UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Inclusive Higher Education Framework

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Foreword

Inclusivity is essential in modern Higher Education. All students should have an equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background, demographic characteristics or current circumstances. However, lack of understanding of the breadth and depth of inclusivity 'on the ground' often lags behind the aspiration to be truly inclusive. Institutions often struggle to define inclusive education, and lack guidance and resources to effectively embed inclusive practice throughout a university.

I am delighted to introduce this Inclusive Higher Education Framework to support colleagues in becoming genuinely inclusive for all. The framework originated here at the University of Hull to help us realise our ambition of a truly inclusive education for all, as established in our education strategy. The framework transformed our understanding of inclusive practice, and the accompanying resources have helped staff across the institution reflect on and change their practice.

This new version of the framework is the result of a cross-institutional project led by the University of Hull to create a framework appropriate for use across the sector. 7 higher education institutions have contributed, resulting in a framework I think will be a powerful tool for helping individuals, institutions and the sector to understand what inclusive education means in practice.

The framework and toolkit provide practical suggestions for academics, professional services and university leaders to become more inclusive. It aims to empower staff to actively embrace inclusive practice. I am delighted that this rigorous framework has been developed to spread our vision of a truly inclusive university and I am excited about its potential for driving sector leading change.

Professor Becky Huxley-Binns, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), University of Hull

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QAA Foreword

We at the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education take pride in working with our Members, to come together and collaborate on issues that matter to staff and students alike. Collaborative enhancement projects offer the unique opportunity to bring together expertise and experience from the sector on themes that we know will make a difference and enhance student experience.

The Inclusive Higher Education Framework and Toolkit project is collaboration between University of Hull, University of Derby, Keele University, Staffordshire University and York St John University. Inclusive practice is at the heart of UK's higher education, and this project aims to empower staff and students to work together in building an inclusive curriculum in its truest sense.

With a plethora of interactive resources, toolkit, and a self-directed online learning resource bank, we hope that colleagues across the sector will find the case studies and practical suggestions helpful and easy to implement in their own institutions. We believe the project will inspire staff and students towards creating a more inclusive and enjoyable higher education experience.

Amrita Narang, Quality Enhancement and Standards Specialist, Quality Assurance Agency

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What is Inclusive Education?

All students benefit from living in a diverse and inclusive society, and from receiving a diversified, decolonised and inclusive education. Students are also the leaders of tomorrow, so the values we demonstrate and embed through our approach to education will be those that they will take into society.

Being inclusive means that all students are given an equal opportunity to succeed, independent of their background or demographic characteristics. Higher education providers have an ethical, moral, and legal obligation to ensure that this happens in practice. The framework has been developed collaboratively to help staff and students understand the breadth and depth of what inclusive practice means within Higher Education, with an intention of creating inclusive cultures across the wider sector.

Our framework adopts a broad definition of inclusivity. It moves away from a culture of reasonable adjustments for individual students, but instead considers the needs of a diverse student body. Inclusive institutions consider the needs of commuter students, working class students, international students, students with caring responsibilities, and other aspects of student life that might impact on student success. Throughout the framework we have included specific examples of inclusive practice and how these can have a positive impact on all students.

Being inclusive does not mean compromising on academic standards or quality processes. Inclusion does not require grade inflation or 'dumbing down' – inclusive programmes can and should be academically rigorous and give authentic training in knowledge, skills and behaviours appropriate to the discipline. Adopting an inclusive approach recognises that some students are systematically disadvantaged by exclusive practices, and proactively ensures that all students have equal opportunities to succeed.

The framework demonstrates that there is no 'single solution' to inclusivity, and that it is everyone's responsibility. It requires students, academics, professional services staff and university leaders to work together to build the most inclusive environment possible. Being inclusive is also a journey – our understanding of inclusive practice and the needs of students is constantly evolving, and we will sometimes get it wrong. We hope that the framework helps all members of any higher education community to think more broadly about inclusive practice and to take action.

Key principles

The framework details **five areas of activity** which contribute to inclusive practice across an institution:

