# Table of contents

**Introduction**
- Inclusivity at Monash University 4
- Building the toolkit 5
- Components of the toolkit 6

**Principles of inclusive teaching** 8
- Be proactive and intentional 8
- Be flexible and responsive 8
- Use clear and accessible language 9
- Display empathy and understanding 9
- Strive to be aware and informed 10
- Reflect on your teaching practices 10

**Guidelines for inclusive teaching** 12
- Inclusive teaching (general) 12
- Students from low-SES backgrounds and other equity groups 19
- Gender and sexuality 23
- Students with disabilities 26
- Indigenous students 30
- Intercultural competence 33

**Appendix A: Other findings from the focus group interviews (FGIs)** 36
- Staff induction 36
- Workshops and visits from representatives beyond the library 38
- More flexible R&L programs and support services 39
- Computer literacy and digital skills development 40
- Displays, exhibitions, and art 41
- Collection development 42
- Library websites and Search 43

**Appendix B: Inclusive teaching focus group interview (FGI)**
- Materials 45
- Readings 45
- Questions 45
Introduction

The aim of the Inclusive Teaching Toolkit for Library Staff is to bring together a series of principles, guidelines and resources related to inclusive teaching practices relevant to the library environment. The toolkit seeks to identify sustainable and effective strategies and approaches for ensuring teaching material and educational interactions are inclusive of the diverse student body at Monash. This diversity exists across many dimensions, including differences in socioeconomic status, educational background, cultural background, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, age, mode of attendance (full time, part time, on campus, off campus), and ability or disability.

“My definition of inclusive teaching would be: [making] sure that every student in the classroom, regardless of their individual needs [or] circumstances, ... aren't disadvantaged in any way, ... and the teaching is done in such a way that everyone is included and that everyone actually benefits equally.” – Library staff member

The toolkit builds on existing Monash University guidelines, the literature on inclusive teaching in higher education, and the data gathered in 2017 from library staff focus groups on inclusive teaching. The development and piloting of the toolkit will enable library staff to articulate and promote Monash’s focus on diversity and inclusion throughout their teaching practices and educational encounters.

The development of this toolkit was informed by Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, which emphasise the use of flexible teaching and learning approaches to cater for the learning needs of diverse student cohorts (Glass, Meyer, & Rose, 2013).

Inclusivity at Monash University

Monash University places a high priority on inclusivity, which forms one of the four key goals articulated in Focus Monash 2015–2020. This strategic plan emphasises “inclusive education” for “students from disadvantaged backgrounds,” and stresses the importance of creating a university-wide sense of “connection and belonging” that “enhances cohesion in a diverse community” (Monash University, 2015). These goals are reinforced by the Widening Participation Strategy, which outlines Monash’s plans to “support and extend talented students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds” (Monash University, 2016c). Likewise, the Reconciliation Action Plan sets objectives for increasing
staff and student awareness of, and respect for, Indigenous peoples, cultures and histories (Monash University, 2016b).

_Inclusive teaching is "a reaction to a much more diverse student body than we may have had once. So as the student body gets more diverse, it's the teacher's responsibility to be more responsive to a diverse cohort." – Library staff member_

The library's desire to create a safe and welcoming environment for all students, and to deliver engaging and accessible research and learning services and programs, is also embedded in the Focus Library 2018 annual plan (Monash University, 2018). Similarly, the Library Capability Framework, which sets out priorities for staff development, highlights the importance of creating “a culture of respect and inclusion around diversity and promote working in a diverse environment” (Monash University, 2017a).

_Inclusion is core business in education, it's not some add-on social policy ... it's what we're always aiming to do." – Library staff member_

A number of units and organisations at Monash seek to support diversity and inclusion at the university, including Disability Support Services, the Ally Network, Access Monash, English Connect, and the Yulendj Indigenous Engagement Unit. This toolkit links to these units, bringing together their valuable resources and inclusive teaching guidelines.

### Building the toolkit

The Inclusive Teaching Toolkit for Library Staff Project Charter was drafted in early 2017 by Zachary Kendal (Subject Librarian, Social Inclusion), in consultation with Lisa Smith (Director, Education) and Linda Kalejs (Manager, Peninsula and Berwick Libraries), and was approved by the Information Resources and Services Committee (IRSC) in June 2017. The project was carried out by Zachary Kendal and Homa Babai (Learning Skills Adviser at Peninsula and Hargrave-Andrew Libraries, formerly acting Learning Skills Adviser for Social Inclusion), under the guidance of a steering committee comprising: Homa Babai, Anita Dewi (Research and Learning Coordinator, Matheson Library), Linda Kalejs, Zachary Kendal, Lisa Smith, Kim Taylor (Research and Learning Coordinator, Caulfield Library), Lyn Torres (Education and Research Programs Manager), Steven Yates (E-learning Coordinator), and Barbara Yazbeck (Education and Research Programs Manager).

Focus group interviews (FGIs), a popular qualitative data collection method, were used innovatively in this project as a collaborative tool in the development of the toolkit. FGIs
are informal group discussions, usually involving a small group of people facilitated by a moderator, and are focused on a specific topic or issue (Wilkinson, 2016, p.83). They are advantageous in deriving the group’s collective opinion in a relatively short period of time (Halcomb, Gholizadeh, DiGiacomo, Phillips & Davidson, 2007).

Staff from across Monash University Library were invited to participate in focus group interviews through a Library Class Booking system listing after ethics approval was obtained from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The focus groups were conducted at Matheson, Caulfield, Peninsula, Law and Hargrave-Andrew Libraries and the number of participants in each group ranged from three to seven. In total, 27 library staff participated in the focus groups. All participants were provided with an explanatory statement about the project and signed a consent form prior to the interviews. Each FGI lasted 90 minutes and conversations were recorded for later reference by the researchers. Each session followed the same structure with 10 guiding questions. The ideas, experiences and recommendations of library staff expressed in the focus groups form the backbone of the principles and guidelines set out in this document. Academic literature regarding inclusive teaching practices was also consulted in the preparation of the toolkit, and has been quoted and referenced throughout.

