



## Inclusivity in the Master Population Studies Student Reports Summary: Main Takeaways

### Context

As part of a [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning](#) grant project, students on the course Qualitative Research for Policy & Practice produced a series of eight reports on multiple facets of Diversity & Inclusion in the Master Population Studies. Through interviewing staff & students, conducting lecture observations, reviewing course materials, reaching out to support structures at the university like the [Student Service Centre](#) and beyond the university to organisations such as [VISIO](#), students have developed a series of recommendations for enhancing inclusivity.

Seven cross-cutting themes were identified in these reports, which this summary aims to translate into practical educational advice with supporting educational resources. Resources are hyperlinked where relevant and each point ends with a number in brackets, eg. (1.1), to indicate its position within the overarching inclusive teaching model, the [Universal Design for Learning](#). This report adopts the UDL approach of encouraging the removal of as many barriers to learning as possible through intentional proactive design, whether students disclose personal circumstances or not. If you would like to know more, you can follow these links to broader explanations, further examples, and supporting educational research.

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## 1. Raising Awareness: “I don’t know how to get the information”

In multiple reports the most significant barrier to student support was a lack of awareness regarding available university resources and reasonable teaching adjustments, combined with the responsibility falling on the student to reach out to lecturers and inform fellow students about special circumstances. Recommendations include:

- A standard page of information that can be added to all courses on Brightspace with links to student support on topics like [neurodiversity](#), [studying as a parent/carer](#), [studying with a functional impairment](#), role of [study advisors](#), etc. (9.2)
- A method by which students can indicate desirable accommodation, share pronouns, or simply make their lecturer aware of special circumstances at the outset of a course. For example, a Google Form at the beginning of a course with a short text to make clear that this information is shared optionally and only to help the lecturer prepare their teaching. [This is one model of a similar document from Erasmus University](#) (7.1)
- Implement awareness-raising moments on issues like studying with a functional impairment, to be communicated to students via popular channels for student engagement (for example, from one report, via Instagram) (9.1)
- Optional workshops for staff on issues like studying with low vision (e.g. through [VISIO](#)), with neurodiversity, and as a trans and gender-nonconforming student (3.3)
- Student-staff forums to discuss topics of diversity and inclusion, to exchange knowledge and build a trusted learning community, perhaps bi-annually (8.3)
- Issues of [accessibility](#), including physical impediments like poor signage in buildings and difficult access to classrooms, or digital barriers like poor website interfaces, reported to [toegankelijkheid@rug.nl](mailto:toegankelijkheid@rug.nl) / [accessibility@rug.nl](mailto:accessibility@rug.nl) (7.3)

## 2. Course Design: “A Global South perspective, but still through a Global North lens”

Lecturers were praised for the level of diverse examples in courses and for taking into account where research, readings, or course materials have limitations. The main feedback concerned integrating this as seamlessly as possible and sometimes foregrounding the Global South:

- Avoid using the Global South as the negative counter example to the Global North (7.2)
- The Global North is very often [presented as the norm or standard](#), and the Global South as an additional example. Is it possible to begin sometimes with the Global South? (3.1)
- Guest lecturers are highly valued in terms of increasing diversity in speakers, topics, and teaching styles, but students sometimes feel that those lectures need to be more clearly embedded in the flow of the course and not appear to be standalone moments. The lecturer should take care to “connect the dots” for students (3.2)
- Where possible include more [diverse examples or case studies](#), such as international or non-heteronormative data (7.2)



- If not, facilitate conversations on the course materials about “[what is missing and why?](#)”. For example, if data only includes heterosexual couples or Global North countries ([3.2](#))
- Provide time and space for students to share examples from their own context (for example, national or gender identity) if they wish or opportunities to “break in” to conversations (for more about this, see section 6 on “Teaching Activities” below) ([7.1](#))
- Students are often interested in broader contexts, e.g. the “human experience” or politics of phenomena like migration. Does this fit within the learning objectives? Or can further resources (texts/videos) be offered to those who want to find out more? ([3.3](#))
- Heighten the perceived salience of readings and make them as targeted as possible.
- Make use of mixed learning resources like video clips or podcasts if possible ([8.2](#))
- Where applicable use - and highlight the use - of literature from the Global South ([7.2](#))

### 3. Accessible Teaching Materials: “*Another font size, different colours*”

Neurodiversity and studying with a functional impairment can be greatly supported through small actions and consistent attention when creating or reviewing teaching materials. Appropriate use of language and attention to [representation](#) within teaching materials and the online environment establishes the foundation for an inclusive classroom.