- **Structures and Processes**
- **Curriculum Design and Delivery**
- **Assessment and Feedback**
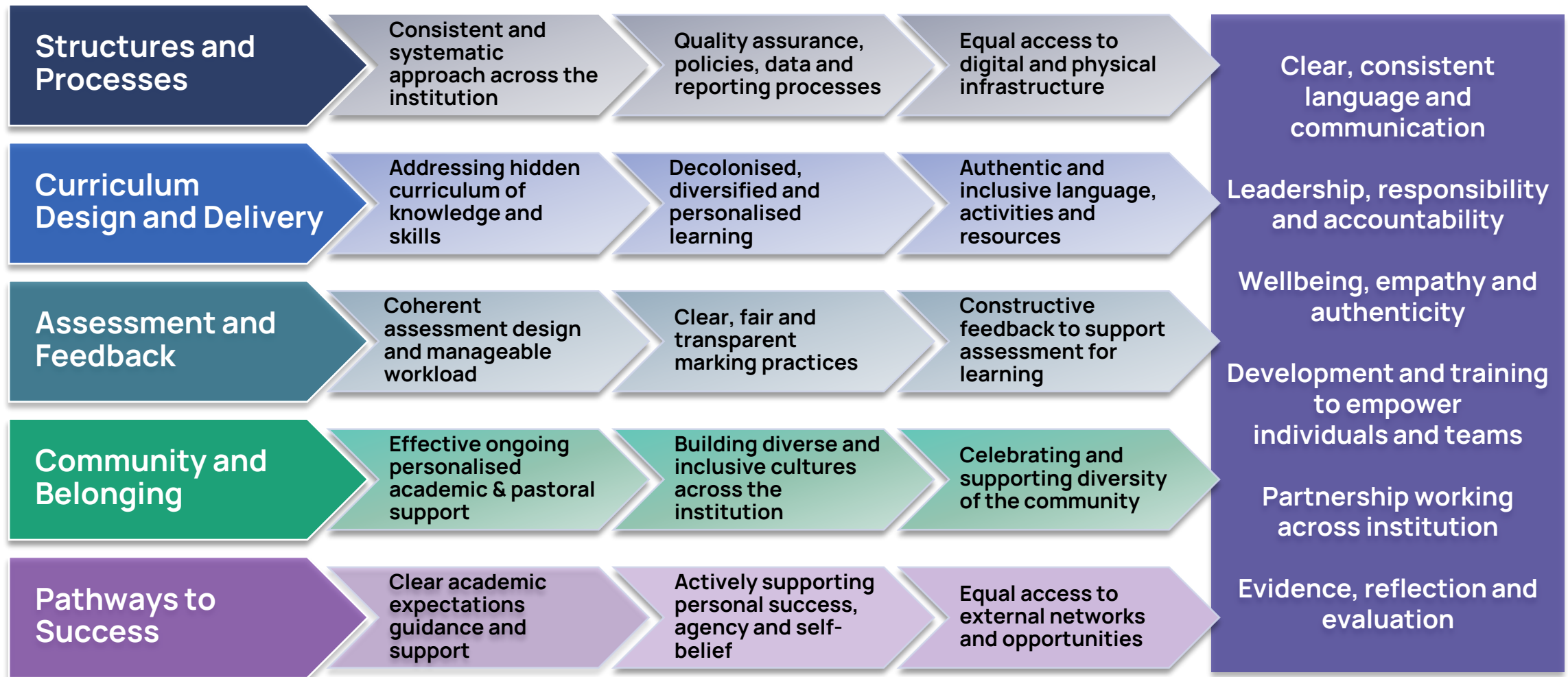- **Community and Belonging**
- **Pathways to Success**

In addition to the five areas of activity, the framework is underpinned by **six key principles** or ways of working:

- **Clear, consistent language and communication**
- **Leadership, responsibility and accountability**
- **Wellbeing, empathy and authenticity**
- **Development and training to empower individuals and teams**
- **Partnership working across an institution**
- **Evidence, reflection and evaluation**

To implement these at institutional level requires all members of the university community to examine their own practices, and to take positive action where inequality is identified. This can and should be discipline or context relevant; the approach to inclusive education may look very different in healthcare compared to the arts, sciences or humanities.

The Inclusive Higher Education Framework

Structures and Processes	Consistent and systematic approach across the institution	Quality assurance, policies, data and reporting processes	Equal access to digital and physical infrastructure	Clear, consistent language and communication
Curriculum Design and Delivery	Addressing hidden curriculum of knowledge and skills	Decolonised, diversified and personalised learning	Authentic and inclusive language, activities and resources	Leadership, responsibility and accountability
Assessment and Feedback	Coherent assessment design and manageable workload	Clear, fair and transparent marking practices	Constructive feedback to support assessment for learning	Wellbeing, empathy and authenticity
				Development and training to empower individuals and teams
Community and Belonging	Effective ongoing personalised academic & pastoral support	Building diverse and inclusive cultures across the institution	Celebrating and supporting diversity of the community	Partnership working across institution
Pathways to Success	Clear academic expectations guidance and support	Actively supporting personal success, agency and self-belief	Equal access to external networks and opportunities	Evidence, reflection and evaluation

Structures and Processes: My Checklist

Within my personal teaching practice I ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
I work in partnership with academic colleagues, professional services teams and students to achieve inclusivity.				
I highlight inclusivity issues to programme leaders to report on through routine quality processes (e.g. via annual quality monitoring)				
I work with others to establish consistent terminology and ways of working across the programme, minimising 'mixed messages' where possible				
I understand the demographics of students on my programme in terms of widening participation (e.g. Ethnicity, Mature students, Disability, POLAR Quintiles of HE participation)				
I understand policies the university has in place relating to inclusive practice, and how to implement these in my area				
I understand what the university targets are that relate to inclusivity (e.g. awarding gaps, retention), and have identified actions I can take to help achieve these				
I know how to access and interpret data relating to university targets around inclusivity (e.g. awarding gaps, retention) and take data-informed actions where appropriate				
I know how to locate information about reasonable adjustments for students I am responsible for, and know how to implement reasonable adjustments.				
I use student-facing materials that meet digital accessibility standards (e.g. closed captions, alt-text for images)				
I review my teaching spaces and facilities to ensure accessibility for those physical disabilities (e.g. step-free access, hearing loops installed, microphones etc) and flag issues where identified (e.g. with estates).				

