

**WARWICK**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

**Interim Report**

# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE ARTS FACULTY

2023-24



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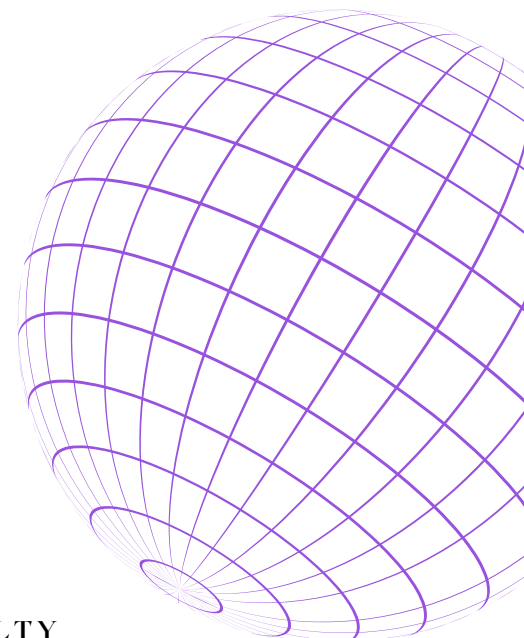
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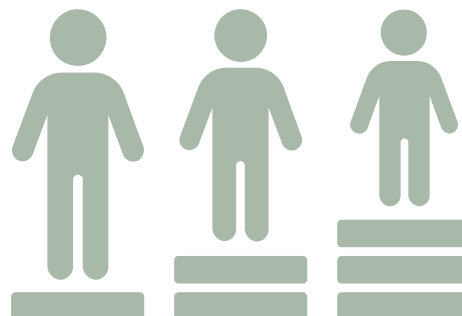
# INTRODUCTION

On Thursday 8 June 2023, the Faculty of Arts held its first Inclusive Education Conference, looking at best practice across our community and highlighting those areas both where we excel and where we can continue to improve. A cross-Faculty selection of speakers and attendees addressed initiatives and work emerging from their 2022 inclusive education plans, and reinforced a commitment to inclusivity in our Faculty.

The second Inclusive Education in the Arts Conference, held on Tuesday 21 May 2024, is just one of the many fantastic examples of the ways in which our Faculty continues to foreground inclusive experience while always challenging itself to improve. The day thought about areas in which the Faculty is leading the way in inclusive education and exhibiting positive inclusive practice – the breadth of examples showcased both in person and online is a real testament to this drive. Similarly, the level of representation – speakers and attendees from all of our departments, from first-year undergraduate students to professor-level teaching staff – is excellent proof that inclusivity is important across our community.

This report is structured around the three major discussion points of the conference:

- The wealth of inclusive student experiences in the Arts, and how we ensure that the experiences we offer are inclusive



- How we can expand Arts inclusivity on both a student and staff level
- How our teaching and learning practices are evolving to become more inclusive

Building on both the conference presentations and our survey of the inclusive work being conducted across departments, this report highlights examples of good practice, exploring how the work is effected, how it may be embedded and/or measured as successful, and the specific challenges to which the work is responding. As we develop our new Warwick Education Strategy, and the associated Access and Participation Plan, and as institutional support for inclusive practices continues to exist at all levels, presenting this work is increasingly important.

We do not claim that the examples and case studies presented in this report are a one-size-fits-all solution to inclusive education – rather, this is a snapshot of where we are currently at and where we hope to be, and it is that that will continue to drive conversation about inclusive education in the Faculty of Arts.

The Team of Authors, July 2024

# INCLUSIVE STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN THE ARTS

02

A quick look at some fantastic projects on the 23/24 calendar!

## **Classics**

### **MOSAIC WORKSHOP**

This workshop, led by specialist Lawrence Payne, invites all Classics students to learn the techniques employed by Roman mosaicists, before creating their own miniature mosaic! An excellent example of the departments commitment to building inclusive learning environments.

## **History**

### **REVERSE MENTORING**

The History Department has embraced the “reverse-mentoring” scheme to break down internal hierarchy, and encourage an inclusive environment for shared learning. This involves Black and neurodiverse students mentoring Faculty staff.

## **Cross-Faculty**

### **STUDENT NETWORKS**

The SMLC, Widening Participation, History and English are a few of the Departments who have introduced a team of student coordinators, to support underrepresented communities at Warwick. These include Black, LGBTQI+ and disabled students.

## **Cross-Faculty**

### **DIVERSIFYING THE CURRICULUM**

Traditional modes of assessment (essay, exams) don't accommodate every student. Hence, the History and Theatre and Performance Studies departments are diversifying the delivery and assessment of learning, including practical, technical, and oral skills.

