

A Guide to Embedding Decolonising and Inclusive Approaches in your Curriculum Design, Learning and Teaching Practices

Many universities are engaging in work to decolonise the curriculum, however, only a handful have made an institutional commitment to decolonising and building an anti-racist university like DMU. During our previous work on the Freedom to Achieve project we found that a focus on the curriculum alone is not enough to address the awarding gap. We are therefore taking the bold step of engaging in broader processes of decolonisation across the whole institution. This demonstrates our commitment to directly tackling racial disadvantage and discrimination within the sector: (for further information see [Decolonising DMU](#)).

Education 2030 presents an opportunity for you to not only review the curricula you deliver but also the pedagogies (approaches) you adopt to teach, assess, and support students. This resource offers some guidance on how you may want to review and revise your curriculum and teaching practice to embed decolonising and inclusive approaches throughout.

The guidance is divided into three stages;

1. How you can design and develop a more inclusive and decolonised programme/module;
2. Decolonising the curriculum and;
3. Effective pedagogical approaches to embed decolonising and inclusive practices into classrooms.

One way to approach decolonising your practice is by reflecting on a model of decolonisation. The appendix includes one possible method. The guidance below should help you implement the model.

Stage 1: Designing Modules/Programmes

This section offers prompts on how you may approach the design of your programme/module before it goes to validation/periodic review.

- Who are you teaching? What is your student demographic/profile? Consider student diversity and representation when designing your programmes/modules.
- Is there an awarding gap on your programme? If so, are there programmes where gaps are smaller and from which best practice can be learned and applied?
- Who will be involved in designing the course? Is it a diverse range of stakeholders involved in the course design? What can you do to help bring stakeholders together?
- Can students be involved as co-creators of the programme/module with you?
- Have the learning outcomes been designed with the diverse student profile on the programme/module in mind?
- Develop at least one anti-racist/decolonisation related learning outcome and map assessment tasks to this.

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/teaching-and-learning/inclusivity/inclusive-assessment>

- Is there a diverse range of assessment methods (formative & summative) on the programme/module that are authentic and focussed on building skills iteratively?
- Is skills development embedded throughout your curriculum design and assessment? This is a form of good practice.
- Is there an opportunity to co-create assessment methods/topics with the students?
- Are the teaching and learning activities varied enough to all allow students to participate and engage in learning?
- Can you create opportunities for students to discuss their extra-curricular experiences as part of their learning activities/assessment?

Stage 2: Developing Curricula

Once validation has been approved at the next stage you may want to consider in more detail the curricula you will offer and how this can be reviewed and revised in light of the decolonising agenda. It is encouraged you try to do this with your students. The following has been taken from the SOAS toolkit <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/decolonisingsoas/learning-teaching/>

- Do your students see themselves reflected in your learning and teaching materials?
- Do your teaching materials expose students to a range of culturally challenging views?
- Is your curriculum written using inclusive language and is it accessible?
- To what extent does the content of my/our curriculum/programme presume a particular profile/mindset of student and their orientation to the world?
- To what extent does my/our curriculum/programme allow students to understand the origins and purposes of this field of study in its historical context?
- Could such an understanding, if absent, be introduced into core or introductory material? Does the curriculum/programme allow for/encourage a critical approach to received/authoritative texts as a central feature of study, and not just something supplementary?
- What is the demographic profile of authors on the curriculum/programme?
 - What is the effect of this on the diversity of views with which the students are presented?
 - What is the effect of this on student engagement?
 - Is the profile of authors acknowledged and examined as part of the learning aims and outcomes of the curriculum/programme?
 - Consider the profile in terms of, for example, race/ethnicity, gender, whether authors are from the “Global South”.
 - For help to decolonise your reading list please view [decol pgcap kt 2 \(panopto.eu\)](#)
- Do programmes/modules enable the use of non-English sources in the curriculum?
- Have you spoken to the librarian about accessing non-English sources or sources from the “Global South”?

Stage 3: Delivering Inclusive Teaching

This section focuses on how you can ensure your teaching approaches (pedagogies) are inclusive and provide equal opportunities for all students to learn effectively.

- Does the physical environment allow for effective student engagement?
- Do you know how to pronounce student names? [Mynameis](#) provides some important resources and videos on the lived experiences of individuals with non-western names and why mispronouncing a name can undermine a student’s identity

- If students work in groups how can groups be organised to maximise inclusive and effective engagement? Remember mixing groups is not always desirable.
- Are learning materials provided in an accessible format and in a timely way?
- Consider the guidance on UDL and DMU Replay.
- Do tutors have/make the opportunity to assess where the students are upon arrival/at start of the module?
- Perhaps especially for first year students, is support given on how to read and write for academic purposes, how to organise time, how to access resources and assistance?
- Are these learning skills timetabled into regular teaching or added as an optional extra?
- Are students given opportunities in their learning to widen their circles of contact or experience?
- Does feedback on assessment correspond to rubric and does it show students how to progress?