**Components of the toolkit**

This toolkit comprises two key components. The first, “Principles of Inclusive Teaching,” articulates six key principles for inclusivity that can apply across the library’s educational activities. These are intended to be broad, founding principles that can be applied to different scenarios, from face-to-face classes, to drop-in consultations, to the development of e-learning resources.

The second, more substantial, part of the toolkit is the “Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching,” which brings together some practical recommendations and advice for making teaching activities and educational resources more inclusive. This section begins with some general guidelines and resources for inclusive teaching across the many dimensions of diversity that are found at Monash University. It then moves into some more specific guidelines and resources related to specific topics, such as inclusivity of different genders and sexualities, and those pertaining to key equity groups, including students from low-SES backgrounds, Indigenous students, and students with disability. Each subsection begins with a short introduction, presents a series of practical
guidelines, indicates avenues for professional development, and links to further resources.

Throughout the toolkit, block quotes in *blue italics* present the insights and ideas offered by library staff through FGIs.

The Inclusive Teaching Toolkit for Library Staff project team intends to develop these principles and guidelines as an interactive and dynamic online resource in 2018, with the assistance of the e-learning team.
Principles of inclusive teaching

Be proactive and intentional

When planning a class, running a drop-in, or developing e-learning resources, anticipate student diversity and actively seek to make the environment and resources welcoming and inclusive. Consider the needs of different cohorts, including international students, LGBTIQ+ students, students from low-SES backgrounds, and students with disabilities, and strive to make our teaching resources and educational environment inclusive from the outset.

“You go into a class or you go into a consult assuming diversity, and assuming that anything is possible in that space. ... We've got to be aware of the range of possibilities in our classes and what might be helpful and what might be damaging to students in their learning in that environment.” – Library staff member

When developing e-learning resources, for example, this means planning and creating content that considers accessibility and the principles of universal design.

This intentionality can extend to all aspects of our class and resource design, as we ensure these each have a clear purpose, with explicit objectives and learning outcomes.

“Why are we running this class? Let's make that really clear, so then we can make it clear to the students.” – Library staff member

Be flexible and responsive

Plan ahead for a diverse cohort, including students with disabilities, and consider ways your class, consultation or e-learning resource can respond to the individual's needs.

When teaching, this means being ready to adjust activities or plans depending on student needs—whether it’s the needs of a student with a vision, hearing, or mobility impairment, or the learning needs of the class.

Teaching inclusively means "allowing for different levels of ability in the class; being flexible enough to change your teaching as you go, if you see that people are struggling with the level you've pitched it at." – Library staff member
For e-resources, this may involve presenting information in multiple ways, allowing for different kinds of engagement. Text description of a concept, for example, could be accompanied by a visual representation or video, thereby making the resource flexible in its use.

**Use clear and accessible language**

Throughout our teaching at Monash University Library, we strive to help students understand the expectations of academic study and research, and develop their research and learning skills. Communicating this clearly requires the use of accessible, jargon-free language.

“What we're doing [in Research and Learning] really taps into like a university-wide approach to helping make expectations clear and using accessible language.” – Library staff member

This also requires avoiding colloquialisms and other culture-specific means of articulating information, and being aware of what kinds of examples or anecdotes might be culturally insensitive. To make our teaching inclusive, we must also strive to keep our language inclusive, avoiding gender-exclusive language and being mindful of preferred terms for different social and cultural groups.

**Display empathy and understanding**

It is essential to display empathy to students to establish a rapport with them. Being empathetic to students also enables us to assist each according to their needs. This is of particular importance in the Library setting due to the unique type of teaching undertaken by library staff. We might not know the students as individuals, being unaware of the issues that they are facing because of lack of contact time with them (e.g. 15 minute R&L consultation, teaching them only once during a semester).

“I've tried to be more sympathetic to people generally in a teaching situation ... I have been to quite a lot of different sessions around working with Asian students, working with Arab students and those kind of cultural awareness things, and in terms of disabilities Autism and those kind of associated things like Asperger. Unless you know somebody who has those you really don't know what it actually means to them.” – Library staff member
Demonstrating empathy to students involves actively listening to them and respecting and valuing their point of view and feelings (Mortiboys, 2010). Empathy can also be displayed by sharing your own experiences and anecdotes when appropriate.

**Be aware and informed**

To truly practice inclusive teaching, and be empathetic and respectful in our encounters with students, we need to strive for an awareness of issues around social inclusion and the diversity of Monash University students.

“To be inclusive, to me, also means that you need to be open and have an understanding – or at least striving to have an understanding – of different backgrounds and paradigms, so that even the type of language you use in teaching doesn't exclude other people from a variety of different backgrounds, [such as different] socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds, things like that.” – Library staff member

Seek opportunities to become more informed about different student cohorts and their needs. If you know you could be more aware of issues affecting Indigenous students, for example, read about the experiences of Indigenous students and best practice guidelines, or attend the Indigenous Cultural Safety professional development workshops.

Understanding the diversity of our students and the pathways they've taken to university also helps us avoid making assumptions about their attitudes or existing knowledge, or stereotyping them according to preconceived categories.

But it's also important to acknowledge that we're human and can't know everything—we'll make mistakes, but what's important is that we learn from these and seek opportunities to become more informed, and better prepared, for next time.

**Reflect on your teaching practices**

Reflecting on your teaching is essential to improving your inclusive teaching practice. Obtaining feedback from students can assist you reflect on your teaching and identify areas for improvement. While you might receive direct, informal feedback from
individuals, these responses may not reflect the views of all students, therefore collection of feedback from the whole cohort is recommended. Participating in or forming peer learning, peer support, or peer observation sessions can also enable you to reflect on your teaching practice.

