



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Policy on Inclusive Learning and Teaching Materials

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1. Preamble

This policy outlines the principles and practical steps that the University finds appropriate to take in pursuit of the [QMU 150](#) overarching goals and drive toward an excellent student experience. These principles and steps aim to further develop the study environment in a way that enables students to maximise their academic potential and derive the most benefit from their programme of study and university experience.

The purpose of this policy is to standardise practice across the University in terms of the anticipation, identification and promotion of good practice in the preparation and presentation of learning and teaching materials. This is for the benefit of all students, including the support of disabled students, self-disclosed or not.

The policy aids the systematic consideration of the effects of teaching, learning and assessment practice at the point of planning, implementation and evaluation to ensure that learning and teaching is inclusive of all students.

This policy aims at maximising the inclusivity of learning and teaching, so that all of our students should have equal access to their course of study. This is consistent with the aspiration set out in the [Student Experience Strategy for 2015-20](#) that we will be committed to social justice, recognising equality and diversity in all that we do.

2. Principles

The principles of this policy are in line with our duty to make reasonable adjustments under the [Equality Act 2010](#). This duty requires education providers to take positive steps to ensure that disabled students can fully participate in their education and enjoy the benefits, facilities and services which education providers offer.

This approach is embedded in the United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education ([HEA 2011](#)) as well the [QAA Enhancement Themes](#).

2.1. This can be achieved by adopting certain types of academic support, also known as reasonable adjustments, and typically and frequently recommended by the Disability Service as standard practices, which can benefit all students.

2.2. Reasonable adjustments are aimed at removing barriers for disabled students as much as is practically possible in order to ensure they can access all learning and teaching materials.

2.3. All materials produced by the University in support of its learning and teaching activities should be accessible to as broad a range of students as possible.

2.4. The standardisation of the anticipation, preparation, presentation and evaluation of teaching and learning activities will ensure that the need for reasonable adjustments for individual students will be minimised.

2.5. These practices will be adopted on a permanent basis across all courses to improve access for disabled students and the implementation of these practices will be of benefit to all students.

3. Scope

This policy standardises good practices across the University in relation to the anticipation, preparation, presentation and evaluation of learning and teaching materials. This policy applies to all students of the University and to all QMU staff who teach and support students.

This policy does not cover students who are studying with collaborative partner organisations, whether within the UK or overseas. It is recognised that collaborative partners may have access to different levels of infrastructure to support learning and teaching, depending on the nature of their agreement, and may employ different

methods of communication and sharing of learning materials. Partners in different countries may also be subject to different legislation. QMU therefore asks partners to demonstrate how they are working towards the principles of the inclusion policy through the following mechanisms:

- 3.1. Setting out their approach to teaching and learning support for students with disabilities in their programme documents and student handbooks;
- 3.2. Considering questions of inclusivity through standard quality assurance reports and procedures (such as annual monitoring, programme review);
- 3.3. Explaining their approach to inclusive admissions through validation and review events;
- 3.4. Seeking advice from QMU regarding good practice;
- 3.5. Adopting QMU procedures where appropriate to the learning context.

Through the process of working together and sharing good practice from QMU, academic links will encourage partners to adopt inclusive learning approaches that will be effective in their context.

4. Communication

- 4.1. The official forms of communication are the University Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and email systems and these should be the primary method of communication.
- 4.2. When using the announcement tool in VLE, staff should ensure an email is sent to individual students by ticking the appropriate box. Information will only be sent to the students' QMU email addresses.
- 4.3. This may be supplemented by other forms of communication (such as plasma screens, lecture announcements etc.) as available and appropriate.

5. Module Descriptors

- 5.1. Module descriptors should be made available at least two weeks before the start of the module.
- 5.2. Module descriptors are likely to be communicated in course handbooks and on the Hub.
- 5.3. Further course details including module guides will be provided at the start of the module on the Hub.

6. Reading lists

6.1. Reading lists, focusing on the core texts only, including book or journal details, should be made available at least four weeks before the start of the module. For all items, book chapters and relevant page numbers should be indicated. Additional reading may be recommended nearer to the start date of the module and during the module.

6.2. Reading lists should indicate priority and/or relevance. The key purpose is so that students can prioritise their own reading.

6.3. There may still be a need to provide some specific support tailored to individual visually impaired students, identified by the Disability Advisers. In these cases, the Academic Disabled Student Coordinators will work with relevant teaching staff and the Disability Adviser to identify and prioritise texts that require conversion to an alternative format.

6.4. Reading lists should be supplied by-module co-ordinators to the Liaison Librarian a minimum of eight weeks before the module is due to begin, with an indication of expected use and demand of the resource. This will ensure the Learning Resource Centre has sufficient time to identify, purchase and ensure core materials are available in appropriate formats.