Structures and Processes: Programme Team Checklist

Our programme team ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
We work in partnership with professional services teams and students to achieve inclusivity				
We report on inclusivity issues and metrics through routine quality processes (e.g., via annual quality monitoring)				
We work together to establish consistent terminology and ways of working across the programme, minimising 'mixed messages' where possible				
We understand the demographics of students on our programme in terms of widening participation (e.g. Ethnicity, Mature students, Disability, POLAR Quintiles of HE participation)				
We understand policies the university has in place relating to inclusive practice, and how to implement these in our programme				
We understand what the university targets are that relate to inclusivity (e.g. awarding gaps, retention), and have identified actions we can take to help achieve these				
Our programme team know how to access and interpret data relating to university targets around inclusivity (e.g. awarding gaps, retention) and take data-informed actions				
We all know how to locate information about reasonable adjustments for students we are responsible for, and know how to implement reasonable adjustments.				
We all use student-facing materials that meet digital accessibility standards (e.g. closed captions, alt-text for images)				
We review our teaching spaces and facilities to ensure accessibility for those physical disabilities (e.g. step-free access, hearing loops installed, microphones etc) and flag issues where identified (e.g. with estates)				

Structures and Processes: Senior Leader Checklist

Our institution systems and processes ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
Academics, Professional services teams and students are supported and encouraged to work in partnership to achieve inclusivity.				
Routine quality assurance processes report on inclusivity issues and metrics, and systemic issues identified are addressed as appropriate				
Staff are supported to use consistent terminology and ways of working, minimising 'mixed messages' where possible				
Staff can easily access and understand information on demographics of students in terms of widening participation (e.g. Ethnicity, Mature students, Disability, POLAR Quintiles of HE participation)				
Policies in place relating to inclusive practice are clearly communicated to staff, who are supported to implement these in practice				
Targets are established that relate to inclusivity (e.g. awarding gaps, retention), which are clearly communicated to staff who are supported to implement these in practice				
Data are provided to staff relating to university targets around inclusivity (e.g. awarding gaps, retention). Staff are supported to interpret the data and take data-informed actions				
Information about reasonable adjustments for students is provided to staff in a timely and transparent manner, and staff are supported to implement reasonable adjustments				
All student-facing materials meet digital accessibility standards (e.g. closed captions, alt-text for images)				
All teaching spaces and facilities are accessible to those with physical disabilities (e.g. step-free access, hearing loops installed, microphones etc)				

Curriculum Design and Delivery

The curriculum is at the heart of the student experience and is the most obvious place to demonstrate inclusivity to students. Students who feel that their curriculum is relevant to them are more likely to be motivated and to succeed.

The curriculum includes what we teach and how we teach it, including the timetable and infrastructure required. It also includes the Hidden Curriculum, which is the 'untaught' component of the educational experience, including the implicit knowledge, norms and behaviours that are required for success at university (Margolis, 2002; Hubbard et al. 2020).

An inclusive curriculum will:

- **Be transparent about the assumed knowledge and skills required for success**. Inclusive programmes consider students with different entry qualifications (e.g. A level vs BTEC), and proactively ensure that all students start the programme with the skills and knowledge required. This could be done by an intensive start to the programme designed to 'level the playing field' before new content is introduced.

- **Adopt a diverse and decolonised range of perspectives**. Decolonisation requires that historical power imbalances are confronted within the curriculum, including the dominance of White European mindsets on the discipline. This is an issue for all disciplines, not just the arts and humanities. For example, a decolonised economics programme would examine the relationship between the historical slave trade and modern global economic disparities. Inclusive healthcare programmes would consider health inequalities and diagnosis in Black and Asian populations, as well as ableist attitudes within health care.

- **Allow students to personalise their curriculum where possible**. Inclusive programmes will give students flexibility and autonomy in how they demonstrate their learning. For example, students could be given a choice of essay topic within a module so that they can focus on something they are particularly interested in, which will increase motivation.

- **Proactively manage and remove barriers to engagement**. Many students build their studies around other aspects of their lives, including caring responsibilities, commuting to campus and paid employment (Leese, 2010). Students with disabilities or long-term health conditions may find it more difficult to come to campus or engage with particular resources. Inclusive teaching activities are designed so that students can engage regardless of their personal circumstances.

- **Give students authentic opportunities to practise their knowledge and skills**. Learning should be active where possible, giving students regular opportunities to discuss, use and test their knowledge and skills. Pedagogy should be authentic and active, using strategies such as problem-based learning, collaborative project-based activities and reflection on learning. Active pedagogies have been shown to reduce educational inequalities such as awarding gaps.

- **Ensure activities are inclusive. All students should feel included and respected in the activities they undertake**. For example, an inclusive healthcare programme would actively consider language used when engaging with LGBTQIA+ or ethnic minority patients, or with non-English speaking patients. In other disciplines, it would be inappropriate to plan field work in countries where homosexuality is illegal.