- Consider accessibility when making or reviewing slides. Utilise the available [digital accessibility tips](#) and the [Digital Accessibility Quickguide](#) ([1.1](#))
- Always draw attention to key terms and words. Make sure they are not just spoken but also written on slides. Distinguish and emphasise key words and data visually ([2.1](#))
- Make slides available in advance of class. The benefits to accessibility outweigh “spoilers,” and slides can be designed with sharing in advance in mind ([1.1](#))
- Lecture recordings are helpful to numerous categories of students, including students who are parents. Share when possible (within Faculty guidelines). Some courses share “upon request” or to students who have indicated special circumstances, but the latter puts the responsibility to disclose back on the student ([1.2](#))
- Use creating new materials or reviewing existing resources as an opportunity to improve aspects like inclusive [language use](#) and incorporating greater [representation](#) ([7.3](#))
- Consider challenges that could arise for students during timed classroom activities. For example, a quiz with fewer questions and more time is preferable ([4.1](#))

### 4. Physical Learning Environment: “*I get very, very distracted by other people*”

Impediments and distractions in the physical learning environment can easily pull attention away from learning activities. Specific needs might be different depending on the student, but some generalised approaches can be implemented.



- If possible, provide an optional quieter zone (inside or outside the room) for students to sit during group work ([7.3](#))
- Some students are distracted by the noise or screens of other students' laptops. Other students rely on digital assistive technologies. Consider the possibility of a laptop free zone in the class, normally at the front but only on one side of the room (students with low vision, for example, will often prefer to sit at the front and use a laptop). This might be a measure only implemented upon request for reasonable adjustment ([7.3](#))
- Minimise external noise when possible, for example shutting doors if the hallway is busy or windows if there is construction nearby ([7.3](#))
- Make use of natural light as much as possible ([7.3](#))
- Try to ensure [clear pathways](#) around the classroom for mobility, which might include some limited reconfiguring of desks and chairs ([7.3](#))

**5. Classroom Management: “Explicitly say, I don’t want to say something stupid, so I don’t know”**

Best practice and appropriate behaviour in the classroom is often first modelled by the lecturer. Setting the tone and clear expectations can facilitate a safe and engaged learning environment.

- Raise awareness of what a good working environment looks like (not speaking while the lecturer is talking, etc.). Set expectations or [co-create agreements](#) with students ([8.3](#))
- Students value the perceived [approachability of their lecturers](#) very highly. This was defined as a lecturer who: makes clear they were contactable regarding concerns; took issues seriously and where feasible made changes; and demonstrated transparency in their approach to teaching and student support, including admitting if they make mistakes or if their expertise (including around diversity issues) was more limited ([9.3](#))
- Make use of inclusive language. For example, some lecturers introduce themselves including their personal pronouns; avoid gendered language when referring to students collectively; use inclusive terminology (partner instead of wife/husband). If unsure, you can also refer to the [university language guide](#) ([2.1](#))

**6. Teaching Activities: “I hadn’t experienced a classroom where there were so many different viewpoints and people were very open about it”**

Students highly appreciate [active learning](#) and classroom activities that intersperse the traditional lecture format with more interaction. This allows students to relate material to their personal context, engage with less familiar peers, and form the relationships that students cited as foundational to personal support. Active learning has also been shown to [narrow the achievement gap](#) for underrepresented students and facilitate [higher order learning outcomes](#). Group work was a common topic in the reports, with both working with trusted peers and encountering new



perspectives from less familiar peers (experiencing diversity as a resource) noted positively. To address this apparent contradiction, context is key.

- Courses should strongly consider how students are introduced to one another, the material, and the online environment, with special attention to [community building](#) activities. These include [ice breakers](#), [research “speed dating”](#), etc. (8.3)
- Consider where you can implement [active learning](#) moments and interactivity into lectures. This can range from small moments of discussion ([think-pair-share](#)) to a class format that divides a two-hour lecture into one hour of traditional lecture format and a second hour of small group discussions (8.4)
- When working in groups, students sometimes value working with peers they trust to speak openly and build confidence. This is particularly suitable for quick [think-pair-share](#) moments that break up a lecture or for more substantial group projects (7.2)
- At other times, students appreciated interacting with less well known peers. This can be good for small group discussion moments in class or randomised [peer feedback](#) (8.3)
- Topic-based group projects give students the option to prioritise subject interest over familiar peers and can be preceded by activities like [research “speed dating”](#) (7.1)
- Advanced group activities like the [jigsaw technique](#) can offer the combined benefits of working in familiar groups and with new people. These take [more class time](#) and preparation (5.1)

## 7. Assessment: “You are already stressed for your exam”

[Assessment](#) is essential to evaluate student learning ([summative](#)) and can be used as a tool to monitor and support student progress ([formative](#)) during a course. Removing barriers here allows students to focus on demonstrating their learning and mastery of a topic.

- If possible include digital options: for example, make use of [digital exams](#). This facilitates use of accessibility tools like screen readers (4.2)
- If your [learning outcomes allow it, you might vary the options and student choice](#) for submission. For example, a video option instead of a presentation, or a spoken assessment option instead of an essay (7.1)
- Make information regarding when extensions or other forms of flexibility are possible and the role of the [study advisors](#) in supporting students (9.2)