6.5. In order to support the principle of inclusive learning and teaching materials, and to maximise accessibility, the Learning Services will normally include the purchase of electronic versions of reading list items.

6.6. It should be clearly indicated which of those readings are considered to be key to the module or particularly relevant to a session or theme within the module. It is not necessary for the whole reading list to be ordered. Neither is it expected that students should read only from the reading list provided; they will be expected, through their own research, to identify further readings.

6.7. In some subjects, the compilation of a reading list may be central to the assessment task and therefore no set reading list is provided. Where this is the case it should be communicated clearly to students as part of the module information.

7. Lectures and seminars/tutorials

7.1. Lecture outlines or presentation slides, such as PowerPoint slides, for lectures/seminars should be made available to students at least 24 hours in advance of the class, preferably on the appropriate area in the Hub, for all students to access as required.

7.2. Where the Hub is not used, students must be informed of how to access the materials. Teaching staff will not be expected to produce presentation slides if

these are not appropriate. In other cases, the lecturer, tutor or module co-ordinator will provide an outline of the session 24 hours in advance of the session. This may take the form of a bullet-pointed list of the key themes/content of the lecture/class: it is not required that detailed notes are provided.

7.3. Judgement will need to be exercised in such cases where confidential or 'spoiler' information is contained within materials so as not to compromise confidentiality or impinge on the pedagogical experience. In such cases students should be informed of the presence of such information and may only be provided with partial presentation slides in advance of the class; the full materials to be made available following the class.

7.4. Students should be notified of changes to modules/classes as soon as possible.

7.5. Students should be notified via Hub announcement and email of changes in the module delivery, such as room changes, time changes, cancellations, or changes to arrangements.

8. Documents

8.1. All document structures should be kept simple. Screen readers (used by blind or visually impaired people) work best with well-structured documents.

8.2. Screen reading software reads across a page from left to right and cannot distinguish columns, so use of columns should be avoided.

8.3. Use a sans serif font such as, Arial, Verdana or Calibri.

8.4. Use a minimum size 12 point font – the font should be large enough to be read easily by most people.

8.5. Write in plain English, avoiding jargon except for technical words.

8.6. Text should be left aligned. There should be enough white space to break up the text. This can be done by adjusting line and paragraph spacing settings.

8.7. Use bullets and numbering.

8.8. All pages should be numbered.

8.9. Use the built-in header styles in Microsoft Word – this then enables users to use the navigation pane to move around the document.

8.10. Make use of diagrams, flow charts, screen-shots, summary boxes and callouts to provide additional visual explanation. Consistently used pictograms can draw attention to important procedures or hazards.

8.11. When using tables the header row should be specified and repeated across different pages.

8.12. Add meaningful 'alt-text'¹ to tables and images.

8.13. Images should be used in such a way as not to obscure text.

8.14. There should be sufficient contrast between the text and the background.

8.15. Where possible, use non-glossy paper, off-white is preferred for printed documents.

8.16. Use hyperlinks so that readers can easily move to information in the same document, a different document or a web page.

9. Presentation slides

9.1. Approved templates, or templates adhering to similar principles, should be used in all cases.

9.2. The layout should be simple and clear.

9.3. Where slides contain tables and diagrams, 'alt text' should be embedded to describe the table or diagram.

9.4. If possible, the presentation should be checked and modified as necessary using the accessibility checker.²

9.5. 'Alt-text' and captions should always be used for any images.

9.6. Images should not normally overlap or interfere with text.

9.7. Keep slide transitions simple to avoid unnecessary distractions.

10. Video-based materials

10.1. All video materials should ideally contain subtitles or alternatively a suitable transcript of the content should be available for deaf or hard of hearing students.

10.2. All video materials should ideally have descriptive voice-over options for blind or visually impaired students.

10.3. File sizes should be made as small as possible.

¹ Alt-text (or alt tags) refers to text that is associated with an image that serves the same purpose and conveys the same essential information as the image itself. Alt-text is used to help people using a screen reader to understand the content of images and other non-text content in a document.

² Available in Microsoft Word 2010 onwards – with the mouse click on File tab, Info, Prepare for sharing.

11. Supporting and promoting inclusive learning and teaching

11.1. Teaching staff may access advice and guidance on inclusive teaching from the Centre for Academic Practice (CAP).

11.2. Training on understanding reasonable adjustments and their implementation should be made available to all teaching and support staff. Human Resources is to ensure the provision of that.

