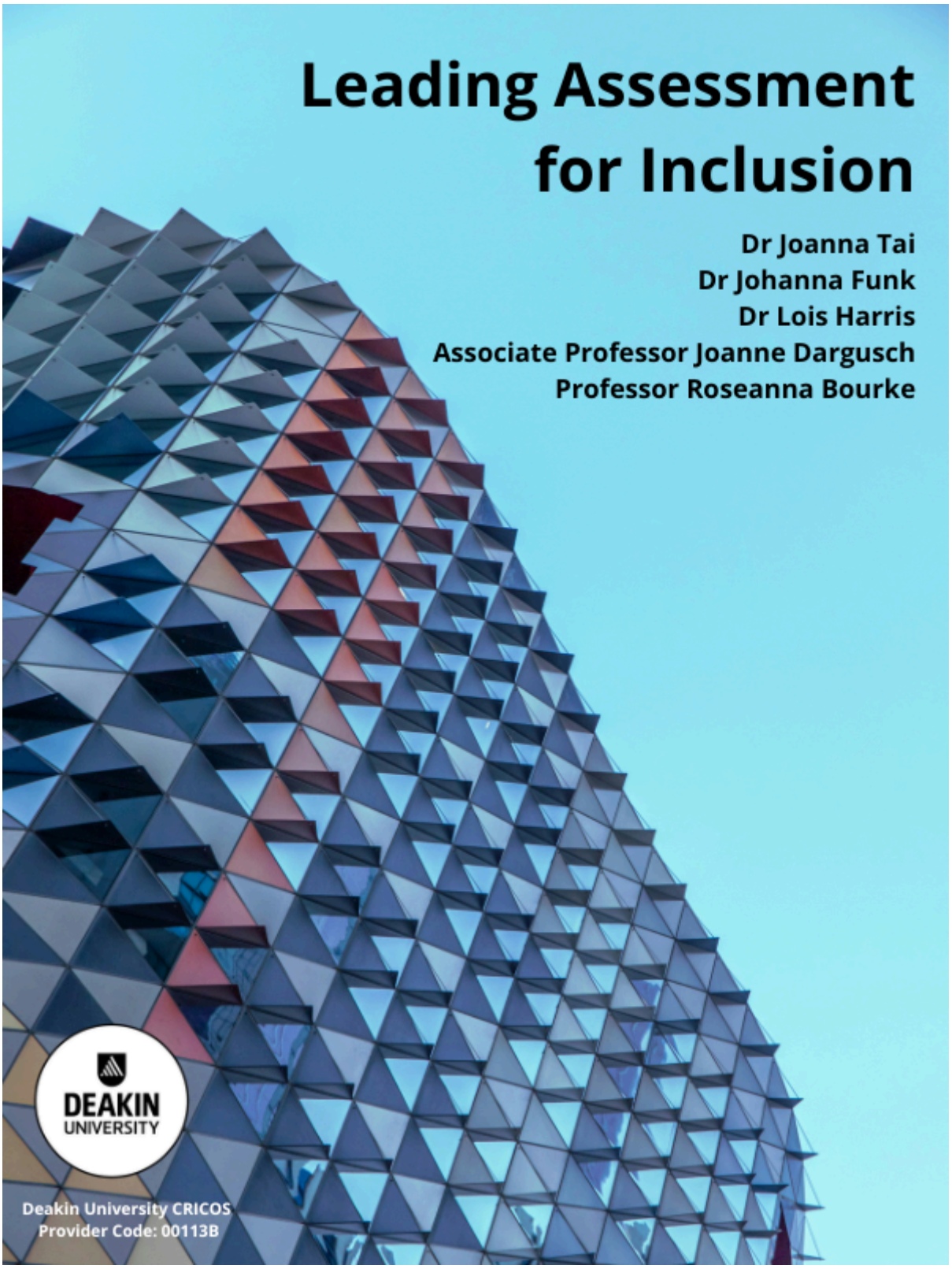
Leading Assessment for Inclusion
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Leading Assessment for Inclusion

LEADING ASSESSMENT FOR INCLUSION

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the unceded lands, waterways, sea and sky across the places where we developed this resource.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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- It has been optimized for people who use screen-reader technology.
  - all content can be navigated using a keyboard
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  - images have alt tags
- Information is not conveyed by colour alone.

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INTRODUCTION

'Leading' Assessment for Inclusion

Inclusive assessment benefits all students' learning and retention. However, current systems rely on *accommodations* rather than improving assessment design in ways that are socio- culturally and research informed.

This resource is an outcome of a project which explored sector-wide understandings of inclusive assessment policy and practice within Australia and New Zealand.

We hope that this focus on the distributed leadership of assessment for inclusion aligns with the idea that it's not just about what you do individually, it's about how you can lead, promote, inspire, and support others to also do the same. We want you to be able to take this resource and share it with colleagues, using it to talk about problems with assessment from an inclusion perspective, and to address them in ways which are appropriate to your context and situation.

