

## HISTORY, CLASSICS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

### 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](http://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 history, classics and archaeology. 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**

### Meeting students' expectations

Students studying subjects like History, Classics and Archaeology include those who have studied the subject before and may have expectations that studying the subject in higher education will be similar to previous study as well as students who have no experience. An inclusive approach to design seeks to anticipate students' previous experience and build in teaching and learning activities that equip all students with the necessary skills to engage effectively with the module content and assessment. Anticipating and meeting students' expectations begins with pre-course information, advice and guidance, and a module/programme design that supports transition. Beals found that the challenges experienced by international students during their first year of HE study had considerable commonality with home History students (Beals, 2010). The challenges most commonly mentioned by first-year History students were:

- “the unexpectedly steep rise of difficulty;
- level of background reading required;
- cost of tuition compared to the number of contact hours;
- misleading module titles and descriptions;
- modules that were poorly organised” (Beals, 2010: 15).

Students expected the level of independent study required but tended to interpret this as “researching by yourself, trying to find it out without assistance” (Beals, 2010: 21). Designing opportunities for History students to audit and then develop skills such as note-taking and using libraries effectively would enhance the experience of all students studying the past. Embedding opportunities to discuss and clarify History-specific conventions, to understand and manage the assumptions and expectations of all students around contact and assessment would help to manage expectations and allow students to take greater responsibility for their learning in a way that makes appropriate use of academic input.

## Increasing the range of assessment tasks

QAA (2007c) advocates two main reasons why History should use a range of assessment tasks: firstly to enable students' full range of abilities to be assessed; and secondly, to give students with different types of pre-entry experience the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. A survey mapping assessment in History drew on information from 250 undergraduate modules from universities across the UK to report that over 60% of assessments involved an essay (43%) or exam (19%), while the assessment of oral skills comprised 14% of the total (Stowell and Woolf, 2004).

An inclusive approach to curriculum design would provide for a greater variety of assessment tasks across modules within programmes in History, Classics and Archaeology. Writing essays is a typical form of assessment in History. Preparing to write an essay is enhanced by using a range of assessment tasks, which also serve to:

- “generate ‘deeper learning’, discourage routine thinking and encourage students to employ a wider range of practical and theoretical skills;
- allow a wider layer of students more fully to achieve their potential;

deter plagiarism and avoid the dangers he describes following his Google search on essay topics set for his course – a fascinating and cautionary tale providing evidence for setting alternative forms of assessment”.

(Bulaitis, 2009: 4–7)

Furthermore, the “overall transferable skill-set of students is enhanced, as is their eventual employability” (2009: 6).

Adopting new forms of assessment in History, Classics and Archaeology can also raise significant anxiety for students even when they are well supported. Building students' confidence and enabling them to test out alternative forms of assessment at a formative stage so that students can benefit from feedback may mediate some of this anxiety. It may also reduce time spent by the tutor on feedback.

The module ‘Fascist movements and regimes in the twentieth century’ is an example of introducing skills less frequently tested by traditional methods of assessment. For two out of three compulsory pieces of coursework for a module students were able to choose from a list of 15 tasks (the final assignment was a reflection on the experience of being a seminar leader). The tasks required:

- writing for different types of audience such as writing a report for a TV producer and producing articles for specified publications (such as *History Today*);
- reflecting on the process of research and explaining the decisions made;
- imaginative pieces of writing, for example researching and imagining a specific event and relating them “to a plot for the science-fiction TV series, *Dr Who*” (2009: 8);
- applying history to contemporary debates using plausible scenarios;
- focused research that required students to evaluate the arguments of specific historians.

However, as Bulaitis notes, although many students enjoyed the variety and novelty of these alternative pieces of writing and produced some very good work, others were clearly out of their comfort zone. Some students struggled to know what was expected of them, despite detailed guidance, and expressed a preference for what they perceived as more straightforward essays (Bulaitis, 2009).

#### Embedding skill development to address subject benchmarking and employers' needs

Group work is common in History, Classics and Archaeology and can offer opportunities for inclusive practice. For instance, it can allow students to demonstrate skills required by the subject benchmarking statements and favoured by employers, for example “the ability to work with others and to respect the reasoned views of others” (QAA, 2007c).

Innovative and imaginative group work activities, such as Green's ‘Group constructed wikis’ can excite, engage and enthuse students and provide useful material for widening access and other events that seek to engage those outside higher education. This research-led, third-year Classics module at the University of Leeds introduced the group production of a wiki where a central aim was to get students to ‘think like an ancients’. The wikis offer a number of benefits:

- an opportunity for group learning and ‘democratic participation’;
- easy construction and accessible to use;
- flexibility, especially in the location and timing of contributions.

The wiki's 40% weighting was felt significant enough to incentivise more strategic or independent learners to engage with the group activity. Student feedback was positive and the convenor felt the collaborative task “produced some excellent and original perspectives on the ancient world” (Green, 2009).

Technology can offer more inclusive ways of working as part of a group, particularly when students can contribute from a place and at a time of their choosing. It can thus avoid excluding students with restricted access (for example, students studying at a distance or with external commitments). Group work can offer opportunities for students with diverse experiences of working as part of a group (such as international students with diverse cultural experience and expectations) to share this experience and learn from other students.

### Designing a relevant curriculum using community engagement

The University of Wolverhampton's 'Wolverhampton Black and Ethnic Minority Experience' (BEME) project was designed to "create a community-based oral History video archive and to promote the use of this unique source of community-based knowledge within a range of educational settings" (Balam, 2001: 1).

The main drivers was to contribute to a more diverse and inclusive curriculum by collating a "unique source of community based knowledge" and promoting its use in modules and programmes across the humanities, health and social sciences.

History students participated in the project by working with community members to produce oral histories, which were then lodged in the project archive. Outcomes included:

- increased number of students studying BEME areas;
- good contacts developed with outside bodies and groups;
- raising awareness of the institution's contribution to widening participation and community involvement.

Similar case studies are described in the English subject guide.

### Enhancing fieldwork

Considerable work has been undertaken to improve the accessibility of Archaeology fieldwork, especially for disabled students. The Archaeological Skills Self-Evaluation Toolkit (ASSET) is aimed at students with little or no prior experience of fieldwork. The purpose of this open-access resource is to enable all students to establish their potential to successfully complete archaeological fieldwork tasks. Consideration should be given to the purpose, structure and assessment of fieldwork to ensure it does not discriminate against students protected by equality legislation. There is a particular focus on transferrable skills and on the development of skills over time (Philips *et al.*, 2007).

There are further examples of fieldwork in the Bioscience, and Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences subject guides.