11.3. Disability Advisers to provide any additional advice on accessibility and inclusivity to teaching staff.

11.4. All documents for (re-)validation to comply with this Policy.

11.5. (Re-)validation Panels to consider evidence of inclusive teaching and assessment strategies to support students with range of abilities.

11.6. Assistive software on the QMU network to be promoted for the use by all students.

12. Student recording learning and teaching activities

12.1. Students should normally be permitted to audio record lectures, tutorials and supervision sessions using their own equipment for their own personal learning.

12.2. The recording is only used by the individual student for the purposes of personal study (it shall be a disciplinary offence to use the material for any other purpose, or to distribute the material).

12.3. Video recording shall not be permitted without the explicit permission of the member of staff involved.

12.4. All Intellectual Property Rights in the recording remain with the University and the lecturer.

12.5. The recording is done in an unobtrusive manner by the student using their own equipment.

12.6. The recording is destroyed once its purpose has been met (this will always be before the student leaves the University and shall normally be by the end of the exam diet to which the module relates).

12.7. Teaching staff have the right to insist that recording stops in certain circumstances (for example to protect confidentiality where sensitive or personal information is being discussed).

12.8. Students agree to these terms and conditions as part of the contract between the University and its students and consent to it on matriculation.

13. Staff role in recording learning and teaching activities

13.1. All staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning should ensure that microphones are worn and used in the lecture theatres (QMU rooms 2156, 3148, 3168 and 3169).

13.2. Where radio microphones are made available in teaching rooms these should be worn and used by all teaching staff. Table-top microphones are not always sufficient on their own, particularly when lecturers walk around whilst talking.

13.3. Maintenance of the microphones is the responsibility of the Media Services.

14. Implementation of the policy

The Inclusive Learning and Teaching Policy will be supported by advice from the Disability Service. The implementation of the policy is expected to take time. The adoption of the policy should signal that new materials will be produced to adhere to the principles and guidelines outlined here. Existing materials should be adapted in due course. Periodic updates on implementation will come to future meetings of the Student Experience Committee.

Document Control	
Policy title	Inclusive Learning and Teaching Policy
Date approved	t.b.c.
Approving body	Senate
Date effective from	Sept 2017
Implementation by	Sept 2020
Review date	Three years following date effective from
Supersedes	This is a new policy
Indicate whether the document is for public access or internal access only	Public access Internal access only
Officer responsible for policy maintenance and review	Head of Student Services
Summary: This policy sets the baseline expectations incumbent on all Programmes and those supporting student learning in order to ensure that the University sustains a culture of inclusive learning and teaching.	

Further information:

ABILITYNET., [no date]. *Abilitynet Factsheets: multiple topics* [online]. [viewed 1 February 2017]. Available from:

[Abilitynet Factsheets: Full Range](#)

ABILITYNET., [no date]. *Abilitynet: Factsheet: General Guidelines for printed material* [online]. [viewed 1 February 2017]. Available from:

[Abilitynet Factsheet: General Guidelines Printed Material](#)

HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY., 2011. *The UK Professional Standards Framework* [online]. [viewed 1 February 2017]. Available from:

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JISC., [no date]. *JISC/Techdis Guides : multiple guides covering various aspects of inclusive teaching* [online]. [viewed 1 February 2017]. Available from:

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QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY., [no date]. *Enhancement Themes*. [online]. [viewed 1 February 2017]. Available from:

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ROYAL NATIONAL INSTITUE FOR THE BLIND., *RNIB Web Accessibility Guidance* [online]. [viewed 1 February 2017]. Available from:

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[SAIF: Producing Accessible Printed and Electronic Documents](#)

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[SAIF: Accessible Documents and PDFs](#)

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[WEBAIM: Creating Accessible Documents](#)

WEB ACCESSIBILITY IN MIND., [no date]. *Webaim: Creating accessible PowerPoint presentations* [online]. [viewed 1 February 2017]. Available from:

[WEBAIM: Creating Accessible PowerPoint Presentations](#)

WEB ACCESSIBILITY IN MIND., [no date]. *Webaim: Creating accessible PDFs* [online]. [viewed 1 February 2017]. Available from:
[WEBAIM: Creating Accessible PDFs](#)

QMU networked assistive software:

Texthelp ReadandWrite GOLD: provides literacy support
[Texthelp ReadandWrite: Training Resources](#)

Mindjet Mindmanager: provides mindmapping support
[Mindmanager: Training Resources](#)

SSOverlay: provides coloured wash for PC screen
[SSOverlay: Training Resources](#)

Audionotetaker (in assistive technology room only): works in conjunction with audio recordings and provides note-taking support
[Audionotetaker: Training Resources](#)