“Part of good teaching practice is collecting and responding to student feedback. So one thing I’ve been pushing with those generic classes is consistent feedback, so that every class has feedback on it.” – Library staff member

It is essential to remember that everyone can make mistakes. What is important is to deliberately evaluate your teaching to recognise and reflect on what has worked and what hasn't to improve your teaching practices.
Guidelines for inclusive teaching

Inclusive teaching (general)

The guidelines and resources below are broadly relevant to all student cohorts, and their practice can make teaching more inclusive and accessible for everyone. Based on focus group discussions and the literature on inclusive teaching, these ideas and recommendations can help make our teaching inclusive of the diverse student community at Monash.

Guidelines

- Promote help-seeking behaviours and ensure students are informed of where to go for support. [classes] [consultations] [e-learning]
  
  ➢ “I always try to include, any time when I’m creating, whether it’s powerpoint slides or new Lib Guide page or Moodle or whatever, somewhere in each piece of content links to all of the places they can go to get help—whether it’s the drop-in times or a Lib Guide or my email address” – Library staff member

- Make learning aims and outcomes explicit. [classes] [e-learning]

  ➢ Clearly articulate the purpose, aims and expected outcomes of the class or e-learning resources. For embedded classes or resources, these should reflect the unit objectives. The RSD framework can be useful when articulating and scaffolding these objectives (see below).

- Articulate complex concepts in multiple ways. This may involve rephrasing key concepts, or using visual aids or images to represent them differently. [classes] [consultations] [e-learning]

  ➢ Inclusive teaching is “not assuming the same level of experience or the same blanket level of skills, or ways of processing information” – Library staff member

- Use images that reflect diversity. [classes] [e-learning]

  ➢ When selecting stock images or taking new photos—whether it’s for slides, websites, or promotional material—aim to represent diversity wherever possible, including diversity of race, gender and age. If using pictures of families or couples, consider including pictures of LGBTIQ+/rainbow families.

- With first-year cohorts in particular, scrutinise what assumed knowledge is reasonable and take time to explain the basics. [classes] [e-learning]
➢ For example, is it reasonable, today, to assume students know what a journal is, or have referred to an edited book of essays? Reflect on what knowledge and skills you take for granted and check students’ understanding when necessary.

➢ “There are a lot of subtle ways where we can unintentionally ‘other’ people – making people feel like ‘others’ – by any kind of assumption that the students that are in our class have the same knowledge that we have, or came into being a student the same pathway we did.” – Library staff member

➢ Take the time to explain library jargon, especially to first-year cohorts, who may never have encountered such terms before.

➢ Examples of terms and concepts not widely understood outside academic environments may include: peer review, academic literature, scholarly literature, primary and secondary sources, academic journals, scholarly databases, critical thinking, argumentation, contention, and so on.

➢ “I had a group of students—Chinese girls—come up to me after a class on databases, and they were so polite and so lovely, and they said: ‘Thank you so much for the class and we really appreciate it, but we’ve looked for the peer review and we can’t actually find the review, and unless we find the review we can’t prove to our lecturer that it’s peer reviewed, so where is the review?’ ... And it totally made sense. It made more sense than me explaining to them that they can’t see it because it’s not public... ” – Library staff member

➢ Scaffold students’ learning, so that it gradually introduces and progresses their knowledge and skills.

➢ Adopting a “step-by-step” approach to teaching was a key recommendation of Devlin, Kift, Nelson, Smith, and McKay’s (2012) research into supporting students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, and it’s advice that remains relevant to all cohorts. A “scaffolded learning” approach begins by providing students with a support structure or framework that is gradually removed as they become more independent (Devlin et al., 2012).

➢ The Research Skills Development (RSD) framework was designed for this purpose—to scaffold the different aspects of skills development—and can be a very useful tool when teaching research and learning skills and progressing students/researchers to greater levels of autonomy.

➢ Allow short breaks in your classes to give students time to process information.
➢ This can mean planning breaks between activities, or factoring in time for reflection.

➢ To keep classes inclusive of students' different learning preferences, try varying direct teaching with individual or group work and activities, and think of ways to make use of the teaching space.

➢ Students with less confidence or who are more introverted, for example, may be uncomfortable contributing to a whole-class discussion—working in pairs might provide them with a way to get involved and share their ideas that's less intimidating.

➢ Explore ways of making the most of the teaching space. If there are large whiteboards around the room, for example, they might provide a way to get students active during group work.

➢ “Now with the whiteboards as well, if you get people working in groups and putting things up on the whiteboard it helps [get students engaged] ... we've got the rooms, [now we can adjust] our teaching to use those spaces ...” – Library staff member

➢ Find ways to make database and software demonstrations interactive, to keep students involved and engaged.

➢ When demonstrating the use of Search, for example, consider having students volunteer topics or keywords—get them involved in finding and combining search terms. Alternatively, ask the students follow along with your demonstration on their own laptop or device (or sharing with the person next to them).

➢ When possible and appropriate, address student displays of exclusion and intolerance directly, but use these as educational opportunities.

➢ For more guidance on how to handle poor student behaviour, refer to the Resolution of Unacceptable Behaviour – Conduct and Compliance Policy.
Consider activities that help you use students’ names, as this can facilitate a more personal and inclusive approach. **[classes] [consultations]**

➢ “We take five seconds before we start the class to have everyone write their name out and have a sign in front of them, so we can actually address them by name, and it also works as an icebreaker activity.” – Library staff member

Consider surveying or polling students (anonymously) at the beginning of the class to check their confidence levels with different skills or concepts. This can be used to set students at ease (knowing there are others struggling with new concepts) and guide you during the class (indicating what topics need further explanation). **[classes]**

➢ Online platforms such as Google Forms, **Poll Everywhere**, or the **Monash Audience Response System (MARS)** can be used for this kind of anonymous survey.

