

DANCE, DRAMA AND MUSIC

Principles of inclusive curriculum design

Anticipatory
Flexible
Accountable
Collaborative
Transparent
Equitable

Generic considerations

- cost and financial considerations;
- embedding student and staff well-being;
- promoting student engagement;
- use of technology to enhance learning;
- responding to different approaches to learning;
- avoiding stereotypes and celebrating diversity;
- making reasonable adjustments.

Introduction

It is the responsibility of the every member of staff within HE to respond to the requirements of equality legislation. The basic principle that can and should be universally responded to is that **it is attitudes, barriers and other forms of discrimination within the system rather than individual characteristics or deficits that are the cause of disadvantage.** Employing an inclusive approach is underpinned by the adoption of other principles of inclusive curriculum design, summarised in the adjacent text box and discussed in the introduction section of this guide available at www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/inclusion/disability/ICD_introduction.pdf

May and Bridger assert, in respect of developing an inclusive culture, “making a shift of such magnitude requires cultural and systemic change at both policy and practice levels” (2010: 2). In essence this change is represented by a shift in focus from responding to the ‘needs’ of individuals or specific groups of students to an approach that anticipates and plans for the *entitlements* of the evolving student population. Thus the onus is on institutions and subject communities to change and adapt their policies and practice rather than expect this of individual or specific groups of students.

There are many generic considerations of inclusive curriculum design, summarised in the adjacent text box, which are discussed in the introduction section. The focus of this section is on subject-specific considerations for those in those subjects aligned to dance, drama and music. Here examples of innovation and effective practice are provided to demonstrate that effective practice for one group can and should be effective practice for all. The examples, resources and ideas included in this and other subject guides have come from the sector. They were obtained directly in response to a general request made to the sector during 2010, from a review of the HEA Subject Centres or from recommendations made by colleagues teaching in the specific subject.

Where there are examples in other subject guides that may be particularly relevant or worth reviewing for further adaptation these are flagged. However, notably inspiration and ideas for curriculum design can come from many sources, therefore reading strategies employed and ideas in other subject areas can be a useful source of new ideas.

Inclusive curriculum design: subject-specific considerations

Responding to an evolving student body: matching the curriculum to the intake

Widening access and changing ideas about what constitute the performing arts have contributed to students having wider and different experiences and aspirations. This has implications for what and how students are taught. It can no longer be assumed that Dance, Drama and Music students will have or require particular skills on entry such as reading musical notation, or performance skills.

Consideration needs to be given to:

- the information provided about courses so that students can make informed decisions pre-entry and during their course;
- how expectations and assumptions are communicated so that they are shared and negotiated particularly at pre-entry or induction or at transition points during the programme;
- the use of performance opportunities to ensure social integration within the student cohort;
- ensuring flexibility is built into the expectations of students attending and participating in performance.

The 'Music and Social Class: Implications of Widening Participation in Higher Education for Student Experience of Teaching and Learning in Music' project by the University of Sheffield considered the factors that might explain why music struggles to recruit from certain groups of students such as:

- the need for specialist (and usually privately funded) instrumental tuition;
- cultural attitudes towards music and the perception of HE music as concerned with high rather than popular culture.

The project highlighted a number of strategies that would benefit all students:

- reviewing the breadth of undergraduate curriculum to

- enable a balanced coverage of genres particularly in year one;
- reviewing assessment patterns to respond to student employment and other commitments (Dibben, 2004).

Enhancing employability using work placements and internships

The creative industries are an extremely competitive field where potential employees have high levels of educational qualification and professional proficiency (PALATINE, 2003).

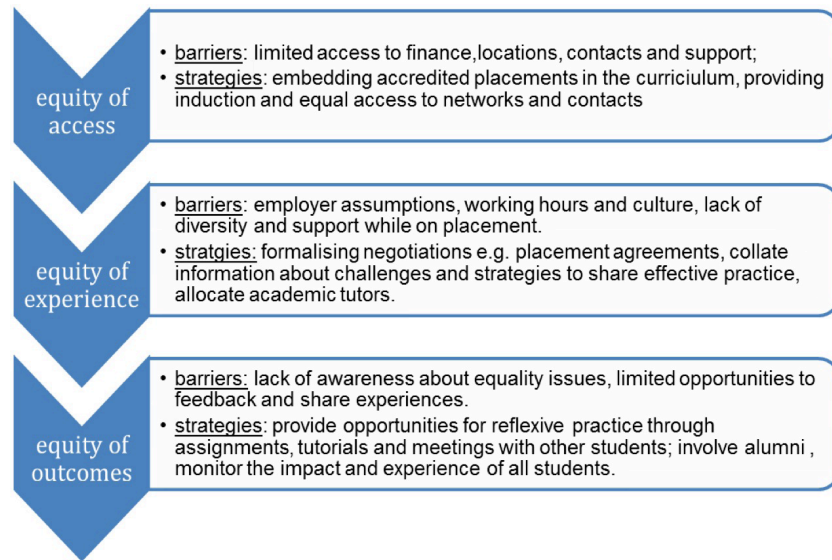
There is a strong tradition of [work placements and internships](#) as an entry route to employment in the creative industries. Work placements play an important role in enabling students to gain the skills, knowledge and industry contacts employers expect. However, recent research conducted for Equality Challenge Unit (Allen *et al.*, 2010) found that a lack of parity exists for many students in accessing, experiencing and capitalising on work placements in the creative industries. They suggest that:

It is important to tackle assumptions and expectations that place the onus on students to be active, autonomous and self-driven in finding and organising their placements, in order to support all students in undertaking inclusive and effective work placements. (Allen et al., 2010: 70)

See also Built Environment, Law, and Social Policy and Social Work subject guides for further examples and discussion of work placements and internships.

There is a tendency to focus on individual motivation and drive as the explanation for success rather than acknowledging the role that social, economic and cultural resources play. Allen *et al.* explain that students with existing social networks and contacts within the creative industries were advantaged in situations where students were expected to identify and secure their own placements. Students' financial situation may have a significant impact on the work placements they are able to consider, for example whether the placement is paid or unpaid. The extent to which a student was able to be mobile – whether for financial reasons or other commitments – also constrains or opens up the range of placement opportunities.

Allen *et al.*'s (2010) report and accompanying toolkits for staff and students provide further guidance on strategies that can be adopted to benefit all students. The following diagram summarises the barriers students may face at different stages of a placement and offers strategies for addressing them.



Work placement barriers and solutions (Source: adapted from Equality Challenge Unit, 2010b.)

Entrepreneurship allows for knowledge to be developed through practice and encourages students to apply their skills and understanding to real-world problems and challenges. It offers an opportunity to bring different kinds of meaning into their learning, connecting students' values and aspirations with the societies, cultures and economies within which they have to operate.

(Evans, 2010: 37)

Careers in the creative industries are increasingly characterised by 'multi-activity' working where, for example, graduates may combine performing with teaching. In addition there is a decline in secure long-term career options with the result that many graduates will work part-time or be self-employed. Moreover, the skills and attributes associated with **entrepreneurship** are highly valued in the sector.

Making Theatre Work::Entrepreneurship and Professional Practice in Theatre Higher Education (Evans, 2010) collates innovative practice and case studies from across the theatre sector as part of a wider project hosted at Coventry University. Evans contends that while the performing arts offer fertile ground for entrepreneurship, few students expressing a desire to set up their own companies after graduation do so. Programmes in Dance, Drama and Music often provide opportunities and reward for students to undertake creative risk-taking. Evans suggests this should be augmented by opportunities to develop and apply the business and professional skills that would "enable them to continue with, manage and benefit from such creative risk-taking outside the academy" (2010: 4). The most popular models for integrating entrepreneurship across the theatre curriculum involved embedding entrepreneurship across the curriculum, providing mandatory modules and by supporting extra-curricular activities.

Strategies that prepared students for work in the theatre that could be adapted to other areas of Dance, Drama and Music include:

- student work that is ‘productive’ such as raising income or meeting audience expectations;
- projects that model professional practice, for example organising short tours or working with external clients;
- taking ‘creative risks’ in a supportive and developmental environment;
- alumni to act as advocates and champions and to provide access to networks.

The ‘*Making Theatre Work*’ (Evans, 2010) project aims to create a network of educators, practitioners and graduate entrepreneurs.

Addressing issues of well-being in the performing arts

Performance and creative work can be intense, intimate and emotionally challenging. It can create anxieties for students and they can be affected by the unusual and long working hours necessary in rehearsal and practice. Allowing students some flexibility about when they will rehearse can be important for certain students such as those with health conditions that impact on energy levels to pace themselves, or students with caring responsibilities to organise when they rehearse, or Muslim students needing to pray at specific times. This may influence design decisions regarding groups or involve students in developing skills of negotiation and compromise to work in an inclusive manner. Clear information about the course’s time and physical demands need to be provided to potential applicants to allow them to make an informed decision about which programmes to apply for.

Students and staff may draw on their own experiences in their work when sensitive and challenging topics are often included in the curriculum. Working inclusively to promote well-being involves considering factors that may create or exacerbate stress and anxiety for students and staff.

PALATINE and Mental Health in Higher Education (MHHE) devised an event model to support emerging, tentative and potentially sensitive discussions. The Art of Wellbeing is structured around a number of short provocations followed by open space discussions. The presentations seek to be short, focused and are often personal and by design provocative. They are strictly time limited and more open discussion is held over to later in the event. (PALATINE, undated)

A significant issue for dance, drama and music is to establish the validity of a range of processes and products to be assessed, along with suitable methods for assessing those processes and products. Students will differ in which forms of

assessment they find most challenging or anxiety provoking. Embedding a variety of assessment methods alongside engaging students, employers and other stakeholders in these discussions will help ensure alternatives meet the entitlements of different students. It will also enable them to acquire academic credit for skills relevant to career paths they are more likely to choose in the future.