Female civil engineer assesses flood risk management plans by ThisisEngineering on Unsplash, used under the Unsplash Licence

We think most people are good human beings who want to do right by others. However, it's one thing to know that we need to do something differently, but it's another thing to actually do it. Within the context of higher education, assessment, and inclusion, we believe that leading by example and inspiring others to do better are really important factors to success. Change comes from within us all.

How this Open Education Resource has been structured

While we have sequenced the chapters in what we think is a logical order, each covers a different aspect of assessment for inclusion, and you might choose to jump around or move back and forth as it suits your interests and needs. Case study examples, assessment for inclusion concepts, and an inclusive assessment framework will be presented in the following chapters to expand on how leadership of assessment for inclusion can look at all levels of higher education.

Chapter 1 focuses on the definitions, data, and legislation basics of Assessment for Inclusion.

Chapter 2 supports the conceptualisation of assessment for inclusion; social justice, sustainable assessment, assessment for cultural inclusion, universal design for learning, and assessment validity.

Chapter 3 and 4 discuss two distinct but nuanced stages of assessment; principles for assessment design and the subsequent design cycles informed by them.

Chapter 5 shares practical examples of assessment for inclusion we've collected from our research.

Chapter 6 discusses opportunities and barriers for higher education, and the elements of different institutional groups within the academy.

Chapter 7 shares strategies for each of these elements within the academy to exercise agency in supporting assessment for inclusion from their own locus of power.

Chapter 8 shares a range of useful assessment for learning links and resources, as well as our Assessment for Inclusion framework resulting from this research project.

Throughout this book, you will also find questions for reflection at the beginning and end of each chapter. Here's an example to start:

Considering the philosophical purpose of education...

How can higher education assessment support students' development in the following areas?

- *capability,*
- *knowledge,*
- *understanding,*
- *concepts,*
- *application,*
- *professional skills and qualifications,*
- *employability,*
- *civic and economic participation,*
- *social goods*

1.

DEFINITIONS OF ASSESSMENT FOR INCLUSION

What do we mean by inclusive assessment, and assessment for inclusion?

Who are we talking about when we refer to equity groups and what are our obligations?

Definitions

The concept of inclusive assessment has existed for some time, defined as "the design and use of fair and effective assessment methods and practices that enable all students to demonstrate to their full potential what they know, understand and can do" (Hockings, 2010, p.34). While there has been a longstanding recognition that inclusion is important in higher education, as it is in broader society, this is still an aspirational ideal in the context of assessment. Inclusive assessment considers learners via culturally informed means (Lambert et al., 2023), moving away from Western-centric, ableist assessments of students' learning. This means thinking about new and multiple assessment approaches for learners to demonstrate what and how they have learned, so that assessment represents, and is inclusive of, all learners. Teachers' feedback is part of this process, as "**Assessment for Inclusion** seeks to create equitable assessment and feedback practices, enabling all students to effectively demonstrate their learning" (UCD, 2024).

Inclusive assessment is critical in higher education, as a 'one size fits all' assessment is no longer perceived as inclusive or equitable. At the most basic level 'equity' may mean providing different assessment activities and choices for students, but it also means curriculum and pedagogy need to be transformed.

Tai et al. (2023) argued that assessment for inclusion should take into account "any learner, no matter what their characteristics or background" (p. 384), including, but not limited to, socio-economic status, cultural background, and gender.

a close up of a book with a lot of words on it by Mick Haupt on Unsplash used under the Unsplash License

Equity Groups and Australian Higher Education Data

Within Australia, there are many different student groups to consider in relation to teaching, learning, and assessment design. Since the 1990s, the Australian government have defined the following six equity groups as a central focus within higher education to collect statistical data (Willems, 2010):

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
2. people from low socio-economic status backgrounds
3. people from remote, rural or isolated areas
4. people with disabilities
5. people from non-English speaking backgrounds, and
6. women in non-traditional areas.

Contemporary efforts to improve equity in higher education have focused on the initial four groups (ACSES. 2024). You can read the official definitions for these groups on the ACSES website.

While recent government efforts to improve equity have focused on the needs of these groups, there are many other groups who need to be taken into account when considering task content and design, for example, students who are the first in their family to attend a university or other higher educational

institution, LGBTQIA+ students and culturally diverse students (Tai et al., 2021). Students may also simultaneously belong to multiple equity groups, which can impact how they engage with university systems and assessment (Harris et al., under review). There may also be equity-like characteristics which aren't formally defined or categorised (e.g., being a single parent) that act in similar ways. Equity group definition and membership only begins to define ways in which assessment for inclusion can be led within higher education. Some students may not be an 'official' member of an equity group, yet still stand to benefit from inclusive practices. There is a need to think beyond categories of disadvantage, towards designing assessment so that it can be inclusive of any student. The research presentation below provides more nuances to this issue.

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Assessment for Inclusion: are we all heading in the same direction? by Dr Joanna Tai for the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Assessment Quality Special Interest Group .