➢ "I have been using, in generic skills classes within the library, an in-class survey at the start of the session, so going over what's going to be covered in the session and asking, anonymously, for people's comfort levels in different aspects of the content that's about to be covered ... the major benefit of doing that, I've found, is that I've actually had quite a few classes where you have zero experience in half the room and quite a lot of experience in the other half of the room – so you can address that at the start of the class to make sure that people aren't feeling worried or anxious that they're at the wrong level. So you can say, 'for the beginners, we are going to be covering this from the basics,' but for the advance users, we do get to this and this and this may be helpful for you... so that people know they're in the right place, they can relax, they realise that they're not the only one who's at entry level. That's been effective, and I've had really really good feedback from the students." – Library staff member

 Whenever possible, collect feedback from students and staff, and use this to guide the design of future classes or resources. **[classes] [e-learning]**

➢ For classes, consider using a Google Form to facilitate student feedback. These can be filled in on laptops or devices, or they can be printed and handed out for completion at the end of the class.

➢ For embedded classes, it is also worth following up with the lecturer or tutor after the class for additional feedback.
➢ For e-learning resources, make sure there are feedback avenues in place, so users can let you know if they found something unclear.

➢ Ask comprehension questions regularly to check students’ understanding.

➢ Acquiescent response bias means that yes/no questions are more likely to be answered “yes,” meaning that asking “do you understand?” is more likely to meet a “yes” response, although this may not reflect the student’s actual understanding level. Try asking questions where “no” answers reflect comprehension, such as: “Would you like further clarification on any point?”

➢ Do not plan classes assuming that all students will have their own laptop or mobile device. If your class requires the use of computers, for example, make sure there are some available for students who do not have their own laptop, or have students work in groups so that only one is needed between multiple students.

➢ It can be tempting to assume that all students have a laptop and smartphone on them at all times, but this is not always the case. A student may only have access to a computer at home, or may be using an older laptop or smartphone of limited capacity. And on any given day, a student may be without their device due to technical failure or personal circumstances. High expectations of technology ownership can also create barriers for low-socioeconomic students, who may struggle to afford high-quality devices. Try to factor these considerations in when planning a technology-heavy class.

➢ “Some students may not have access to technology. ... [I treat] the use of technology ... as a facility, instead of an aim. And I've witnessed some people falling into that trap, as treating technology as the main point.” – Library staff member

➢ If you have to identify a student during a class, do not use racial or gendered terms. It is best to use names whenever possible, otherwise find neutral descriptors.

➢ For example, if you’ve asked for volunteers and several hands have gone up, you could call upon “the student at the back” or “the student in the red shirt,” as opposed to identifying the student by assumed race or gender.

➢ Note that spotlighting students for individual contributions to a class is not generally good practice, as this can make more introverted students highly...
uncomfortable – such students could contribute in other ways, such as in written exercises, electronic polls, or pair-based activities.

If providing treats (or catering) during classes, be aware of dietary requirements and eating restrictions, and try to provide alternatives. [classes]

➢ Whenever possible, provide gluten-free, dairy-free, nut-free, vegan, halal, kosher alternatives, such as these Sweet William chocolates, which are available at most supermarkets.

When talking to students about their work, ensure your feedback is constructive. [consultations]

➢ Be clear and explicit about how students can improve their work, providing them with some practical advice for the future.
➢ When providing feedback on assignments, refer to assignment rubric/marketing guide if available.
➢ Comment on what the student is doing well. Focusing only on where the student is going wrong can be demotivating (Sarkany & Deitte, 2017).
➢ Encourage the students to ask questions about your feedback, and regularly check their comprehension and understanding of your advice.
➢ For more ideas on how to provide constructive feedback, see the University of Melbourne’s “Providing effective feedback to students” guide.

Professional development

● Peer learning sessions [Library]
● Research Skills Development (RSD) masterclasses [Library]

Additional resources

General resources

● National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE)

Other university guidelines

• La Trobe University. (2014). “Developing inclusive curriculum.”
Students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and other equity groups

Until the late-twentieth century, higher education institutions tended to be dominated by “traditional or elite views” that characterised students from low-socioeconomic (low-SES) backgrounds according to a “deficit model.” This model “conceptualises differences as ‘deficits’, effectively blaming students for their lack of ‘preparedness’” (Lawrence, 2005). Such an approach has been challenged in recent decades, as the higher education sector has moved toward a “joint venture” approach to bridging the incongruity experienced by low-SES students and those from non-traditional pathways—the student may need to adapt to the new requirements of the university environment, but there is much that universities can do to be more inclusive of such students (Devlin, 2013).

“If they're from some of the suburbs of Melbourne that are identified as being generally lower socioeconomic, likely they went to a school that didn't have great funding, and that didn't have great programs, and that probably didn't have a computer lab where they were spending a lot of their time ... if they're not at that [academic skill level] when they reach us, it's not their fault, by any means ... ready for study does not necessarily mean having all of these assumed skills.”

–Library staff member

Improving access, retention, performance, and outcomes for students from low-SES backgrounds is a major focus of the government’s recent equity-focused higher education initiatives. The 2008 Review of Australian Higher Education (the Bradley report) noted significant gaps in accessing higher education between high-SES and low-SES individuals and recommended targets for dramatically increasing low-SES representation at Australian universities by 2020 (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008). In response, the federal government’s Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP), operating since 2012, has sought to fund programs and initiatives for domestic low-SES students to improve access and retention and help universities meet these targets.

Low-SES cohorts often overlap with other underrepresented groups, including first-in-family, mature-age, and part-time students, and the guidelines and resources below take a broad and inclusive approach to these cohorts. Much of what would benefit
these cohorts are covered above as general guidelines for inclusive teaching, but there are some other considerations that are particularly pertinent for these groups.