Curriculum Design and Delivery: My Checklist

Within my personal teaching practice I ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
I embed inclusive education practices within my teaching and assessment planning, design and delivery, with support from the programme team				
I work with students as active partners in curriculum design and delivery				
I actively consider the content that students are likely to have covered before university (e.g. A level, GCSE, BTEC syllabus) and design interventions to address disparities and gaps in knowledge				
I include opportunities for students to test relevant pre-existing knowledge before introducing new content, and support students to address any gaps identified				
My teaching content has been reviewed to ensure it goes beyond white European perspectives i.e. has been decolonised				
My teaching highlights diverse figures within the discipline to students (e.g. LGBTQIA+/Black/Asian/Disabled researchers, authors, or policy makers)				
My students can personalise their curriculum where appropriate, i.e. can focus on relevant topics of personal interest				
I work with students to review my teaching materials to pro-actively point out any language that is not clear and consistent				
My teaching resources are made available in appropriate accessible formats in advance of scheduled teaching sessions wherever possible				
My teaching adopts an active and authentic learning approach, not being overly reliant on didactic lecturing, and designed to be accessible to all students (considering e.g. disability, international students, those with limited financial resources)				

Curriculum Design and Delivery: Programme Team Checklist

Our programme team ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
Our curriculum planning, design and delivery actively embed inclusive education, and staff are supported to achieve these in practice				
Our students are active partners in curriculum design, development and delivery				
Our programme actively considers the content that students are likely to have covered before university (e.g. A level, GCSE, BTEC syllabus) and design interventions to address disparities and gaps in knowledge				
Our programme includes opportunities for students to test relevant pre-existing knowledge before introducing new content, and address any gaps identified				
Our teaching content has been reviewed to ensure it goes beyond white European perspectives i.e. has been decolonised				
Our curriculum highlights diverse figures within the discipline to students (e.g. LGBTQIA+/Black/Asian/Disabled researchers, authors, or policy makers)				
Our students can personalise their curriculum, i.e. can focus on relevant topics of personal interest				
We work with students to review our teaching materials to pro-actively point out any language that is not clear and consistent				
Our teaching resources are made available in appropriate accessible formats in advance of scheduled teaching sessions wherever possible.				
Our teaching adopts an active and authentic learning approach, not being overly reliant on didactic lecturing, and designed to be accessible to all students (considering e.g. disability, international students, those with limited financial resources)				

Curriculum Design and Delivery: Senior Leader

Our institution systems and processes ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
Curriculum planning and design processes embed inclusive education, and staff are supported to achieve these in practice				
Students are active partners in curriculum design, development and delivery				
Programmes actively consider the content that students are likely to have covered before university (e.g. A level, GCSE, BTEC syllabus) and staff are supported to design interventions to address disparities and gaps in knowledge				
Programmes include opportunities for students to test relevant pre-existing knowledge before introducing new content and staff are supported to address any gaps identified				
Curriculum design processes ensure content has been reviewed to go beyond white European perspectives i.e. has been decolonised, and staff are supported to implement this in their areas				
Curriculum design processes enable staff to highlight diverse figures within the discipline to students (e.g. LGBTQIA+/Black/Asian/Disabled researchers, authors, or policy makers)				
Curriculum design enables students to personalise their curriculum, i.e. can focus on relevant topics of personal interest				
Staff are supported to work in partnership with students to review teaching materials, and pro-actively point out any language that is not clear and consistent				
Staff make teaching resources available in appropriate accessible formats in advance of scheduled teaching sessions wherever possible.				
Staff are supported to adopt an active and authentic learning approach, not being overly reliant on didactic lecturing, and designed to be accessible to all students (considering e.g. disability, international students, those with limited financial resources)				

Assessment and Feedback

Assessment is a major driver of student learning but is also a source of considerable anxiety for many students. Poorly designed assessment strategies can act as a barrier to learning, and potentially reinforce educational inequalities. Inclusive assessment goes beyond the provision of reasonable adjustments for individual students with disabilities, towards a model where flexibility of assessment is available for all (Waterfield and West, 2006).

Inclusive pedagogy also requires effective use of feedback and feedforward. All students benefit from having a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their work and be able to identify how to improve their performance in future assignments. Inclusive assessment and feedback processes are also mindful of student anxieties and provide constructive support for students in demonstrating their learning (Winstone and Nash, 2016).

An Inclusive Assessment and Feedback approach will:

- **Have coherent programme level design.** All students benefit from seeing connections between assessments in different modules. Earlier years of the programme will prepare students effectively for their final assessments, ideally with no novel assessment types introduced in the final year.

- **Be mindful of assessment burden.** Inclusive programme teams will coordinate assessments so that students are not over-assessed. This prevents academic staff and students from facing unmanageable workloads. Consideration at programme level should prevent deadline clashes with other significant taught components, e.g. placements or field trips.

- **Consider student anxieties around assessment.** Most students will face some level of stress relating to assessments but this may be particularly acute for some. Programme teams should adopt a supportive culture around assessment, provide clear guidance, and offer opportunities for students to voice concerns. Effective use of formative assessment may also reduce student anxiety.

- **Design out the need for individual reasonable adjustments wherever possible.** There can often be flexibility in how students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. This is not necessarily incompatible with standards defined by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) or Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). That flexibility can be used to design out individual reasonable adjustments. For example, students needing to demonstrate effective communication could have a choice of format (e.g. podcast, infographic, blog), enabling students to identify the most appropriate medium for their individual capabilities and needs.

- **Give students authentic opportunities to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and self-awareness.** When assessments are embedded in 'real world' scenarios, students are more motivated by seeing the connections between their learning and the wider context and their future career.

- **Give students a diversity of assessment modes.** An inclusive assessment portfolio will include a balanced variety of formats relevant to the discipline, so all students have opportunities to play to their strengths.

