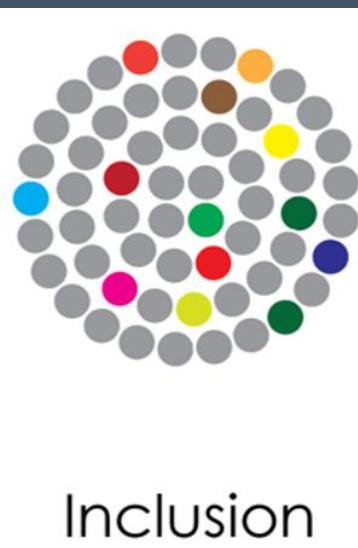


WHAT IS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

And how does it apply to my teaching?

Inclusive education is a fundamental human right underpinned by Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).



The *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* ([CRPD](#)) is a legally-binding international treaty that has been signed and ratified by the Australian government. The UN recently published [General Comment No. 4](#) (2016), which articulates the right to inclusive education and defines it as:

...a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences.



The CRPD affirms students' rights to changes and modifications that are already required under Australian anti-discrimination legislation. The [1992 Disability Discrimination Act](#) (DDA) and [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) (DSE) apply to all students with a disability meeting the [DDA definition](#) across all levels of education, including university education. Under the DDA and DSE, education providers must offer a person with a disability the same educational opportunities as everyone else through changes known as "reasonable adjustments". Such adjustments might include changing assessment procedures or providing course materials in different formats. The DSE outlines [educators' obligations](#), which include the obligation to **consult** students about the adjustments they need and which best suit them. However, inclusive education is about more than making changes if and when a student with a disability enrolls. Indeed, there is [evidence](#) that inclusive education benefits *all* students and, when incorporated into [planning](#) and teaching, inclusive practice is more efficient because [accessibility](#) reduces the need for ad hoc, retrospective adjustments.

- Student choice in mode (content delivery and assessment)
- Intentional design of accessible learning and assessment materials
- Adjustments to reduce/remove barriers to access & participation
- Students (or their associate) must be consulted about the adjustments that are designed and implemented
- Use of respectful person-first language (e.g., student with disability)

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS



Provision of choice



Proactive design of accessible learning and assessment materials



Making adjustments



Student consultation

As articulated in the CRPD [General Comment](#), inclusive education requires anticipation of barriers to access and participation in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. It is as much about the provision of choice and proactive [design of accessible](#) learning and assessment materials, as it is about making adjustments (e.g., provision of readers, scribes, support plans).

Did you know...?

Dips in kerbs were originally created to improve the safety and amenity of wheelchair users. This hugely successful innovation was followed by the walk signal at traffic lights and the later addition of both audio and tactile components. These simple additions ensure the safety and independent mobility of people with sensory impairments, but they are also helpful to the broader population. This proactive approach to planning for accessibility came to be known as “universal design” and the principles apply just as much to education as they do to architecture.

Inclusive education is deeply informed by the [social model of disability](#). Put simply, the social model shifts the focus from remediating impairments to (pro)actively dismantling the barriers that impede access and participation. Thinking and planning in this way has been around us for a long time, but not always in education. Leading the way have been architects and urban planners who have increased accessibility by designing out barriers and incorporating supports, reducing the need for costly retrospective changes.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

UDL is an approach to planning for accessibility that draws on the three main principles



1. PROVIDE MULTIPLE MEANS OF ENGAGEMENT



2. PROVIDE MULTIPLE MEANS OF REPRESENTATION



3. PROVIDE MULTIPLE MEANS OF ACTION

University education already offers so much that is consistent with [UDL](#) and in some ways is more inclusive than school education. For example, the availability of recorded lectures (UDL Principle 2) enables students to re-watch lectures and to stop the video to take notes or replay misheard or misunderstood sections. Accessibility can be further enhanced by lecturers ensuring that visual resources (e.g., slides/ video clips) are clear and that they do not overburden working memory. Slides, for example, should briefly summarise and complement verbal instruction. They should be able to be read quickly by students and should not [split their attention](#) between audio and visual information. Diagrams that help explain concepts are beneficial, slabs of elaborative text and additional points are not. [Inclusive language](#) is another essential element. Patronising terms like “special needs” or dehumanising acronyms (e.g., ATSI) are never used. Use person-first (student on the autism spectrum) unless individuals nominate identity-first preference: Autistic/Deaf.