**Guidelines**

- Strive to be empathetic and understanding of time-poor students, who may have difficulty making it to class in person or meeting assignment deadlines.  
  - Being time poor is a common aspect of the student experience today, but this can be an even greater issue for students from low-SES backgrounds or non-traditional pathways, who may have no choice but to juggle work or family commitments with their studies.  
  - If during a R&L Point consultation a student mentions not having attended class, or not having time to do the required readings, try withholding judgement and understanding the challenges the student might be facing. Such a scenario might also provide an opportunity to discuss time management and efficient reading skills, and coming from a place of empathy, rather than judgement, will likely make the student much more receptive.

- Be mindful of the expenses involved in university education and take opportunities to promote library copies of textbooks and other cost-free resources available to students.  
  - Academic textbooks can be prohibitively expensive for low-SES students, so if a student mentions not having bought the textbook, try not to respond with, “You would buy the textbook if you were serious about your studies,” but with, “Let’s look at how to use Search to find library copies of the textbook.”  
  - If a student is expressing serious concern about the cost of textbooks, it might be appropriate to encourage them to look at the university’s equity scholarships.  
  - “With all students from a low-SES background, regardless of their cultural background, just the fact that they are in a university environment, we have to understand that [it’s] a taxing environment for everyone – it’s just expensive.”
    - Library staff member

- Be aware of potential gaps in computer literacy and digital skills.  
  - In her report into digital skills among Australian high school graduates, Sue Thomson (2015) notes the significant gaps in digital skills between students...
from high- and low-SES backgrounds, with schools in low-SES and regional areas reporting a lack of access to skilled IT training and reliable, up-to-date IT resources.

➢ “If they’re from some of the suburbs of Melbourne that are identified as being generally lower socioeconomic, likely they went to a school that didn’t have great funding, and that didn’t have great programs, and that probably didn’t have a computer lab where they were spending a lot of their time. ... If they’re not at that place when they reach us, it’s not their fault, by any means. ... Ready for study does not necessarily mean having all of these assumed skills.” – Library staff member

➢ When possible, strive to be flexible in your consultation times and when scheduling library workshops, especially if you know a student (or a group of students) struggles to be on campus within certain hours due to work or family commitments. [classes] [consultations]

➢ Students from low-SES backgrounds, as well as mature-age students and those studying part-time, are often “time poor” due to “balancing financial pressures, family responsibilities and/or significant hours of employment” (Devlin, et al., 2012, p.4). Empathising with this experience of time poverty, and understanding when students struggle to complete assignments due to these circumstances, can facilitate better teaching and learning experiences.

➢ “I might end up dealing with a student more online because I know that it’s difficult for them to come up to campus and come to a drop in ... you adjust your flexibility to be available, as much as you can be, without compromising your own sanity.” – Library staff member

➢ “Why are they not coming [to classes]? Does it come down to the fact that they have to go and work from 5:00 till 10:00, ... or do they live ages away and they have to travel and don’t have their own car and they’re limited to the campus bus ... sometimes you’re simply not aware of what the issues are for them, and you try, as much as possible, to schedule things at times that are a bit more inclusive.” – Library staff member

Additional resources


Gender and sexuality

A lot of progress has been made over the years in terms of gender and sexuality inclusivity in the university environment, but as the Australian Human Rights Commission’s 2017 report into sexual harassment at Australian universities indicates, more can be done to make university culture safe and welcoming for all students (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017). Whenever we interact with students or engage in educational activities, we can play a role in changing university culture by demonstrating and promoting respect for students of different genders and sexualities.

In 2016, Monash University released its “Inclusive Education Guidelines – Diverse Genders and Sexualities,” a document that reflects on some of the direct and indirect discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTIQ+) students in the university environment. These guidelines seek to address heterosexism and heteronormativity, which the document defines as follows:

**Heterosexism** is defined as a set of individual, group or institutional norms and behaviours that result from the assumption that all people are heterosexual. It is the practice of assuming that heterosexuality is inherently normal, rendering the experiences of others – such as LGBTIQ+ people – invisible, unacknowledged or ignored.

**Heteronormativity** is the normalisation of heterosexist ideals and behaviours in our everyday lives on an institutional, interpersonal, and personal level. (Monash University, 2016a)

Heteronormativity can permeate our language and practices, often in ways we don’t expect, so it can be challenging to face them and adopt more frameworks. Such unintentional heterosexism can be harmful to LGBTIQ+ students, who may be made to feel inferior or abnormal. Heterosexism and the reinforcement of stereotypes concerning gender and sexuality can also make students feel unwelcome in their courses of study, ill suited for their desired career, or increase their feeling of isolation.

The guidelines below draw on these existing Monash University resources (see “Additional resources”) and consider them in the library environment, while adding further practical recommendations based on the experience of library staff.
Guidelines

- Use gender neutral language.
  ➢ When referring to generic or unknown persons, use gender neutral pronouns, such as “they” and “them.” For example, an assessment task that requires students to “interview a researcher about his practices” assumes that all researchers are men – replacing “his” with “their” avoids this gender exclusive language.

- Avoid using gendered terms, such as “guys,” when referring to groups of students.
  ➢ "Guys" is a gendered term, yet it is often used to refer to groups of diverse genders. Although it remains a common practice in university culture, saying “ok guys!” to bring a class to attention privileges this male-gendered term and can lead to feelings of exclusion or invalidation on the part of women and those of non-binary genders. Try out different terms instead, such as “ok everyone,” “ok people,” or just “let’s finish up our conversations.”
  ➢ “Somewhere along the way I got used to groups being referred to as ‘you guys’ ... and when I started teaching I’d do it as well ... and then I had some students ask ‘could you please not refer to us as guys?’” – Library staff member
  ➢ “I think we fail to recognise when something is either so colloquial or so cultural that it has become normal at a level when it should not be.” – Library staff member

- Avoid using stock images and creating examples that inadvertently reinforce heteronormativity and stereotypes around gender and sexuality.
  ➢ If you’re using scenarios or stock images that depict couples or families, for example, aim for a diverse representation of different genders and sexualities.
  ➢ Consider gender diversity in images as well. Stock photos in which all doctors are men and all nurses are women, for example, reinforce gender stereotypes around these professions, which can make women studying medicine or men studying nursing feel isolated or uncomfortable.