## **Faculty-Level Projects**

### **BUILDING ON LAST YEARS' FEEDBACK:**

A cross-disciplinary team of staff and students have been building upon the foundational feedback to last year's Inclusive Education projects. In May, the Inclusive Education in the Arts Conference brought together staff, students and alumni to showcase the Faculty's strides towards inclusive education, and the next steps. Moreover, this year's Toolkit will unpack how the Faculty have responded to the recommendations of last year's research.

# CASE STUDY: WARWICK IN VENICE

02

Over the Easter vacation, the Faculty of Arts invited a range of students from Widening Participation (WP) backgrounds to the University of Warwick's base in Venice - Palazzo Guistinian Lolin.

Undergraduate students from a WP background face many structural disadvantages when they arrive at University. Mobility is one of these obstacles. According to UUKI Gone International Research, 9.5% of students from advantaged socio-economic backgrounds were mobile, compared to 5.6% of their peers from less advantaged backgrounds.

The Faculty of Arts recognises how outward mobility gives students "life-changing" experiences, enhances their skillsets and opens more doors for the future. Ultimately, travel impacts the student on a personal, academic and employability level.

We are therefore thrilled to announce that the Faculty of Arts recently hosted [a number] of Warwick students, from a WP background, in Venice.



During their time here, these students tackled some of the largest questions surrounding this beautiful, sinking city: "How has Venice survived for 1,600 years from its foundation?" and more importantly "how is the city responding to the challenges of rising sea levels?" The students were able to begin answering these questions by engaging with the environment around them.

Whilst these students came from a diverse range of both academic and personal backgrounds - this experience encouraged them to communicate effectively - building skillsets and friendships alike that they will take with them in their future ...

# WARWICK IN VENICE: STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

02

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## **OLIVIA FARRELLY (UG, GSD)**

*The trip encouraged me and students from similar backgrounds who wouldn't have believed prior to Venice that we would have had the means to take part in experiences like this or have the possibility to think about taking a year abroad.*

*This trip has opened many doors for myself not just through the people I have met and the experiences I have had but also by making me feel validated and deserving.*

## **BRAM ALLAN-BOWDERY (UG, CCMP)**

*The experience has undoubtedly given me the drive to visit new countries in the future as a means of widening my connections and greater understanding of the world.”*

*The ability to visit new and different places across the world is extremely important in allowing students to grow both academically and personally.*



# OVERVIEW: INCLUSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES

The Faculty of Arts has utilised a number of methods involving teaching staff and learning techniques to improve inclusivity in the student community. This section seeks to highlight various initiatives that contribute towards a more inclusive way of teaching.

## ***Dr Roberta Bivins***

Working as a team is a priority, enabling all the students to follow their own interests and questions and encouraging more free-flowing and fuller discussions.

The module and teaching stays fresh and up-to-date when all of my students are feeding in new questions, topics and sources via their own work - I can quickly improve the module every year based not just on student feedback, but on articles and primary sources engaged students use in their assessed work and/or introduce in discussions.

Including and promoting students who have different perspectives to bring forward means I learn new things and can access different voices and communities - so 'research-led teaching' and becomes 'teaching-led research'.

Making that really evident flattens the hierarchy, and creates virtuous cycle to reinforce better discussions!



# OVERVIEW: INCLUSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES

03

## Professor Yvette Hutchinson

Professor Yvette Hutchinson's presentation in the conference focussed more closely on extending intersectionality in curricula to include disability.

First, the factors influencing our sense of ourselves and others were introduced which included:

- How we learn to see, interpret and then judge ourselves and others
- The role of representation in these processes
- How social, economic, political ideologies and systems impact these processes
- The place of performance – in the everyday and in artistic forms in these negotiations

Yvette highlighted the various methods of integrating this kind of intersectionality into her teaching, such as:

- A first-year core module, *Ways of Seeing*. In Unit 1, she looks at the gaze – what seeing does and how – and in Unit 2, she looks at positionality to ask how do we constitute ourselves in relation to others.
- A third-year module, *Intercultural performance practices*, includes disability overtly.

Yvette's teaching looks at 'assumptions around dance (sport) as a space for the super-able bodied – asking what happens when we put a differently abled body or mind in that performance space – for other performers, the industry and audiences'.





# CASE STUDY: SMLC STUDENT NETWORKS

04

Embedding good practices means identifying them, promoting them to spread awareness, and putting in resources to maintain them. There are multiple instances of positive practices within the sphere of inclusive education in the Faculty of Arts, and it is highly important to embed them so they continue to impact students and staff, as well as develop further into more robust and recognisable approaches.

One particular example of these positive practices would be the Student Networks founded within the School of Modern Languages and Cultures (SMLC). These networks are student-led groups focusing on different demographics, such as Disabled Students, Black Students, LGBTQIA+ Students, and Widening Participation Students.