Image attributions list

The focus of equity funding changes as government and social priorities shift. For example, at the moment, major Australian funding for equity (i.e., Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program, HEPPP) funds projects to meet the needs of regional and remote students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and those from low SES backgrounds; students with disabilities and those from other equity groups (e.g., English Language Learners) are not the focus of this work. As equity group definitions and priorities do change over time, it is important to consider what inclusion means and who should be included.

In their review of the higher education literature, Stentiford and Koutsouris (2021) highlighted that inclusion was used both in the context of disability inclusion and social inclusion. They found that some authors focused on a more traditional concept of 'disability inclusion' drawn from disability studies and special education, which focuses on the integration of students with disability into mainstream classrooms. Others however had a more expansive notion of inclusion, broadening considerations to groups marginalised on the basis of social identities and characteristics, such as culture and ethnicity. Overall, the concept of inclusion is related to recognising *difference* across the student population.

Consider why it might be important to distinguish between different kinds of inclusion: would you change how you might be inclusive for these different groups? *How many forms of inclusion can you think of?*

Obligations under Australian anti-discrimination legislation

In the Australian context, there are different anti-discrimination legislation acts that attend to disability inclusion and social inclusion. Federal legislation covers **disability inclusion**, particularly the Disability Discrimination Act, and the Disability Standards for Education. The Disability Discrimination Act (1992) makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person, in many areas of public life, including gaining employment, participating in education, getting or using services, renting or buying a house or unit, and accessing public places, because of their disability. The Disability Standards for Education (2005) specifically outlines the rights of students with disability in supporting access and participation, and particularly the obligations of education providers to offer equitable access to education opportunities. In 2020, the Australian Government conducted the latest review of the Disability Standards for Education and suggested four directions for reform, which gives an indication of what still needs to be done in terms of disability inclusion:

- empowering and supporting students with disability and their families
- strengthening the knowledge and capability of educators and providers
- embedding accountability for the Standards throughout the education system
- building awareness and capability in the early childhood education and care sector

Legal frameworks for **social inclusion** arise from state based Anti-Discrimination Acts (e.g., Equal Opportunity Acts discussed below), which cover personal characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, sexuality. Beyond the requirement not to discriminate against people with particular characteristics, there is also a positive duty under these acts to be inclusive through eliminating discrimination, including harassment and victimisation.

  - Victoria
  - NSW
  - ACT
  - Tasmania
  - Queensland
  - Western Australia

- Northern Territory
- South Australia

Legislation tends to align with current societal values and, regardless of personal opinions or experiences, it is everyone's responsibility to abide by the law. Within the context of assessment in higher education, it is important to remember that these requirements exist and consider them when designing assessment and making sure tasks genuinely determine *whose* work meets relevant standards or criteria.

Beyond these more general legislative instruments which apply across education sectors, the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold standards) 2021 sets out universities' requirements as an Act of Parliament, and specifically articulates that university courses *must* account for diversity, and ensure all students have equivalent opportunities to achieve academic success. The framework covers all aspects of universities' operation, and TEQSA – the sector regulator – offer insightful guidance on how diversity and equity should be supported with respect to the framework.

This section stipulates:

1. Institutional policies, practices, and approaches to teaching and learning are designed to accommodate student diversity, including the under-representation and/or disadvantage experienced by identified groups, and create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds.
2. Specific consideration is given to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
3. Participation, progress, and completion by identified student subgroups are monitored, and the findings are used to inform admission policies and improvement of teaching, learning, and support strategies for those subgroups.

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International Perspectives

Each country will have different anti-discrimination legislation and other education-related legislation and policy which determines the obligations of higher education providers. Different countries may have different priorities with respect to promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion. For instance, Finn, Nadarajah, and Tai (2024) describe the differences between the United Kingdom, Australia, and Malaysia. In the United Kingdom, students leaving social care and first in family to attend university are also highlighted as important groups for inclusion. On the other hand, Malaysia has a focus on geographic location, race (including Indigenous groups), and socio-economic status. International terminology and the specific name of the legislation may also vary, for instance, there are "protected characteristics" in the United Kingdom as part of the Equality Act (2010), in Ireland there are the Equal Status Acts 2000-2008, the Disability Act 2005 and the Higher Education Authority Act 2022, and in Finland, there are the Non-discrimination Act (2014) and the Universities Act (2009). We share these examples to highlight that when moving between national contexts, though the specifics may differ, there is substantial commonality in values around inclusion.

Many of these countries have a range of policies and procedures to ensure inclusion and inclusive practices in higher education, that are underpinned by a range of international conventions. One of these is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 24 (UNCRPD) identifies the importance of people accessing tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning "without discrimination and on an equal basis with others". Article 24 2(e) states that "Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion".

The Tertiary Education Strategy in Aotearoa New Zealand (2020) comprises eight priorities for tertiary

education organisations in New Zealand, all of which incorporate the inclusion of learners within a bicultural country and multicultural context.

