Setting the agenda for Inclusive Assessment: an auditing tool

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1   Introduction

This short auditing tool is intended to support the activity of reviewing assessment strategies with a view to establishing inclusive practice. The approach highlights six key points of engagement, as a set of targeted questions, at the following levels:

- Institutional level
- Programme level
- Academic staff level
- External examiner level
- Student participation level
- Assessment level

Each of the six sets of questions are structured in such a way as to help to identify the elements of the framework necessary to establish inclusive assessment.   While each question might elicit a range of answers from a simple 'yes', 'no' , 'none', and 'don't know', to a much more complex reaction delineating the frameworks of institutional policy, practice and procedure, the underlying intention is one of trying to join up and mobilize the necessary components for change. To this end, users of this auditing tool are faced with a supplementary question to each of the leading questions in turn; they are asked: 'Who might respond?' We hope that this approach will afford colleagues the opportunity to reflect upon, and to help to identify, the relevant role responsibilities that may need to be marshalled for establishing the networks of knowledge and points of reference between staff within an HEI, so necessary for constructive change.   The intention being that the pursuit of clarity will facilitate positive action towards making assessment inclusive.

This guidance has been written as a practical adjunct to Waterfield, J. and West, B. (2010) **Inclusive Assessment: Diversity and Inclusion - the assessment challenge**. A University of Plymouth contribution to the University of Bradford Programme Assessment Strategies Project (PASS) funded by the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme. A full version of this can be found at the following: http://www.pass.brad.ac.uk/wp5inclusion.pdf Our agenda in that summary essay was to argue for the need to consider flexibility and choice in assessment provision for the sake of inclusivity, to meet student diversity. The present document is offered in pursuit of the same overall goal and point of view.

This auditing tool is designed as a staff development resource. It may be found to be valuable as a focus for bringing together staff from different institutional *loci* with a range of different but interrelated responsibilities, or as the basis for discussion amongst colleagues already working closely together, or as an *aide memoire* for understanding individual responsibilities.   As a resource it is presented as a springboard for action planning and not as an end in itself.

2   At an institutional level

At an Institutional level	
Some inclusive questions to answer	**Who might respond?**
Are the institution's assessment practices fair and transparent?	
To what extent do the current assessment modes allow for socially diverse students to participate (along the continuums of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief, and age)?	
How does the inclusivity of assessment support diverse students entering the socially diverse world of employment?	
Is the language, delivery and mode of assessment cognisant of diversity in an inclusive way?	
Do you know how well diverse student cohorts do in your current assessment practice?	
How is inclusive assessment embedded into the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of the institution's policies?	
What cross-institutional committees, networks, policies and procedures need to be monitored and updated to facilitate the on-going development of inclusive assessment practice?	
Is inclusive assessment a standing procedure at Faculty Board meetings?	
How is the issue of inclusive assessment addressed in teaching and learning action plans?	
Is inclusive assessment an integral part of the institution's assessment policy?	
Is there a clear sense of who constitutes the stakeholders in defining an assessment practice that is inclusive?	
How does the institution engage employers in the development of inclusive assessment practices?	
Is there student participation in the development and monitoring of inclusive assessment provision?	
Is a clear distinction being made between inclusive assessment for all students and those 'reasonable adjustments' that may be required for disabled students through modified assessment provision and/or alternative assessments?	

3   At a programme level

At a Programme level	
Some inclusive questions to answer	**Who might respond?**
How are the diverse and changing on-course student cohorts represented in programme planning, validation and review for an inclusive curriculum?	
How is the planning and design of the inclusive curriculum reflected in the related planning and design of inclusive assessment practice?	
How is inclusivity embedded in the mapping of assessment at programme level?	
How do inclusive assessment criteria reflect the competence standards required by external or professional bodies?	
How is inclusive assessment practice reflected in the programme validation process?	
In what ways are periodic review/module review based on meeting inclusive assessment criteria?	
How can the academic standards of a programme be guaranteed whilst assessing inclusively?	
How can the flexibility and diversity of choice of assessment be established through modular courses if, or when, set within programme-based assessment objectives?	
How can the loading of assessments across modules and in programmes be arranged to facilitate inclusivity of assessment practice?	
Are some course assessment regimes within the discipline more inclusive than others, if 'yes', are there possibilities for modification or transfer?	
Is there scope for inclusivity through adopting non-cognate assessment methods from different discipline areas?	
What are the specific frameworks in programme design for linking inclusive assessment practice to the learning outcomes, graduate attributes and skills, and employment-related learning in the curriculum?	
How is inclusive assessment addressed in the student handbook?	
How can the composition of programme teams, review and validation panels, etc. be constituted to best reflect the diverse student population?	