Other possible adaptations:

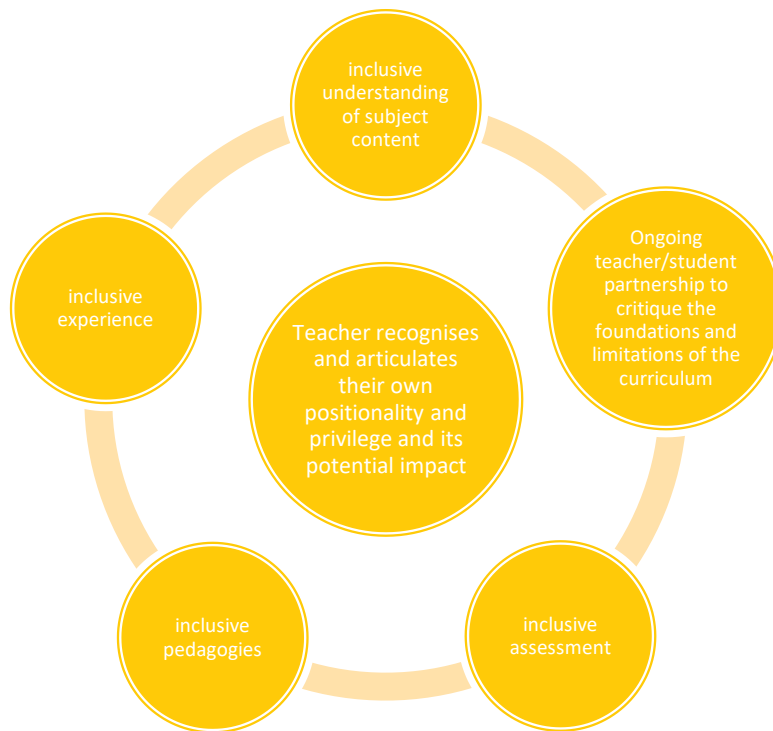
- Use a diverse range of examples, voices and resources in your teaching content, for example in reading lists and lecture content which allows students to make connections to their existing knowledges and experiences
- Use clear, precise and accessible language in the classroom, in study materials and lecture recordings. Be mindful of academic jargon, colloquial language and cultural context of metaphors (Singh, 2020). Consider your pace as well as your language.
- Have a knowledge of, and respect cultural differences: don't always expect students to interact straight away, it is important to build a community of trust.
- Signpost students [Library Learning Services](#) for academic skills support. International students are also provided with English language support from the [Centre for English Language Learning](#).
- Manage the classroom in order to generate participation and confidence amongst all students; proactively disrupt patterns of dominance emergent in classroom discussions by restructuring the conversation or workflow.
- Spend time with students individually wherever possible.
- Make time in core teaching to go through assessment expectations explicitly.
- Be aware and reflect on your own biases when marking. This is important to consider when marking anonymously and also when assessments cannot be marked anonymously.
- When timetabling assessments have you considered major religious and cultural festivals that may impact upon engagement and accessibility?

References/Additional Sources

- Adapted from SOAS Learning and Teaching Toolkit: <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/decolonisingsoas/learning-teaching/>
- For further information and assistance in relation to the above questions/issues, please visit <https://decolonisingdmu.our.dmu.ac.uk/>.
- [The Anti-Racist Curriculum Project Guide | Advance HE \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](#)
- [Tackling Racial Inequalities in Assessment in HE May 21.pdf](#)
- https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/bame_awarding_gap_toolkit_2020.pdf
- [Resilient Learning Communities - Decolonising the Curriculum in the Time of Pandemic \(enhancementthemes.ac.uk\)](#)
- <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/news/decolonising-the-curriculum-toolkit-launched-by-students-and-colleagues>

Appendix 1: A Model for Decolonisation

By Marita LeVaul-Grimwood and Hardeep Basra



Teacher recognises and articulates their own positionality and privilege and its potential impact

In order to begin the decolonisation process as an academic you need to understand your own positionality and privilege. Examining terms such as intersectionality, privilege and positionality will allow you to understand the structural disadvantages which exist in society and thus it will allow you to understand why inequality in education is a reality. We know being white affords certain privileges and gives certain social advantages not afforded to other groups. Understanding which assumptions and beliefs you hold that are a result of this privilege can be personally challenging. However, committing to that reflective process is also what enables you to support all your students equally and effectively.

Ongoing teacher/student partnership to critique the foundations and limitations of the curriculum

One step to decolonising your academic practice is to work in partnership with your students to critique the foundations and limitations of the curriculum. It is important to work with your students to understand how you can change the curriculum as well as your teaching practice, which can help you decolonise what you teach as well as how you teach. This means allowing yourself to be open to students' knowledge and experiences, and to accept the limits of your own.

Inclusive understanding of subject content

It is necessary to ensure the curriculum is representative of your student cohorts. Even if your student body is not diverse, having a wider range of views and experiences in the curriculum and classroom can lead to a more critical understanding of a subject. You need to make sure you create authentic learning opportunities, which develop knowledge and skills they can apply to future employability. You may widen the material you include and revise your curriculum. In order to do this, you need to understand the historical construction of knowledge in your subject discipline.

Inclusive assessment

We know assessment has to be designed to meet learning outcomes but assessment has to also be designed in such a way it is accessible to all students to give them equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement. Assessment should be authentic and offer students contextualised meaningful tasks that replicate real world challenges through effective programme design. Inclusive assessment should have clear assessment briefs and marking criteria. Students should be given opportunities to familiarise and understand assessment literacy. Formative tasks should help scaffold knowledge and skills to be assessed through summative assessment.

Inclusive pedagogies

To deliver a successfully decolonised curriculum you also need to decolonise *how* you teach, in other words the pedagogies you use to teach. Universal Design for Learning is the preferred pedagogy at DMU. Please ensure you have completed the associated UDL training. You need to look at how you support student learning in and outside of the classroom. “Inclusive learning and teaching recognise all student’s entitlement to a learning experience that respects diversity, enables participation, removes barriers and anticipates and considers a variety of learning needs and preferences.”

Inclusive experience

This particular aspect focuses on fostering a sense of belonging for students inside and outside of the classroom. A truly inclusive experience does not work on the deficit model, whereby students are seen as individually responsible for differences in attainment. Instead, we have a responsibility to ensure we create an environment where all students feel a sense of belonging and equality of opportunity to learn. Creating this equality of opportunity means recognising that different students will respond to different kinds of support. Delivering an inclusive experience is a collective responsibility by the institution as a whole and involves all aspects of the student journey.