- Respect students' preferred gender pronouns.
  ➢ Avoid hastily assuming genders of students, and be mindful of using their correct pronoun when it is indicated. Using the wrong gender pronoun is called “misgendering.” If you misgender a student, apologise briefly and correct
yourself, as emphasising your mistake may make the student feel uncomfortable.

Professional development

- Queer 101 [myDevelopment]
  - Queer 101 is a three-hour training event organised by the Monash University Campus Community Division. It explores the concepts of sex, gender, sexuality, and gender expression, with the aim of fostering an inclusive campus culture.

- Ally Network training [myDevelopment]
  - This four-hour face-to-face workshop, run by Pride in Diversity, trains staff to become members of the Ally Network, which aims to promote a campus environment that’s inclusive of LGBTIQ+ students and staff.

Additional resources

- Monash Student Association, Queer Officers
Students with disabilities

Disability Support Services (DSS) can assist students with ongoing physical and/or mental health concerns. They can organise: alternative arrangements for exams and other assessment tasks; short-term loan of accessible equipment; note takers or scribes for students; Auslan (sign) interpreters; and the alternative formatting of materials (that is, making materials available in electronic formats, or in braille).

Each library has a Disability Contact Officer – their details can be found on the “Services for users with a disability” page on the Library website – who can assist students registered with DSS with accessing library services and materials. The contacts can also assist students with the use of assistive software and the Library’s adaptive technology rooms (ATRs).

Guidelines

- Make arrangements for support workers (e.g. notetakers, assistants, interpreters) who might accompany a student with disability. [classes] [consultations]
  ➢ “...for a student who is deaf, normally they need an interpreter and a note-taker to attend the class as well and just having an understanding of that there are other buddies that we’re expecting in the classroom and ...making sure that everything is going OK.” – Library staff member
  ➢ Pause, or repeat the information, for the support worker to catch up (Mortiboys, 2010).

- “Where possible, ask a learner how you can best meet their needs and keep checking if they are being met” (Mortiboys, 2010, p. 112). [classes] [consultations]

- If a student is assisted by a notetaker, scribe, or interpreter, direct your conversation to the student, not their learning assistant. [classes] [consultations]

- Check physical teaching spaces before classes begin, to ensure there are no obstacles that would impede accessibility for students in wheelchairs or with other mobility impairments. [classes]

- Always try to face students when you’re talking—following your mouth movements while you’re speaking is essential for students with hearing impairments who might lip-read. [classes] [consultations]
➢ For classes, this may require scoping out the teaching space beforehand to determine the best place to stand to increase your visibility. Note that students learning English may also benefit from seeing your mouth as you’re speaking.

Wherever possible, avoid putting text in images. When text is necessary (in flow charts, for example), ensure “alt text” is provided, or produce alternative text-only versions. [e-learning]

➢ Students with vision impairment or reading difficulties often use screen reading software, such as JAWS, NVDA (NonVisual Desktop Access), or VoiceOver for Mac, and unless alternative text is provided for images, or text-only versions are produced, visual resources can be inaccessible.

➢ In particular, avoid using Piktochart to generate text-heavy resources. Piktochart exports images, which will not be accessible.

➢ Presenting text in images also means that text cannot be resized (to become more readable) without losing quality.

For embedded classes, try to find out ahead of time whether any students will need special accommodations due to disabilities, and plan your class accordingly. [classes]

➢ This may involve asking the lecturer or unit coordinator if they are aware of any students with special needs.

➢ If you have administrative access to the unit’s Moodle site, you can generate an AAA (alternative arrangements for assessments) report. Although some information will be of limited relevance, it may still indicate whether classroom accommodations need to be made for any students.

Become familiar with the services offered by the library’s Disability Contact Officers, and the university’s Disability Support Services (DSS), so you can refer students on as required. [consultations]

Learn about the software available in the library's adaptive technology rooms (ATRs), so you know the kinds of assistive tools available to students and how these programs can impact use of e-learning resources, so that you can provide accessible documents. [consultations] [e-learning]

➢ The assistive software available includes screen readers (JAWS), screen magnifiers (MAGic), dictation software (Dragon), learning and literacy support tools (texthelp read&write, inspiration) and optical character recognition (OCR) software (ABBYY FineReader).
Knowing how screen readers work, for example, is important when designing online resources, as it helps you recognise the importance of proper page structure, appropriate use of headings and hyperlinked text, and the necessity of alt text for images and icons. Further details about creative accessible documents can be found in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines website.

To use the ATRs, students must be registered with DSS. For more information, contact Disability Support Services (DSS) or talk to one of the library's Disability Contact Officers.

Be mindful of colour blind users and don't depend on colours alone to communicate meaning. Colour blindness affects approximately 1 in 12 men and 1 in 200 women worldwide (Colour Blind Awareness, n.d.). Yet a lack of awareness around colour blindness means that many visuals – particularly graphs, charts and maps – aren't designed with colour blind users in mind. To avoid producing inaccessible visuals, consider the following:

- Use symbols, as well as colours, to convey your message.
- When using colours in charts or graphs, consider using textures as well.
- Avoid colour combinations that are indistinguishable for some colour blind users (e.g. red and green, blue and purple, light green and yellow, etc.)
- For more recommendations, see Collinge (2017) below.

To make visual information clear to visually impaired students, describe and explain images (Mortiboys, 2010).