- **Be marked using clear, fair and transparent criteria.** Inclusive marking criteria will not disproportionately penalise students for mistakes in written English or referencing, except where this is required by e.g., professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. Weighted rubrics that clearly specify requirements may be more objective and inclusive than holistic marking criteria.

- **Use feedback constructively to promote student learning**. Feedback that students receive can either build or undermine academic confidence and success. Students may find large amounts of feedback overwhelming and so benefit from targeted and focussed guidance. Feedback should be clearly communicated, constructive and timely. This may be offered in different formats, e.g. written, verbal or recorded. Opportunities to discuss feedback should be built into programme delivery.

Assessment and Feedback: My Checklist

Within my personal teaching practice I ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
I understand how my assessments relate to the programme level assessment design, and work with colleagues to minimise clashes of hand-in dates in order to achieve manageable assessment workloads				
I use a range of assessment formats, and enable student personalisation or choice of assessment format where appropriate				
I understand how my assessments build towards final year summative assessments throughout the programme, and explain to students the relationships between assessments at different levels				
My assessments are clearly explained to students through module documentation, written materials and activities in class, using transparent and consistent language to make requirements clear				
My assessments design out the need for individual alternatives wherever possible (e.g. students given the choice of audio/visual formats so students with hearing/visual impairments do not require individual alternative assessment)				
My mark schemes are clearly linked to learning outcomes or competencies to ensure marking is appropriate and consistent with assessment design				
My mark schemes do not over-penalise mistakes in written English or referencing conventions				
My feedback comments are constructive, and actively point out ways that students can improve their work for future assignments.				
I provide relevant, focussed and timely formative feedback to support student learning				
I am sensitive to student anxieties around assessment and feedback, so create a supportive culture around assessment, provide clear guidance, and offer opportunities for students to voice concerns				

Assessment and Feedback: Programme Team Checklist

Our programme team ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
Our assessment is designed at programme level, giving students a manageable assessment workload and minimising clashes of hand-in dates				
Our programme uses a range of assessment formats, and enables student personalisation choice of assessment format where appropriate				
Our students have had an opportunity to practice all final year summative assessment types earlier in the programme, and understand the relationships between assessments at different levels				
Our assessments are clearly explained to students through module documentation, written materials and activities in class, using transparent and consistent language to make requirements clear				
Our assessments design out the need for individual alternatives wherever possible (e.g. students given the choice of audio/visual formats so students with hearing/visual impairments do not require individual alternative assessment)				
Our mark schemes are clearly linked to learning outcomes or competencies to ensure marking is appropriate and consistent with assessment design				
Our mark schemes do not over-penalise mistakes in written English or referencing conventions				
Markers' feedback comments are constructive, and actively point out ways that students can improve their work for future assignments.				
Markers provide relevant, focussed and timely formative feedback to support student learning				
Our programme team are sensitive to student anxieties around assessment and feedback, so create a supportive culture around assessment, provide clear guidance, and offer opportunities for students to voice concerns				

Assessment and Feedback: Senior Leader Checklist

Our institution systems and processes ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
Curriculum design ensures assessments are designed at the programme level, giving students and staff a manageable assessment workload.				
Programmes are designed to use a range of assessment formats, enabling student personalisation choice of assessment format where appropriate				
Programmes give students opportunities to practice all final year summative assessment types earlier in the programme, and the relationships between assessments at different levels are clearly understood by staff and students				
Assessments are clearly explained to students through module documentation, written materials and activities in class, using transparent and consistent language to make requirements clear.				
Staff are supported to develop assessments that design out the need for individual alternatives wherever possible (e.g. students given the choice of audio/visual formats so students with hearing/visual impairments do not require individual alternative assessment)				
Staff are supported to develop mark schemes which are clearly linked to learning outcomes or competencies to ensure marking is appropriate and consistent with assessment design				
Staff are supported to develop mark schemes that do not over-penalise mistakes in written English or referencing conventions				
Staff are supported to ensure feedback comments are constructive, and actively point out ways that students can improve their work for future assignments				
Staff are supported to provide relevant, focussed and timely formative feedback to support student learning				
Staff are aware of student anxieties around assessment and feedback, and encouraged to create a supportive culture around assessment, provide clear guidance, and offer opportunities for students to voice concerns				

Community and Belonging

For all students, feeling part of a community invokes feelings of security, positive emotions, and increased self-worth. A sense of belonging has also been demonstrated to be positively associated with student motivation, and academic success (Freeman et al, 2007; Bliuc et al, 2011). Students are less likely to withdraw from programmes or leave university if they are engaged both on an academic and a social level (Tinto, 1993; Krause & Armitage, 2014). Inclusive universities will build cultures which positively foster a strong sense of community and belonging.

Community and Belonging - Examples

■ **Effective Personalised Academic & Pastoral Support.** Enabling students to feel comfortable discussing their concerns or anxieties with appropriately trained staff will allow for effective signposting to additional support as indicated. Some students may require more structured and specialist support than others. Interventions such as bi-weekly drop-in sessions or scheduled one to one monthly meetings could be used to help to facilitate effective rapport and relationship building.

■ **Relevant and inclusive induction activities.** Effective induction is embedded within programmes and includes both social and academic focussed activities. Structure, timing and format of events will be considered, being mindful of commuter students, those with caring responsibilities etc. For example, the provision of alcohol might exclude students who choose not to drink for cultural, health or religious reasons. Inclusive induction will also provide tailored support for international students and those transferring from other institutions part way through their programme.

