Inclusive Teaching

What is inclusive teaching?

Inclusive teaching focuses on designing learning experiences so that all students are able to succeed. The goal of inclusive teaching is to promote a safe and welcoming classroom and university community where individual differences are valued, embraced, and evident. Building an inclusive classroom community means implementing practices where all students, regardless of individual differences, have opportunities to be included in the classroom and participate in their learning experiences.

How can I implement inclusive teaching in my course?

Inclusive teaching starts with course design. Consider inclusive teaching principles when designing your syllabus, developing course content, choosing activities, establishing classroom protocols, and providing feedback.

Syllabus guidelines

Please visit the VCU Syllabus Statement site to find condensed and full versions of VCU's mandatory syllabus information.

As you develop your syllabus, consider these inclusive principles:

- Prioritize learning as the primary goal.
- Frame your course structure as an invitation to learn.
- Explicitly articulate expectations and norms, rather than assuming all students know them.

Course content and activities

- Incorporate content that represents multiple perspectives, identities, and experiences.
- Create assignments and activities that engage multiple ways of learning.
- Provide plentiful opportunities for group work, peer mentoring, problem-based learning, and cooperative learning.
- Allow students flexibility in demonstrating achievement of course objectives.
- Follow principles of Universal Design, such as equitable and flexible use, when designing course materials and activities.

Inclusive Teaching Strategies

- Include diverse content, materials, and ideas.

- Maximize the varied backgrounds and personal experiences of students.

- Create a respectful and productive learning environment.

- Read blogs to find more ideas on inclusive teaching.

- Learn about principles of Universal Design.

- Complete the University of Wolverhampton's (UK) online module on Learning to Teach Inclusively.

In the classroom

- Learn about your students' diverse backgrounds and experiences and incorporate their unique perspectives.
- Establish ground rules for discussion.
- Give immediate feedback, clarify instructions, ask for questions, repeat or give additional examples.
- Relate new topics to already learned topics or real-life examples.
- Consider your role as that of guide and facilitator rather than expert.
- Start with concrete examples, then expand to abstract concepts.
- Plan ahead and prepare for managing "hot moments" while maintaining honest dialogue.

Reflection and feedback

- Provide plentiful opportunities for course evaluations by students.
- Give students the time to engage in self-reflection through written assignments or discussions.
- Provide feedback to students that focuses on a growth mindset and avoids praising intrinsic abilities.
- Increase transparency in courses by using rubrics for grading (this provides students with clear details about assignment expectations).

Please feel free to contact the VCU Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence or your department for help and feedback as you design and implement active learning approaches.