Professional development

- Teaching inclusively for disability [myDevelopment] [CEED module: online]
  - An online CEED module developed by Disability Services and delivered through Moodle.
- Mental Health First Aid [myDevelopment]
  - “We've got a defibrillator out there ... there's less chance of that defibrillator getting used than somebody needing some sort of [assistance during a] mental health [crisis].” – Library staff member
Additional resources

Monash University guidelines


Other guidelines and standards

- NCSEHE. Students with disabilities.

Learning Disabilities


Autism

- Autism & Uni – a European website for university students with autism. Check out the “Student Stories” section, particularly “Penny and the Library” and “How can Leeds Beckett Library help you?”

Colour Blindness

- Colour Blind Awareness. What is Colour Blindness?
- Daddow, O. (2017). It's time designing for the colour blind became a more integrated component of academic and media training. London School of Economics and Political Science.
Indigenous students

At Monash University, the Yulendj Indigenous Engagement Unit coordinates support for Indigenous students and staff at Monash University. The unit provides a range of programs and services for students, including subject tuition, skills programs, pathways programs, and assistance finding accommodation or applying for scholarships or bursaries. At the Yulendj building, students also have access to a lounge, quiet study spaces, and computers. The Wurundjeri Tribal Land Council gave the unit approval to use the word Yulendj, which means 'sense, intelligence' in the Woiwurrung language.

Indigenous Australians comprise just over 1% of all students enrolled in Australian higher education institutions (Pechenkina, 2015). A lack of awareness of Indigenous cultures among university staff can have a significant impact on Indigenous students’ access to, and retention in, higher education (Evans, 2017). When teachers don’t understand the importance of Indigenous cultural practices and ceremonies, they may not be in a position to respond appropriately during interactions with Indigenous students. The guidelines below provide some best practices with respect to engaging with Indigenous students and Indigenous cultures, including information about Acknowledgement of Country statements.

Guidelines

- Take the time to learn about Indigenous cultural practices, such as smoking ceremonies and Sorry Business, so you can respond with understanding when these are mentioned by students. [classes] [consultations] [e-learning]
  - Spend some time browsing the resources below and consider signing up for an Indigenous Cultural Safety workshop.

- Look for opportunities to integrate learning about, or representation of, Indigenous cultures and traditions into your classes. [classes] [consultations] [e-learning]
  - Universities Australia (2011, p.9) recommends that teachers: “Embed Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in all university curricula to provide students with the knowledge, skills and understandings which form the foundations of Indigenous cultural competency.” Although this is more difficult to do in the library environment, given the one-off, skills-focused nature of
most of our classes, there may still be ways we can build in or draw on Indigenous perspectives. This could involve using positive examples involving Indigenous Australians, or using works by Indigenous authors or artists when drawing on items from library collections.

- For larger classes, or ongoing series of classes, you may wish to make an Acknowledgement of Country. [classes]
  - At Monash University campuses and sites in Melbourne we acknowledge the people of the Kulin Nations, as this is inclusive of all Indigenous people groups in the area. At the Parkville campus, we acknowledge the Wurundjeri people.
  - Suggested wording: "I wish to acknowledge the people of the Kulin Nations, on whose land we are gathered today. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present."
  - Note that an Acknowledgement of Country should always be made at formal library events, such as exhibition openings and conferences, preferably by the first speaker in their welcome or introduction.
  - You can also acknowledge traditional owners in official documents or your email signature—for example: “I wish to acknowledge the people of the Kulin Nations, on whose land Monash University operates. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.”
  - Find out more on the Victorian Government’s “Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners” website.

Professional development

- **Indigenous cultural safety program** [myDevelopment]
  - Cultural Safety – Indigenous: Introduction – A half-day face-to-face workshop that aims to equip staff to make Monash University a safe and welcoming place for Indigenous students.
  - Cultural Safety – Indigenous: Level 2 – A full-day workshop that builds on the knowledge and competencies developed in the introductory session.

- **Enriching Curricula with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content** [myDevelopment] [CEED module: blended]
  - A CEED module delivered through both online resources (Moodle) and a face-to-face workshop.
Additional resources

Monash resources

- Monash University, Yulendj Indigenous Engagement Unit
- Indigenous Cultures & Histories: Indigenous Engagement at Monash University (Library Guide)

External resources

- Universities Australia, National Best Practice Framework for Cultural Competency in Australian Universities (2011)
- National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students”
- Victoria Government, “Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners”
- Reconciliation Australia
Intercultural competence

Monash University is an international university with a culturally and linguistically diverse population. Over a quarter of students enrolled at Monash University are international students (Monash University, 2017b). The Monash student body will become even more diverse with international research and education, and recruiting students from various countries, being a key priority in the University’s strategic plan (Monash University, 2015). Therefore, having intercultural competence is essential to being able to respond to the cultural diversity at Monash appropriately.

A combination of attitudes, knowledge and skills lead to the development of intercultural competence. According to Deardorff (2009), openness, respect and curiosity are three key attitudes that constitute the foundation of intercultural competence in teachers. She also maintains that it is also necessary to have a clear understanding of one’s own culture (i.e. cultural self-awareness) and culture-specific knowledge about other cultures. In addition, active listening, observation, evaluation and reflection skills are also fundamental to being an interculturally competent teacher (Deardorff, 2009).

It should be noticed that the development of intercultural competence is a lifelong process (Lundgren, 2009). Its development entails having continual interest in upskilling oneself in effective intercultural communication, exposure to multiple intercultural encounters, and gaining intercultural knowledge through education and training. The key factor in becoming an interculturally competent teacher is openness to view the world through others’ lenses and understand the world from their viewpoint (Deardorff, 2009).

Some guidelines are provided below to assist library staff to respond to cultural diversity in classes more appropriately. However, it should be noted that the guidelines provided in this document are by no means an exhaustive list.