4   At an academic staff level

At an Academic staff level	
Some inclusive questions to answer	**Who might respond?**
How do staff propose to establish a repertoire of inclusive assessment modes?	
How do staff conceive of inclusive assessment in the context of programme-level assessment?	
What kinds of information, advice and guidance might staff be required to impart to students to help support flexibility of assessment choice?	
What are the likely consequences for the teaching strategy of adopting an inclusive approach to assessment?	
In what ways might the leaning outcomes need to be revised to relate more clearly to the assessment criteria?	
Do the learning outcomes avoid prescribing how they will be assessed, e.g., could the term 'oral' be removed from the term 'presentation' to make the assessment mode more inclusive?	
What might be the management issues of the timing for the staging of assignment submissions and student study time?	
How can marking criteria be developed where model answers are less relevant?	
How can staff manage the appraisal and marking of a range of much more individualized student assessments?	
What is the likely impact on staff time of meeting the demands of assessing inclusively?	
What types of records do staff keep regarding the validity of different assessment methods in terms of inclusiveness?	
In what ways can student assessment feedback be improved to garner a better understanding of how to make assessments more inclusive?	
What are the likely resource implications of developing more inclusive assessment practice?	
What is the range of activities undertaken by staff during staff development programmes to encourage the use and development of inclusive assessment practice?	
What would be the procedure for staff to develop and evaluate an inclusive assessment pilot?	

5   At an external examiner level

At an External examiner level	
Some inclusive questions to answer	**Who might respond?**
What aspects of the role of the external examiner need to be reviewed to make this activity more inclusively focused?	
How is inclusive assessment represented in the notes and guidance documents for external examiners?	
Are external examiners required to evaluate the validity of inclusive assessment in their report forms on course standards, etc?	
How will the input of external examiners facilitate inclusive assessment practice?	

5   At an external examiner level

6   At a student participation level

At a Student participation level	
Some inclusive questions to answer	**Who might respond?**
How can students be involved in establishing a suitably inclusive assessment mode for a specific module or programme?	
Is there scope for developing an inclusive assessment pilot involving student participation in the planning, monitoring and evaluation processes?	
What mechanisms are in place to impact assess the viability of inclusive assessment in terms of student satisfaction, achievement, retention and progression?	
In what ways is student engagement with assessment practice affected by the use of inclusive assessment?	
How can students be supported to ensure that flexibility of assessment choice both reflects individual student preferences, and still retains the range of assessment modes necessary to encapsulate the demands of the programme or module?	
Are students clear on how they are going to be assessed?	
What are the grounds for requiring a student to undertake an assessment task, when the assessment method makes demands on what the student perceives to be a learning style weakness?	
Is student achievement measured, recorded and evaluated against different types of assessment method?	
What is the impact on assignment grades and pass rates when flexibility and/or assessment choice are offered to students as elements of inclusive assessment?	
Is there a necessity (and if 'yes' in what form) to record student dissatisfaction with an assessment task to support the idea of student ownership of learning and the completion of CPD?	

7   At an assessment level

At an Assessment level	
Some inclusive questions to answer	**Who might respond?**
What do you understand by the term 'inclusive assessment'?	
Which stakeholders will contribute towards the development of making assessments inclusive?	
To achieve inclusivity what measures can be taken to evaluate different assessment methods in relation to specific on-course student cohorts, reflecting their diversity?	
How can the different elements and requirements of the full breadth of the equalities agenda be reflected through inclusive assessment practice?	
Are students involved in the development, planning and reviewing of inclusive assessments?	
What are the details of the specific criteria for evaluating the inclusivity of any given assessment mode?	
Has careful consideration been given to the possibility that a specific assessment method may discriminate against a particular group of students or an individual?	
How does formative assessment inform the pursuance of inclusive assessment that is summative?	
What student feedback is sought to support the on-going development of inclusive assessment?	
Are there assessment methods, and if 'yes' which, that can be drawn from non-cognate subject areas and deployed in an inclusive way?	
Is there scope for developing an inclusive assessment pilot?	
To what extent does the provision of inclusive assessment affect the requirement to offer disabled students modified assessment provision or alternative assessments?	
Has a cost benefit analysis been undertaken to establish the savings accruing from offering inclusive assessments in place of modified assessment provision of alternative assessments?	