1. the achievement and wellbeing of all learners
2. ensuring that places of learning are safe and inclusive and free from racism, discrimination, and bullying
3. reducing barriers to success and strengthening the quality of teaching to give learners the skills they need to succeed in education, work and life
4. taking account of learners' needs, identities, languages and cultures in their planning and practice
5. incorporating te reo Māori and tikanga Māori into their everyday activities
6. collaborating more with whānau, employers, industry and communities to support learners to succeed in work.

Putting legislation into practice: You can be a leader in inclusive assessment

As you consider inclusive assessment in your own practice, it's important to remember that as different students have differing needs, there are many ways to make assessments more inclusive. You might have had a lot to do in this space previously, never thought about it before, or be somewhere in between. You might have experienced inclusive assessment as a student – or not. It is common for our own experiences of assessment, and the disciplinary traditions of assessment that we have been exposed to, to influence how we approach assessment design (Bearman et al., 2017).

We acknowledge that there are seldom "correct" or singular "best practice" approaches that will automatically improve inclusion. Proponents of inclusion have indeed argued that the binary of "inclusive" and "not inclusive" assessments is unhelpful when we seek to move everyone towards inclusion. Hence, the term "assessment for inclusion" has been suggested as a useful phrase to support conceptual and practical change (Tai et al., 2023, UCD, 2024).

It is vital for people like you to reflect on current assessment tasks and their contexts, designing solutions that work for the range of students engaging in the course. As a starting place for your planning around making assessment more inclusive, it may be helpful to consider your university and course level data.

- Are there groups of students who are not achieving at parity with university/course averages?
- Why might that be so?
- What barriers have you personally noticed or have students identified in relation to assessment tasks?
- What kinds of accommodation and extension requests are commonly lodged?

These data can provide clues as to where current assessment tasks may not be meeting student needs.

How do leaders and practitioners talk about inclusive assessment?

Part of the CAULLT project sought to identify the different ways that inclusive assessment is discussed and conceptualised. Across the university leaders and practitioners we interviewed, we identified five distinct conceptualisations, with increasing complexity, described in the table below. While all might be considered inclusive assessment, you'll note they imply very different approaches to the intended function and design of assessment.

Conception of inclusive assessment	**Description – from least to most sophisticated or inclusive**
Adjusting assessment conditions	Responding to individual student needs
Creating choice and options	Recognises individual capabilities and offers flexibility for students across a cohort
Valuing different knowledges	Embeds multiple cultural and epistemological perspectives in assessment tasks
Partnering with students	Offers dialogic and co-design approaches to align with learner goals for assessment
Expanding collaborations	Uses assessment as a catalyst to achieve both learner and community needs and goals

(Harris et al 2025)

In this resource, we're going to provide some examples of how others have approached inclusion within their own design practice. These examples and ideas will hopefully support you to generate solutions that are relevant for your own context and best meet your students' needs.

Questions for reflection

- How have you been previously involved in assessment design and implementation, and what parts were more, or less focused on inclusion?
- What are your / your institution's main priorities regarding inclusion and assessment?
- What considerations, beyond the legislation, exist in your context?
- What influences your concepts of disability? Accommodation? Social inclusion?
- Which student equity groups were you responding to when trying to make assessment more inclusive? Who else might have been advantaged or disadvantaged in the assessment design?

- Which students – who may not have an official diagnosis or membership of a specific equity group – may still stand to benefit from assessment for inclusion?

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2.

CONCEPTS TO GUIDE ASSESSMENT FOR INCLUSION

Why should we make assessment inclusive?

What purposes are important, and what impact do we want to achieve?

Concepts which have been developed with respect to assessment and learning are helpful in developing ideas around the purpose and intended impact of inclusive assessment. In this chapter, we introduce you to a select few which have been driving recent conversations and action. These are: social justice (which has strong philosophical roots), the distinctions between assessment design, adjustments or accommodations; the promotion of sustainable assessment, assessment for cultural inclusion, Universal Design for Learning, and assessment validity.

Assessment for Social Justice

McArthur (2016) uses two conceptualisations of social justice – the capabilities approach and critical theory – to consider the ways in which key assessment issues would look differently through these alternative lenses. McArthur's work on assessment for social justice also helpfully frames concepts of inclusion, introducing philosophical perspectives which can help to guide what actions might be taken to design assessment in inclusive ways.

Professor Jan McArthur discusses the evolution of these considerations in the presentation linked below:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/leading-assessment-inclusion/?p=41#oembed-1

CRADLE Symposium Keynote by Professor Jan McArthur for the Centre for Research and Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE) at Deakin University

McArthur also offers a written overview in this open-access book chapter: Reflections on Assessment for Social Justice and Assessment for Inclusion (2023) where she suggests that *assessment for social justice* is an umbrella concept under which 'different possible practices, dispositions and beliefs can coalesce and find meaning' (p. 21). She started this work as a response to the procedural views of fairness and justice that were predominant in assessment, and added to this that the *outcomes* of assessment should also satisfy calls for social justice. This can be thought of both as how students (who are naturally a heterogenous or diverse group) experience assessment, but also how assessments have the power to change what happens in the world, through the validation of particular forms of knowledge, and the ways that people subsequently think and act: how assessment shapes future graduates and their values. This broader call for social justice through acts and experiences of assessment can help to inform the goals of what is intended by assessment for inclusion. It helps us to identify which groups might benefit most from an inclusive perspective, and also opens up opportunities for different perspectives on what might be the result of including particular student groups through assessment design.