■ **Supporting students to build friendships and peer support throughout their programmes.** Many students are more socially isolated than we might assume, so welcome opportunities to form connections with their peers within the programme. Examples might include working in smaller teaching groups, peer student support networks, and encouraging involvement with related academic societies.

■ **Effective and ongoing partnership with students.** Examples of this might include initiatives such as student and staff collaborative projects, or involving students in programme design and decision making. Encouraging students to regularly evaluate modules and programmes, and responding constructively and transparently to feedback given.

■ **Empower students to embrace inclusivity within their own learning environments.** This could include open discourse around student personal experience, and sharing of ideas amongst peer groups in relation to supporting diversity. This also includes actively educating students about equality, diversity and inclusion, bringing that knowledge and values into their future lives and careers.

■ **Build diverse staff and student communities.** Higher education institutions have historically not represented the diversity of the wider population. No one should face structural barriers to becoming part of the higher education community. This may require reviewing student admissions policies and staff recruitment practices. All staff and students should feel that they are supported and valued members of the institution regardless of demographic background or personal circumstances.

Community and Belonging: My Checklist

Our institution systems and processes ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
I meet with all students I have responsibility for at multiple points during the academic year				
I have undertaken appropriate training so I understand my role and responsibilities around student academic and personal support				
I can effectively signpost students I am responsible for to appropriate support services where required				
I ensure that everyone feel welcome, included and supported within my teaching				
I am aware of diversity within my community of staff and students, and influence hiring and admissions processes to increase diversity where possible				
My teaching provides opportunities for students to interact socially within structured activities				
I work in partnership with students to establish clear ground rules around inclusion and respect for all, or implement rules established at programme level				
I actively work with students in partnership, and act on student feedback provided through formal and informal channels				
I design group work so that all students are actively included regardless of background, current circumstances or demographic group				
I make it clear to students that they can confidently raise concerns around inclusivity, including potential bias or discrimination, and I would feel confident about intervening if necessary				

Community and Belonging: Programme Team Checklist

Our programme team ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
Our programme team meet with all students they have responsibility for at multiple points during the academic year				
Our programme team have undertaken appropriate training so they understand their role and responsibilities around student academic and personal support				
Our programme team can effectively signpost students they are responsible for to appropriate support services where required				
Our programme team ensure everyone feels welcome, included and supported throughout their programme from induction onwards				
Where possible, our programme team influence hiring and admissions processes to build a diverse community of staff and students				
Our programme provides opportunities for our students to interact socially within structured activities				
Our programme team and students work in partnership to establish clear ground rules around inclusion and respect for all				
Our students are active members of our department/school, and we act on their feedback provided through formal and informal channels				
Group work on our programme is designed so that all students are actively included regardless of background, current circumstances or demographic group				
Our programme team make it clear to students that they can confidently raise concerns around inclusivity, including potential bias or discrimination, and staff would feel confident about intervening if necessary				

Community and Belonging: Senior Leader Checklist

Our institution systems and processes ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
Staff meet with all students they have responsibility for at multiple points during the academic year				
Staff have undertaken appropriate training so they understand their role and responsibilities around student academic and personal support				
Appropriate support services for students are provided, and staff can effectively signpost students to these services where required				
The institution ensures everyone feels welcome, included and supported from induction onwards, including within academic programmes and the wider institutional community				
Institutional hiring and admissions processes actively build a diverse community of staff and students				
Programmes are designed to provide opportunities for students to interact socially within structured activities, and student-led communities are supported and encouraged				
The institution establishes clear ground rules around inclusion and respect for all, developed in partnership between staff and students				
Students are active members of the institutional community who acts upon their feedback provided through formal and informal channels				
Staff are supported to design group work so that all students are actively included regardless of background, current circumstances or demographic group				
Staff are supported in ensuring that students can confidently raise concerns around inclusivity, including potential bias or discrimination. Staff are supported to feel confident about intervening in these areas if necessary				

Pathways to Success

Inclusive institutions offer all students, regardless of their background or entry level, the opportunity to succeed. Inclusive education is not just about academic grades. It involves gaining additional personal attributes such as social and practical skills, lifelong friendships, and a fulfilling sustainable future career (York et al, 2015; Cachia et al, 2018). Encouraging students to reach their potential by adopting a fair and inclusive approach will ensure that success is achievable to all.

Importantly, success is dependent on a student's understanding of the norms, cultures and behaviours of higher education. Students who are from historically disadvantaged backgrounds or are the first in their family to access higher education are less likely to have accumulated this understanding. To be inclusive the institution will make its norms and expectations as transparent as possible.

Pathways to Success - Examples

- **Making programme expectations clear.** All students benefit from knowing what is expected from them throughout their programme. For example, providing a clear explanation detailing how UK degree classifications work will help students to understand academic expectation, and the link between academic grades and future career or study plans.

- **Demystify and avoid the use of academic jargon**. Using clear and understandable language in all programme materials will ensure that outcomes and opportunities are explicit.

- **Constructive ongoing reviews of academic progress**. Regular reviews of academic achievement with appropriate staff will allow students to focus on academic issues, future targets, and address potential support needs. Early identification of future career aspirations also allows for action planning and bespoke support and signposting.