Each network has two appointed leads, who are students belonging to those communities. The networks have created community spaces both online (via group chats) and in-person (via meet-ups and social events), where students can meet other people with similar life experiences, share their opinions and ask for advice. Students have found these beneficial because the groups are specific to their own needs and identities, but they are also casual and do not require regular commitment to attending events.

The department has set an example in terms of embedding these networks as part of the SMLC student experience. Each year, new student leads have been appointed. The aim is that the new student leads will continue the work of their predecessors: for example, this year's LGBTQIA+ network leads continued working on the resources for inclusive language that their predecessors had started working on, alongside staff.

The networks are advertised within departmental spaces, such as the Transnational Resource Centre, and also via Moodle. More could certainly be done to increase the visibility of the networks, such as promoting them on the departmental social media, creating digital and physical posters, and sending out emails to encourage students to join the networks. Promoting and marketing is vital in embedding good practices because without engagement, initiatives are difficult to maintain.

The principal challenges experienced by the organisers were low engagement. This is due to a myriad of reasons including exam season, lack of advertisement, and a small target demographic. One way to improve engagement would be an intersectional approach, where each network collaborates with and uplifts each other. That way, the networks' profile is boosted. Of course, once the networks have been running for longer, they have stronger foundations and more of a presence within the School, and can expect higher levels of participation.

## ***How other departments can follow this example***

Other departments within the Faculty of Arts would likely also benefit from setting up Student Networks to represent various communities within their cohort. Not only does it give students a community space to meet others from a similar background or experience, it also gives them the chance to apply for the lead position and learn valuable leadership skills.

There are lots of other examples of inclusive practices within the Faculty. We recommend learning about the approaches taken by other departments and taking inspiration from them. Attending events such as the Inclusive Education Conference can raise the profile of inclusive initiatives and help other departments implement their own versions.

More opportunities to showcase inclusive approaches could really help spread them, with input from both staff and students. The Inclusive Education Conference is a fantastic demonstration of good practices, but only happens once a year, so it may be helpful to meet on a more regular basis to discuss ideas and observations.

## ***Summary***

The most important factor in embedding good practices is individuals committed to inclusivity, who are willing to put in the time and resources to maintain initiatives, closely followed by engagement. We recommend that all staff and students learn about initiatives around them, such as the case study discussed above, and use their voice to spread awareness of good practice, therefore increasing the likelihood of good engagement. We also encourage them to get involved wherever possible to make positive and consistent changes to inclusive education across the Faculty .

# NEXT STEPS

The purpose of this report is not only to look back at our successes, but also to look forward at where we head next. These are a few recommendations for good practices and priorities that can and should be addressed over the next academic year.

Establish Faculty-wide student networks, building on the successful work led by departments to ensure that these networks have greater reach and support

Build on the information and feedback collected from Arts projects in 2023-24 (including, but certainly not limited to, the Inclusive Education Toolkit, the Trans and Non-Binary Network, and the Inclusive Welcome Week project) to ensure that the Faculty remains both reactive and proactive to our students' concerns

Uplift Inclusive successes all year round, not just in a yearly conference - this can and should be done on a departmental and Faculty level, making connections with the Inclusive Education team and the Dean of Students office to ensure that good practice is shared widely

Use our knowledge and data to help support wider systemic change at Warwick (through, for instance, simplifying where possible the number of platforms students and staff have to use)

Proactively address the question of what voices are (not) included in our teaching, learning and experience activities

# CONCLUSION

**Inclusion continues to be at the heart of all activities across the Faculty of Arts. As we continue to develop the inclusive education model at Warwick, it is vital that we work together to make the University as an inclusive a space as possible for our brilliant students. One year on from our last inclusive report in the Faculty, it is clear that the Faculty is making excellent progress on this front, but there is still more work to be done.**

**--- David Lees, Dean of Students**

We hope this report provides insight into the richness and diversity of the inclusive education practices ongoing in the Faculty of Arts. Our community does not rest on its laurels; rather, it continues to innovate, to build on our successes and our weaknesses, and to evaluate and critically assess what more we can do. Inclusivity remains at the heart of our Arts education offering and our community, and our commitment remains steadfast.



This report is far from the final word – instead, we would prefer to think of it as the continuation of the conversation about inclusivity in the Faculty of Arts. As we stated in the introduction, the theme of our work was two-pronged – looking at our current practice and successes, but also thinking about what we can do next. We hope that this report proves a useful contribution to that process of reflection.

## How can you get involved with inclusive education?

- Engage with networking sessions, training and events happening across the University e.g. TRIW, ADC Inclusion Programme, Active Bystander Programme
- Talk with others in your department/faculty to share plans and learning and ask to be involved
- Read guidance on Inclusive Education and Social Inclusion webpages, and from WIHEA Learning Circles
- Small steps make a big difference e.g. Say my name, opening up conversations
- Engage students in your work

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