Inclusive teaching checklist

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Disclaimer: This checklist was prepared to prompt discussion within RMIT’s newly-established Inclusive Teaching Working Group. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying inclusive teaching Discussion Paper.
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Most of the strategies under each of the inclusive teaching principles below have been selected because research tends to support their use with all students (see the accompanying inclusive teaching Discussion Paper). For strategies that make adjustments for students from particular backgrounds (e.g. those with disabilities, or those with lower ESL proficiency), see the list of ‘Helpful Websites’ on the Learning and Teaching website of RMIT’s Science Engineering and Health portfolio (http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=6b78ibxl00bm), and the excellent and exhaustive guidelines published by the United States’ National Center on Universal Design for Learning (http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines).

1. Student-centred philosophy

- feedback, ‘the most powerful single moderator that enhances achievement’ (Hattie 1992), is provided at every opportunity, including feedback on students’ choice of strategies
- mastery learning, in which students can only proceed to a subsequent learning objective after mastering the current one, is preferred to methods of instruction offering less formative feedback
- formative assessment (testing understanding, but not for marks) is built into the curriculum wherever possible
- a combination of direct teaching (which includes guided practice) and less-guided instruction (e.g. problem-based learning) is used
- classes routinely use collaborative discussions and activities (pair-work, group-work) as well as whole-group and individual work
- classrooms allow for re-arrangement of furniture for small-group discussions and learning activities

2. Simple and transparent

- detailed course guides are provided at the start of semester and an overview is given at the start of each class
- detailed assessment criteria spell out exactly which learning goals (including academic skills) will be assessed and the weight they will be given
- at the start of a unit of work, teachers identify knowledge and skills that are goals of instruction and make these known to students
- learning goals (or ‘outcomes’) are expressed as statements of what students will know or be able to do at the end of the unit
- teachers identify and use specific instructional techniques for specific instructional goals, and these techniques are named for students, e.g. to unpack the author’s argument in this article, we’re going to use argument mapping, because it tends to improve critical thinking.
- teachers use instructional techniques that apply to all the instructional goals that were initially set, e.g. if critical thinking is a goal, use strategies that have been demonstrated to improve it
- a rubric or scale is provided to show to what extent a student has mastered each learning goal
- for each learning goal, teachers single out a few well-structured input experiences as critical to students’ learning, and the importance of these is announced to students
students are involved in some kind of previewing activity before the actual presentation of content, e.g. via ‘advance organisers’ (e.g. teacher-prepared questions or notes), to activate prior knowledge. This is especially important before ‘critical input experiences’
cues or ‘signposts’ are used to link new content and skills to content and skills previously taught in previous lessons, and also within lessons, e.g. ‘the second important point is…’
new material is delivered in small chunks, proceeding from less complex to more complex
‘macrostrategies’ such as ‘reciprocal teaching’ (a small group strategy) are used to allow students to process the small chunks of new material
academic skills are embedded or integrated into course content and taught in class time either by the content teacher or (initially) by an academic skills teacher
time is allowed for teacher-guided practice of skills to allow students (alone, with other students, or with teacher) to cognitively assimilate the skill
‘hurdle’ tasks are used to test for mastery of relevant academic skills before high-stakes assignments
difficult and colloquial vocabulary and symbols are explained or avoided for the benefit of ESL learners (and others)
the correct way to ‘read’ difficult visual representations, e.g. graphs and maps, is explained
teachers who would like to develop their practice of embedding/integrating academic skills are referred to L&T adviser or Study and Learning Centre for advice


Multiple means of representation, to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge.
electronic versions of all course materials (including text books and readings) are provided, so that students can use their preferred adaptive technology e.g. text-to-speech software
knowledge taught in classes is routinely represented in visual form (e.g. pictures, diagrams)
options are routinely provided that illustrate key concepts non-linguistically
students are taught a meta-cognitive approach to learning strategies, i.e. that different strategies suit different learning tasks

Multiple means of action and expression, to provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know.
consideration is given to offering a choice of assessment modes for each assessment task e.g. exam, report (written or oral) or online project
students are taught the skills required for each mode of assessment
students are taught note-taking and note-making techniques to use in and out of class (including visual and diagrammatic techniques)
students are taught and encouraged to make visual representations of knowledge e.g. diagrams, mind-maps, to help them manipulate and structure information
students are taught to set explicit goals, identify strategies for accomplishing goals, and to monitor progress toward goals
options are provided in the mode of physical response to learning tasks (e.g. physical model or computer model)
assistive technologies such as speech recognition software and text-to-speech software are made available to as many students as possible

*Multiple means of engagement,* to tap into learners' interests, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation.

- the teacher asks lots of questions, to activate students’ prior knowledge and to assess their level of understanding
- a level of autonomy is provided in order to enhance relevance, value and authenticity of learning goals and activities for different learners, for example, students might be given the option of formulating their own essay question or problem to solve
- every opportunity is taken to give students mastery-oriented formative feedback
- there is a peer tutoring (peer mentoring) program in place, in which first year students can be tutored by second or third year students
- teaching aims to maintain a ‘high energy level’ as a stimulus for engagement (e.g. physical activity; good pacing of instruction that wastes no time; varied activities; an enthusiastic manner of teaching)
- ‘missing information’ is used to engage students (e.g. problem-based learning; games and puzzles based on academic content; unusual information is provided, and explanation postponed)
- students are encouraged to talk about themselves in class, the better to activate prior knowledge and the construction of learning, and to apply theory to their own lives in their assignments (e.g. a component of assessment might be a reflective journal)
- mild controversy or competition is used to engage students (e.g. games; debates)
- appropriate humour is used where possible

4. **Inclusive spaces**

- classrooms with flat floors and moveable furniture are used where possible, to allow group-based and collaborative learning as well as direct teaching of the whole group
- furniture is as adjustable as possible to allow healthy ergonomics for as many students as possible
- class sizes are kept to a minimum
- lectures are made interactive where possible, for example, small group exercises can still be included, even in lecture theatres
- the lighting is adequate, and the acoustics allow audio-recording

5. **A community of learners**

- there is a peer tutoring (peer mentoring) program in which first year students can be tutored by second or third year students
- a compulsory meeting between each student and the teacher is a course requirement, where feasible
- blogs, chatrooms or other forums are in place, to promote discussion between teacher and students, and between students
- students are taught the skills necessary for self- and peer-assessment
peer assessment and self-assessment are used where possible, in conjunction with assessment by teachers, as a means of increasing the amount of formative feedback each student receives

teachers know a little about each student in the class, where possible

teachers exhibit behaviour which shows interest in students and their opinions

6. Inclusive climate

consider a statement on diversity in the first class and in the course guide calling for enrolled students to respect and value diversity

students are surveyed to monitor their comfort level in class discussions

diversity content is incorporated into the curriculum, e.g. by highlighting the work of female thinkers or intellectuals from historically marginalised cultures

teachers convey high expectations for all students in the programme (i.e. teachers give the impression that they believe every student can succeed)

teachers establish positive emotions in the classroom (e.g. through praise; calling on students of various abilities and backgrounds to answer questions, and giving them equal time to answer)

teachers are encouraged to engage in critical self-examination of their attitudes to diversity, including identifying students for whom they have low expectations, and planning compensatory behaviours