- **Proactive monitoring of student engagement**. Routine monitoring of engagement can identify students at risk of withdrawal at an early stage. Monitoring systems should be designed to support staff and students rather than penalising non-attendance, and should acknowledge complex personal circumstances that may impact engagement.

- **Embedding institutional support services into programme delivery.** Inclusive programmes will embed introductions to services such as central academic skills teams, or student wellbeing teams. Doing this early in the programme encourages engagement with relevant services and reduces student anxieties about seeking support.

- **Use student facing materials that demonstrate inclusivity and success**. This could involve student facing marketing materials making use of 'real' student narratives. For example, highlighting students who have achieved success despite needing to suspend their studies or due to ill health could make for powerful role models.

- **Effective use of mentoring & role models.** This can support inclusivity by demonstrating to students available possibilities and potential career opportunities. Examples might include involving alumni in career events, collaboration with prospective employers and feeder colleges, and internship opportunities. Role models within the curriculum will represent the diversity of the student body.

- **Use additional supportive mechanisms to enhance student self-belief and confidence**. Inclusive programmes will embed activities that build student autonomy, responsibility and self-confidence. This may involve partnering with external organisations or targeted programmes to support particular groups of students.

- **Ensuring that placement or external opportunities are equitable to all**. Some students may potentially be disadvantaged if a placement opportunity is likely to incur additional travel or time commitments. Students with paid jobs may be unable to commit to a lengthy placement, and students with disabilities may face additional challenges in accessing placements. Placements, work experience, and extracurricular opportunities should be carefully managed to ensure inclusivity.

Pathways to Success: My Checklist

Our programme team ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
I provide students with clear information about commonly used academic terminology, degree classifications and institutional conventions throughout their programme				
I systematically identify and support 'at risk' students that I am responsible for (e.g. those with low engagement), and refer students to professional services teams where appropriate				
I review individual academic progress of students I am responsible for (e.g. after exam boards), discuss this with students, and intervene where appropriate.				
I embed or signpost towards structured tools and resources designed to encourage student self-management, self-belief, and aspiration where available				
I include diverse and successful alumni/career role models within my teaching				
I embed careers guidance and related schemes in my teaching (e.g. entrepreneurship scheme, Employability awards), and relate these to personal ambitions of my students where possible				
I include diverse and successful alumni/career role models within my teaching				
Within my teaching, I embed opportunities for all students to work with employers, develop personal networks and reflect on self development and career goals				
I offer placements and external opportunities that are designed to be inclusive, particularly for those with caring responsibilities, health conditions, financial constraints etc.				
I support all of my students to access appropriate external mentorship programmes, networking and self-development opportunities				

Pathways to Success: Programme Team Checklist

Our programme team ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
Our programme team provide our students with clear information about commonly used academic terminology, degree classifications and institutional conventions throughout their programme				
Our programme team systematically identify and support 'at risk' students (e.g. those with low engagement), and refer students to professional services teams where appropriate				
Our programme team review individual student academic progress (e.g. after exam boards), discuss this with students, and intervene where appropriate.				
Our programme embeds or signposts towards structured tools and resources designed to encourage student self-management, self-belief, and aspiration where available				
We know how to signpost students to relevant support and personal development services within the university (e.g. academic skills support, dyslexia support, bereavement support)				
Our programme embeds careers guidance and related schemes (e.g. entrepreneurship scheme, Employability award), and relates these to personal ambitions of our students where possible				
Our programme includes diverse and successful alumni/career role models in student facing materials				
Our programme embeds opportunities for all students to work with employers, develop personal networks and reflect on self development and career goals				
We design placements and external opportunities on our programme to be inclusive, particularly for those with caring responsibilities, health conditions, financial constraints etc.				
We support all our students to access appropriate external mentorship programmes, networking and self-development opportunities				

Pathways to Success: Senior Leader Checklist

Our institution systems and processes ensure that:	Yes	No	Maybe	N/A
Students are provided with clear information about commonly used academic terminology, degree classifications and institutional conventions throughout their programme				
'At risk' students are systematically identify and supported (e.g. those with low engagement), and the institution provides resources for effective intervention by academic and professional services teams				
Individual student academic progress is regularly reviewed (e.g. after exam boards) and the institution provides resources and support for staff to intervene where appropriate				
The institution provides structured tools and resources designed to encourage student self-management, self-belief, and aspiration, and supports staff to embed these within programmes				
The institution provides relevant support and personal development services (e.g. academic skills support, dyslexia support, bereavement support), and supports staff in signposting students to them				
The institution provides careers guidance and related schemes (e.g. entrepreneurship scheme, Employability award), and supports staff in relating these to the personal ambitions of students where possible				
The institution develops student facing materials that demonstrate inclusivity and success (e.g. diverse and successful alumni/career role models), and supports staff to embed these within their programmes				
Programmes are designed to embed opportunities for all students to work with employers, develop personal networks and reflect on self development and career goals				
Programme placements and external opportunities are designed to be inclusive, particularly for those with caring responsibilities, health conditions, financial constraints etc				
Students are supported to access appropriate external mentorship programmes, networking and self-development opportunities				

Case Studies and Resources

To bring the framework to life, and to illustrate how it might be implemented in practice, we have collated a series of case studies from institutions involved in this collaborative project. If you want further information on the examples, each case study includes contact details. We have aligned these with the five domains of the framework.

