be included into their long-term strategic planning.

Going forward, it would be necessary to follow up the survey as staff and students have moved on and programmes have changed in the meantime. In addition, **new issues have emerged** since the survey first ran, such as the cost-of-living crisis, which would require an adaptation of the questionnaire used.

Best Practice: Student Communication

Students have repeatedly reported their difficulties with the way the university communicates with them. Many find the emails they receive overwhelming and confusing, and as a consequence, they are often unaware of the support that is available to them. **Below, the Student Communications Team shares some advice.**

Best Practice Guidance: Emailing Students

Consider your subject line - Keep it short (up to 8 words) and make it unique. Always use a different subject line for each email you send out and avoid repetition; if students think it might be a duplicate email, they are less likely to open it.

Personalise - Students are used to personalisation in the digital world, so make sure to address your recipient by their name and ensure you're using personal words such as 'discover your passion' / 'what inspires you?'

Increase authenticity - Students value authenticity. Whether it's utilising student-led content or using a direct quote from a student when introducing a blog, authenticity is key to building an engaged audience.

Consider your timing - A good time to deliver communications is around 10am, after lunch, or towards the end of the day. You might find different times work best depending on study level, etc. It's helpful to review analytics if available to help determine this.

Keep it concise - Students are regularly bombarded with emails and they don't always have the time to sit down and read an email in detail. Keep content concise and make it digestible by using sections, headers, bullet points and images.

Make life easy for your reader - Ensure it's clear what you are asking your audience to do and make it easy for them to do it. Use clear call-to-actions and highlight key information. Include links for further information and consider direct calendar invites for a simple user experience.

Conclusion

“ Inclusive education is at the heart of everything we do in the Faculty of Arts. We have some excellent practice to share and creative ways of moving forward in partnership with staff and students.”

Sarah Richardson, Chair of the Faculty Education Committee & Deputy Chair of the Faculty of Arts

We hope that this report has been able to showcase the richness and diversity of some of the inclusive education initiatives currently taking place in the Faculty of Arts. As mentioned in the introduction, it is primarily

meant to serve as inspiration, encouraging all members of the Faculty to reflect on their practice, their achievements, challenges, and lessons learnt in the area of inclusive education, and to learn from each other. In addition, as the academic year 2022/23 comes to an end, this report can hopefully provide some new ideas and guidance for future inclusion strategies. Finally, we'd like to draw your attention to the box below, which outlines some further sources of information and training.

We hope you have found this report useful. If you'd like to provide feedback, please reach out using the email address provided on the next page.

The Team of Authors, July 2023

Further Sources of Information and Training

The [Dean of Students Office pages on inclusive education](#) contain more information on the Inclusive Education Model, inclusive education action plans, and the attainment/awarding gap dashboard.

There are numerous WIHEA Learning Circles relevant to the topics of this report, including but not limited to: Trans & Queer Pedagogies Learning Circle; Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Process in HE; Co-Creation; Inclusive Policy and Practice for Disabled Students; Neurodiversity and the Student Experience.

For data analysis support and training, including help with the attainment/awarding gap dashboard, please reach out to the [Strategic Planning & Analytics Office](#).



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