This work asks us therefore to consider: What capabilities are facilitated in students through assessment design? Can accommodations be useful if the assessment design inherently alienates the students' capabilities? Addressing the particular capabilities students use in assessment- or cannot use due to intersecting characteristics; (physical, social, cognitive, and otherwise) – can provide conditions for more socially just assessment procedures and practices.

Assessment Design, Adjustments, or Accommodations?

Commonly, for students with particular characteristics, circumstances, or identities (e.g. students with disabilities, students with an acute medical condition), some kind of special consideration is made, which leads to an adjustment or accommodation with respect to an assessment task. This could be extra time on a task, assistive technology (e.g. voice to text), or a different environment to take the assessment in. In many jurisdictions, this is required by anti-discrimination law (as we outlined in Chapter 1) as part of an education provider's obligations. Such adjustments or accommodations are usually perceived as helpful, yet in many cases they might not necessarily address a particular student's problem or concern (Waterfield & West, 2006). Furthermore, while accommodations might support students in the shorter

term by 'removing' a barrier, it may be better to design tasks which instead scaffold their capability and improve their performance, in alignment with students' future imagined careers (Tai, 2023).

Adjustments or accommodations can also be problematic, where the range of options readily available (i.e. satisfies the 'reasonable' aspect of reasonable adjustments) do not actually mitigate the problems the student has with the task. In a research project focussing on high-stakes assessments (such as exams), Tai et al. (2022) highlighted the range of student experiences relating to assessment adjustments: while at times they help students feel included, at other times, they did not. The seminar below offers an overview of the project findings, including how pre-emptive and considered assessment design could be changed to improve inclusion and mitigate the need for adjustments.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/leading-assessment-inclusion/?p=41#oembed-2

Re-imagining Exams: How do assessment adjustments impact on inclusion? by Dr Joanna Tai for the Centre for Research and Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE) at Deakin University. Image attribution list

This work asks us to consider how necessary accommodations and adjustments are, if there might be other assessment designs that do not require adjustments for students with particular conditions or characteristics. Given the administrative burden (for both students in accessing and staff in implementing) of adjustments, it is also worth considering adjustments might have an impact across a whole system of assessment. Although there will always be a need for adjustments (Johnstone, Ketterlin, Geller, & Thurlow, 2022) they also have limitations which **Universal Design for Learning** (see below) might be better able to address.

Sustainable assessment

Different stakeholders (e.g. academics, students, employers) have different priorities for the reasons that we do assessment within universities. For instance, university administrators and employers might both want to be sure that graduates can actually do the things that a university degree warrants they can. This is the assessment ***of*** learning purpose, which is about certification. Students, academics, and even broader society might also expect that assessment, as part of a broader curriculum, supports students to learn relevant knowledge, or develop particular skills, including through formative feedback opportunities. This is commonly called assessment ***for*** learning.

However, potentially even more important is sustainable assessment, which contributes 'to learning beyond the timescale of a given course [...] that meets the needs of the present in terms of the demands of formative and summative assessment, but which also prepares students to meet their own future learning needs' (Boud & Soler, 2016, p.400). This perspective asks us to consider how students might benefit from what they do in the assessment task beyond the immediate university setting.

The key question to ask then, to understand if the assessment is sustainable, is *what's in it for them?* In the context of student diversity and supporting inclusion, this requires us to think with greater imagination and more broadly about what students might do outside of the university environment, and particularly to consider the multiplicity of goals they might have. While it might seem obvious in some areas – e.g. not all law students become solicitors or barristers – sustainable assessment has a central focus on ensuring that students are able to operate in the world without requiring teachers or assessors (other than themselves) to inform them of when they've done a good job, and when they need to pursue further development.

Discover more about these distinctions between the purposes of assessment in the video below.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/leading-assessment-inclusion/?p=41#oembed-3

Some critical issues in enabling impactful assessment, by Professor David Boud and Professor Geraldine O'Neill for Quality and Qualifications Ireland

The concept of sustainable assessment prompts questions such as the following:

- *Aside from exams mandated by accreditation and professional bodies, what happens to assessment after the unit or course is completed?*
- *What portion of it is transferrable beyond the course students are studying, and further, outside of the higher education system?*
- *What elements of assessment are 'disposable'?*

Therefore, when considering how to design and support more inclusive assessment practices, it is important to consider not only the purpose of the assessment for the university, or the degree, but also what students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse characteristics might choose to engage in beyond their time in a higher education institution.