Case Studies: Areas of Activity

- **Structures and Processes**

- **Curriculum Design and Delivery**

- **Assessment and Feedback**

- **Community and Belonging**

- **Pathways to Success**

Resources

- **Toolkit of inclusive resources**

- **Checklists**

- **Self-paced course**

- **How does the framework help students?**

Development of the Framework: Phase 1

The Inclusive Education Framework has been developed through a number of stages, incorporating the pedagogical literature, staff and student consultation, stakeholder workshops and development within the core project team.

Phase 1: Development of an Institution Level Framework

The Framework started as a project at the University of Hull to develop institutional understanding of the depth and breadth of inclusive practice.

The first iterations of the framework were based on the academic literature and relevant sector level reports into inclusive practice and awarding gaps. The framework is ultimately rooted in the work of Mountford-Zimdars et al (2015) in the 'Causes of differences in student outcomes' project. This report identified four explanatory factors in differential student outcomes; Curricula and learning, Relationships between staff and students, Social, cultural and economic capital and Psychosocial and identity factors. The framework builds upon these themes, but adapts them to allow a focus on effective inclusive practice.

To create an institution wide Inclusive Education Framework, we then incorporated themes from the wider literature and our experiences of driving more inclusive practice. We added an additional theme of 'Structures and Processes' to recognise the role that the institution has in ensuring inclusion is embedded into the routine working of the university, and adapted the remaining themes based on the literature and iterative consultation with academic staff, professional services staff, students and the student union. We also identified a series of key 'principles' or 'ways of working' that underpinned implementation of the framework.

Development of the Framework: Phase 2

Development of the Cross Institution Framework

This QAA funded project aimed to create a version of the framework that was appropriate for use in the wider UK HE sector, across multiple types of institutions. It involved six additional HE providers, including from the Russell Group and new specialist providers.

We visited each partner institution and ran a series of structured activities to gather opinions about the Hull framework and how it would need adapting for use elsewhere. At each institution we conducted the following

- A focus group of academics, professional services staff, senior leaders, staff and students.
- Demographic representation of these focus groups is shown in Table 1, with a total of 48 individuals taking part. Focus groups were given the framework to comment on and suggest improvements, with discussions recorded on flipcharts (Example in Figure X).
- A workshop open to staff and students focussed on Inclusive Education was held at 5 out of the 6 partner institutions, with a total of 182 individuals taking part. The workshop invited participants to reflect on their own practice, but also to evaluate the framework. For example, we asked participants to give examples of inclusive practice, align them against the Hull framework and identify any examples which didn't fit in the original framework design. We received 284 examples of practice, of which 25 could not be aligned to the framework, which informed development of the cross-institutional version.

After all visits were completed, a working group derived from the project steering group conducted a thematic analysis of the responses from all institutions. We used template analysis as a method for iterative development of the framework (King, 1998; King 2012), with a total of 6 versions of the template produced. The working group met regularly to discuss findings and adapt the framework language. The final version was agreed upon after input from the steering group.

Acknowledgements (1)

Project Leads

Katharine Hubbard **(University of Hull)** is a Reader in Biology Education and Senior Fellow of the University of Hull Teaching Excellence Academy. Her expertise is in Inclusive Education and Awarding Gaps, as well as effective laboratory based teaching within the Biosciences. She is a National Teaching Fellow and Senior Fellow of Advance HE.

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Project Steering Group

Megan De Ste Croix **(Staffordshire University)**, SFHEA, Academic Developer and HEA Fellowship Programme lead, with a background in biosciences. Megan is an expert in active, team-based learning & how it supports a reduction in progression and attainment gaps.

Katy Bloom **(York St John University)** SFHEA, CSciTeach, Associate Professor of Initial Teacher Education, Science Lead and an Advanced Skills Teacher. Her research interests include the interplay between pedagogy, assessment and feedback, as well as advocacy for Women in STEM.

Mark Dransfield **(York St John University),** SFHEA, Senior Lecturer in Academic Practice and institutional scheme lead for HEA Accredited CPD provision. His expertise is in professional recognition, dialogic assessment and pedagogic practice in HE.

Lucy Potter (York St John University), currently the Administrator for the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Team. She has long-standing interests in decolonial curricula and pedagogy and, for the past few years, has been a member of a grassroots activist movement campaigning for racial justice and against multiple forms of exclusion within and across the UK education system.

Pei-Chi Ho (Student intern, York St John University) a final year Media Production student. She has been a student intern on the QAA Collaborative Enhancement project, gaining valuable experience directing, producing, and editing videos to support the project.

Amrita Narang (Quality Assurance Agency), SFHEA, Quality Enhancement and Standards Specialist with Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), with keen interest in teaching, learning & assessment practice for high quality student experience. Currently pursuing her doctoral inquiry into decoloniality and curriculum reform, using a post humanist approach.

Acknowledgements (2)

Project Steering Group

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Sue Jones NTF, CATE, PFHEA, is the Executive Head of Education at the Institute of Biomedical Science. Her expertise in inclusive programme and assessment design that successfully addresses awarding gaps was built over 20 years in Higher Education.

Dr Helen Walmsley-Smith SFHEA, was an academic developer at Staffordshire University (now retired).

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