Guidelines

- Avoid using slang, colloquialisms, and other culture-specific references or language conventions. [classes] [consultations] [e-learning]
  - These may not be understood by students from other cultures, or unfamiliar with the conventions of Australian English. If using cultural references, provide some context so they can be understood by all students.
Make all students feel welcome and appreciated regardless of their cultural or linguistic background. [classes] [consultations]

➢ “You have international students who come up and they’re obviously nervous about their English, and I say, ‘Well, you’ve got more languages than I do!’ … I feel that helps them settle in.” – Library staff member

Remain aware that conventions around personal names differ between cultures, and in some cultures naming conventions might be different from western conventions.

➢ When teaching citing and referencing, for example, it might be worth clarifying what we mean by “first name” and “surname,” and how to cite non-Western names that may not neatly fit into such a breakdown.

Do not stereotype. However, be aware of differing expectations and cultural norms that the students might bring to class.

➢ Students coming from countries without copyright laws
➢ Different values around referencing and academic integrity

Whenever possible, use group/pair work to assist students establish intercultural relationships and recognise the value of diversity (Edmead 2012).

Develop cultural self awareness.

Be open to learn about other cultures as much as possible.

Include non-western perspectives in teaching whenever possible

Demonstrate an ongoing commitment to developing intercultural competence

Engage in ongoing reflection relating to your intercultural competence

Professional development

• Building cultural competence through transcultural capacity [myDevelopment] [CEED module: blended]
  ○ A CEED module delivered through both online resources (Moodle) and a face-to-face workshop.

• Intercultural Competence [myDevelopment]
  ○ A full-day workshop on intercultural competence, focusing on the culturally diverse Monash community.

• Teaching Chinese students [myDevelopment]
  ○ A 45-minute interactive seminar that introduces participants to Chinese language and culture.

• Cultural awareness - Middle East [myDevelopment]
- Cultural awareness - Middle East: Introduction – *A one-day course designed to introduce participants to middle-east culture, designed for all academic and professional staff who have interactions with staff or students from the Middle East.*
- Cultural awareness - Middle East: Advanced – *A one-day course that expands on the introductory session above.*

**Additional resources**

- **SBS's Cultural Atlas**
  - *The Cultural Atlas is an educational resources developed by SBS to accompany their Cultural Competence Program.* It features an interactive world map highlighting the countries of origin of Australia’s largest migrant populations. Clicking on a country will reveal demographic and cultural information, including cultural conventions of communication, etiquette, name and date conventions, religious traditions, and more. *This is a very useful resource for increasing your cultural awareness.*

- Cultural and religious calendars:
  - [Faith Communities Council of Victoria, “Multifaith Calendar”](http://cultural-competence.com.au/)
Appendix B: Inclusive teaching focus group interview (FGI) readings and questions

Readings

*Required reading.* We request that participants aim to read the following documents prior to the focus group. Some of the interview questions will respond to the ideas presented in these guidelines.


*Further reading.* The following reports may also be of interest to participants and could further enrich focus group discussions.


Questions

*Focus group participants will be asked the following questions, time permitting:*

1. Please introduce yourself and your role in the library.
2. What does “inclusive teaching” mean to you, and should it be important to the library?
3. What examples of good inclusive teaching practices have you encountered, or used yourself, in your role at the library?
4. What examples of poor practice, in terms of inclusive teaching, have you encountered in the university environment? How could such situations be avoided in the future?

5. Monash has developed guidelines around some specific aspects of inclusive teaching. One of these resources is the recently released “Inclusive Education Guidelines: Diverse Genders and Sexualities.”

   a. If you have encountered examples of intentional or unintentional gender discrimination or heterosexism in the teaching environment at Monash, or in the library specifically, what have these been?

   b. How could the library improve inclusivity of students of diverse genders and sexualities?

6. Another set of guidelines produced by Monash, and accompanied by professional development courses, is the “Inclusive teaching toolkit for students with a disability.” Reflecting on the principles of universal design and accessibility, how could the library improve inclusivity of students with disabilities across its teaching activities and resources?

7. Improving access, retention, performance, and outcomes for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds is the central focus of the federal government’s Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP). These low-SES cohorts often overlap with other underrepresented cohorts and equity groups, including first-in-family, mature-age, and part-time students.

   a. What challenges could be faced by these groups while studying at Monash University?

   b. How could the library ensure that its teaching practices are inclusive of these cohorts?

8. As recently reported by Jake Evans (ABC News), a lack of cultural understanding among university staff is having an impact on Indigenous access to, and retention in, higher education. Six years ago, the Universities Australia developed a “National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities” (2011), but a lack of significant improvement in this area suggests more can be done to make universities safe and inclusive environments for Indigenous students. How
could the library improve inclusive teaching and cultural competence in terms of Indigenous engagement?

9. Thinking about intercultural competence more broadly to cover the diverse racial, cultural and religious backgrounds represented across Monash University, in what ways could the library improve its inclusive teaching practices to bridge sociocultural differences?

10. Beyond the readings and topics discussed, what other dimensions of inclusion are particularly important within the context of Monash University Library?

Optional question to be asked at the end if time allows:

11. RMIT’s “Guiding principles for inclusive teaching” outlines six core principles that govern their approach to teaching across the university: “Design intentional curriculum”; “Offer flexible assessment”; “Build a community of learners”; “Teach explicitly”; “Develop a feedback-rich environment”; and “Practice reflectively.”

   a. Thinking about the teaching undertaken by Monash University Library, both face-to-face and online, which of these do you find the most important, and why?

   b. Which of these principles do you find least relevant to the library’s teaching activities and resources, and why?
References


http://www.intranet.monash/learningandteaching/learningandteachingquality/inclusive-education-guidelines
https://www.monash.edu/about/indigenous/rap

https://www.monash.edu/access/about-us/strategy


https://www.monash.edu/ups/statistics/summary-reports

https://www.monash.edu/library/about/reports/annual-plan-2018


https://theconversation.com/nothing-has-changed-since-indigenous-higher-ed-review-41354