Assessment for cultural inclusion

We acknowledge that the term 'inclusion' can be problematic in itself, implying an underlying power dynamic that allows for some to include 'others', and thereby reinforces the structural inequalities that exist in education. Because admission to and participation in higher education and its culture embodies this dynamic, we see assessment for inclusion as a way to ameliorate and transform these problematic aspects of existing power relations.

Inclusive assessment includes a strong alignment to cultural considerations. This means that students need to 'see themselves' in the assessment task if they are to demonstrate their learning. Cultural considerations mean incorporating diverse assessment methods that acknowledge students' cultural knowledge(s), and, importantly, that students with Indigenous heritage are able to stand strong in their Indigenous knowledge. Collaborating with students using familiar contexts in applying their leaning can create a more relational dynamic between institutional and student cultures. Alongside developing a better understanding of the cultural groups we are working with, gaining a better understanding of the epistemological assumptions and cultural biases inherent in our own practice is a positive move towards assessment for inclusion.

Critically disrupting dominant narratives in education that promote *exclusion* of any form of culture can help transform practices and show respect for the lived experiences of students, and culturally distinct ways of learning. Lambert, et.al. (2023) posit a Culturally Inclusive Assessment Model, mapping across the justice dimensions which Adam (2020) defined. The model suggests different ways cultural justice can be developed in assessment content, pedagogy, and processes.

Dimension	Common themes
Justice-as-content: decolonising what is taught.	Removing deficit discourse from learning materials, texts, discussions, assessment examples and feedback. Correcting under-representation or misrepresentation.
Justice-as-process: decolonising education processes: a plurality of thought is designed into the course curriculum, assessment, and content	Two-way learning; relational processes; personal positioning and critical consciousness; student co-creation of decolonised learning materials as an assessment task
Justice-as-pedagogy: students are encouraged to critically engage, reflect on, and even challenge what is being taught; assessments or whole subjects designed to teach the ideas of socio-cultural justice, decolonisation or cultural competence.	Modelling and scaffolding critical thinking and reading skills to challenge deficit discourses and power difference; learning how to apply socio-cultural justice, diversification and decolonisation to new experiences and contexts.

The Culturally Informed Assessment Model, (Lambert, et al., 2023) CC-BY-ND-NC., adapted from Adam, 2020 CC-BY 4.0

Developing a deeper systemic appreciation and dismantling of injustices can lead to more meaningful inclusive practice that acknowledge, if not ameliorate or eventually transform, cultural misrecognitions baked into conventional practices (Hodgkinson-Williams and Trotter, 2018).

An example from New Zealand is in the concept of 'aromatawai'. In Te Reo Māori aromatawai (assessment) means 'Aro' or to take notice of, and matawai (to examine closely). Assessments from a Māori perspective are underpined by six dynamic kaupapa that are inextricably linked. You can read about these in the resource Aromatawai and the Principles of Assessment (NZQA, 2022). The six principles are: Te reo (the value and importance of te reo and tikanga Māori is recognised); Manaakitanga (respectful relationships between teachers and students, and enhancing the wellbeing of students); Kaitiakitanga (quality teaching and learning); Whanaungatanga (student success is supported and encouraged by positive relationships that are mana enhancing, or lifting up the student); Rangatiratanga (students' world views are reflected and achievement supported); and Pūkengatanga (tasks are authentic and contextualised). The resource attached can provide you with more detail on how these are used.

colored pencil lined up on top of white surface by Jess Bailey on Unsplash used under the Unsplash License

Universal Design for Learning in assessment

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is one way to positively impact students' experience of assessment. How units and assessment tasks, along with related communication, are designed directly impacts on student and staff experience and outcomes of assessment, especially during asynchronous attendance.

Universal Design for Learning suggests that a multi-mode approach will support the majority of students in their learning and foster individual agency. There are three main domains to consider: engagement, representation, and action or expression. These can be enacted with respect to access, perceptions, and executive function. Assessment design usually encompasses aspects of all these domains, from the topics that are chosen in the assessment, to how instructions are communicated, and the ways in which students are invited to respond.

Therefore, efforts to make assessment more inclusive include offering students choice, programmatic approaches to assessment and co-design of assessment, and policies that promote inclusion. Universal Design for Assessment has yet not been widely implemented within the sector and may be insufficient alone since there may always be cases where legally, we are required to make accommodations (Johnstone, Ketterlin, Geller, & Thurlow, 2023).

Furthermore, limited theorisation and operationalisation of inclusive assessment and assessment design processes mean tradition and taken-for-granted assumptions about how assessment should be done continue to be the norm. Re-designing assessment and curriculum entirely can also be a daunting task for incoming staff, who may not have resources allocated to such endeavours.

One proponent of UDL, Thomas Tobin, instead suggests a pragmatic "plus one" approach:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/leading-assessment-inclusion/?p=41#oembed-4

Applying Universal Design for Learning by Thomas Tobin for Disability Awareness

The Australian Disability Clearinghouse for Education and Training has many resources that can help you better understand and implement UDL. These resources can be accessed on their website.

Assessment validity

Does the assessment actually measure what it purports to measure? This is assessment validity, and it has long been thought of as relating to psychometric properties of various standardised tests. However, this core idea of validity should apply across all forms of assessment and is important from the perspective of inclusion: if the assessment doesn't actually measure what it intends to and instead measures or tests other aspects of performance or capability, then this is a problem since decisions will be made to exclude individuals or prevent progression on the basis of irrelevant data.

Messick (1994) argued for six integral aspects of validity: content, substantive, structural, generalizability, external, and consequential. He argued that all aspects needed to be accounted for (rather than being substitutable) and highlighted the importance of the quality and relevance of the content, the substantive rationales for the underlying theoretical processes demonstrated, the scoring structure and relevant weighting, the generalizability across different groups, settings, and tasks, relationships to other external measures or patterns, and outcomes of the use of the test and how they might perpetuate problems of bias or injustice.

Modern perspectives on validity also emphasise the processes within assessment, the types of evidence considered, and also in terms of consequential validity – the impacts of the assessment on learning. Dawson (2022) offers the following example:

> "when students sit a multiple-choice exam focused on lower-level knowledge they may choose to cram right before the test rather than space their study out, choosing an effective short-term strategy, with consequential validity effects in the form of poorer longer-term learning." (p 117).

Therefore, validity is important to consider not just to ensure that assessments are appropriate with respect to the outcomes or capabilities they intend to assess, but also to support learners in their lifelong learning journeys.

This chapter has offered some different perspectives on approaching inclusion and assessment.

Depending on local context and practice, some of these concepts may be more useful than others in any given situation.

Questions for Reflection

- What values are important to you when you design, create, or implement assessments?
- What disciplinary or professional values and principles inform the way that assessment is conducted? How might these interface with equitable experiences and outcomes for students?
- What adjustments or accommodations have you made to your assessment tasks?
- How might you avoid having to make adjustments through design changes to assessment?
- What makes your assessment design sustainable beyond the course or unit?
- How could you design tasks so the main goal is supporting student learning rather than assessing their achievement?
- What might a "plus-one" approach to accessibility look like in your assessment tasks and the forms of assessment scaffolding you provide in your course?
- How do you ensure validity in your assessments?
- Who would you approach to learn more about inclusion and assessment? Are there colleagues who are already working or leading in this space? What communities of practice already exist?

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3.

ASSESSMENT DESIGN PRINCIPLES

How can we turn assessment for inclusion concepts into principles for action?

What aspects of assessment influence students the most?

What might inclusive assessment design look like?

Remember when Covid-19 caused a 'pivot,' including changes such as shifting examinations online, using technology, increasing time limits, and moving to open-book examinations? This had a perhaps unexpected but incredibly useful impact of increased inclusion for many students, who were able to use familiar equipment in spaces they had adapted to their own needs (Tai et al., 2023). Staff implementation of access requirements and assessment flexibility also increased.

However, as the 'return to campus' was orchestrated, previous flexible arrangements that had become the 'new normal' were often rescinded. Though assessment changes have been the most likely of Covid-related changes to remain, there is still much that we can do to improve assessment design for inclusion, and the recent pandemic demonstrates just how possible some of these changes are (Broadbent et al 2023). Universities and lecturers need to carefully consider how time, technology, equipment and materials contribute to inclusion or exclusion.

woman biting pencil while sitting on chair in front of computer during daytime by JESHOOTS.COM on Unsplash used under the Unsplash License

The multiple tensions in assessment

From an institutional perspective, assessment is used to ascertain students have met the appropriate outcomes at the requisite level. This is important for certification and validation of qualifications. Due to the high-stakes nature of this process for each individual student, it is extremely important that students are not disadvantaged or excluded on the basis of characteristics or abilities that are unrelated to the outcomes being judged.

However, due to assessment task design and implementation, constructs unrelated to the learning outcomes often impact on success – even when accommodations are applied. For instance, in a project on students' experiences of inclusion in exams, Ellie, who was studying a health professional degree and had dyslexia, recounted one of her experiences:

> "It was an exam that tested your knowledge on medical terminology, and the pathophysiologies behind multiple conditions.
>
> They did things like crossword puzzles and then you might have a sentence which has been broken into four sections, and then jumbled up so you have to put the sentence in order. You had to put your corresponding number to the order that should be matched with the jumbled-up sentences. Okay, firstly, the sentences are jumbled up, it's in a box that's so

> small and then you have to put numbers with it. **I don't think that's a true measure of testing someone's intelligence in regard to content**.
>
> Then, they were asking us certain things like spelling, like you have to spell these really, really long words correctly. It might be like, 'What is the medical terminology for this?' The word could be so ridiculously long, and my scribe might not know how to spell it, and then I would be trying to phonetically spell things out, and **if I couldn't get it right, my scribe would get really flustered and I just missed out on marks**."
>
> (data from Tai et al., 2022)

In this example, there are multiple challenges which the task creates for the student due to her dyslexia, including aspects related to the layout (i.e., small boxes), structure (i.e., jumbled sentences), and foci (i.e., spelling), none of which seem to align with the stated learning outcome, which was the knowledge of medical terminology. In instances like this, assessment should be revisited with a close focus on the learning outcomes. For example, the first two problems Eliza experienced are probably able to be eliminated by changing the task, since neither format is necessary to use. The final one, spelling, is a bit more complicated. Here, staff need to consider if correct spelling is or is not actually a learning outcome. If spelling is an important part of learning and communicating medical terminology, it needs to be stated so students understand it is a requirement and the reasons for this, with appropriate support offered.

Students also prefer assessments that help them connect to their future goals. For example, Eliza noted:

> "The career path that I'm following, you can't do it at home, you have to go into the clinic, you have to be scrutinised by the doctors checking your work. I feel it's something that you need to get used to doing." (Tai, Mahoney, et al., 2023, p. 396)

This example illustrates how students might see that more authentic forms of assessment are inclusive of their futures. In these situations, it can also be helpful to consider what types of authentic restrictions or affordances might be available within a workplace or other environment where they might apply their skills (Tai, Ajjawi, et al., 2023).

There is a moral obligation for universities not to act directly or indirectly to disadvantage those enrolled. Beyond this prevention of *negative* experiences, we might also have *positive* duties to ensure students are supported in their learning and assessment, in a similar way to how sex discrimination legislation now requires 'proactive and meaningful action' from employers to prevent and eliminate sexual harassment, discrimination, and violence (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2024).

Previous justifications for inclusion and fairness of assessment focused on population level outcomes, with abstract ideas of what happens in assessment. Instead, we argue (in alignment with McArthur's 2018 work on Assessment for Social Justice) that we also need to focus on how students actually experience assessment.

man in orange and white striped polo shirt beside woman in black and white floral dress by ThisisEngineering on Unsplash used under the Unsplash License

Principled Assessment for inclusion

There are many ways to conceptualise assessment design. Frequently constructive alignment (Biggs, 1999) is invoked as the mainstay of assessment design: this requires learning objectives, learning activities, and assessment tasks to align with each other, and moreover, that students actively participate or engage in the activities in ways that allow them to construct their own learning. This approach suggests that for assessment to be inclusive, it's not just the end task that matters, but also all the processes and activities that lead up to the task. Students agree with this: in a project exploring diverse students' perspectives on assessment, Tai, Dollinger and colleagues (2023) found that aspects such as assessment timing, instructions, information, and interactions with staff, as well as broader access to learning resources, were all part of what made assessment inclusive.

Tai, Ajjawi, et al. (2023) offer three design principles which may help to ensure diverse students are not disadvantaged through assessment.

Design principle	Why this approach is inclusive	How you might apply it
Authenticity in assessment	Can support students in their diverse future goals and help students to build capabilities which are useful beyond the university. Can represent diverse values, contexts, and situations within tasks, and provide real-world situations which students can see apply to them. Students can 'try out' tasks and roles to understand possible future opportunities.	• Authenticity to self: integrate students' values, capabilities, and future aspirations • Authenticity of task: share expectations about acceptable support or restrictions in completing work • Authenticity in our values: involve diverse students in assessment design (Ajjawi et al., 2023)
Programmatic assessment	Offers multiple opportunities to be assessed and receive information on performance to inform improvement and support student development. When decisions about progress/certification are made on an accumulation of tasks, this allows for students with fluctuating conditions/ unexpected circumstances to ensure their best performances are included. Requires clarity and communication of learning outcomes.	• Take a programme-level perspective on required outcomes • Realise not everything has to be assessed at every occasion • Consider how tasks are linked or related • Scaffold students' capabilities over time
Assessment for distinctiveness	Highlights the importance of diversity and difference, and that students, across their assessments, can compile or curate their distinctive set of capabilities to be prepared for their unique post-university destinations. Offers opportunities for capabilities to be demonstrated in different ways.	• Open-ended tasks could support students to develop their distinct capabilities • Offering a variety of ways to demonstrate learning aligns with Universal Design for Learning

Remember, designing assessment for inclusion doesn't mean you remove all challenge from the assessment. Rather, the task should be explicitly scaffolded within the course and assessment design, and proactively consider different potential outcomes and formats. To do this, we need to start from the learning objectives and consider the priorities and what is important. This might also involve reconsidering learning objectives to remove extraneous or irrelevant components. For example, if the learning objective is "to write an essay on schools of philosophy", is the writing of a comparative essay the important capability, or are you more interested in how the student understand the history of philosophy? If both are important, how can you make this clear through your unpacking of criteria?

Then, you might consider assessment design and its subsequent practice by all involved. It might be that there are different ways to think about meeting the objectives (e.g. might students prefer to discuss orally or record a video), some of which might be more appropriate than others in particular contexts. There might also be considerations about what level of pre-existing capability or understanding students have about

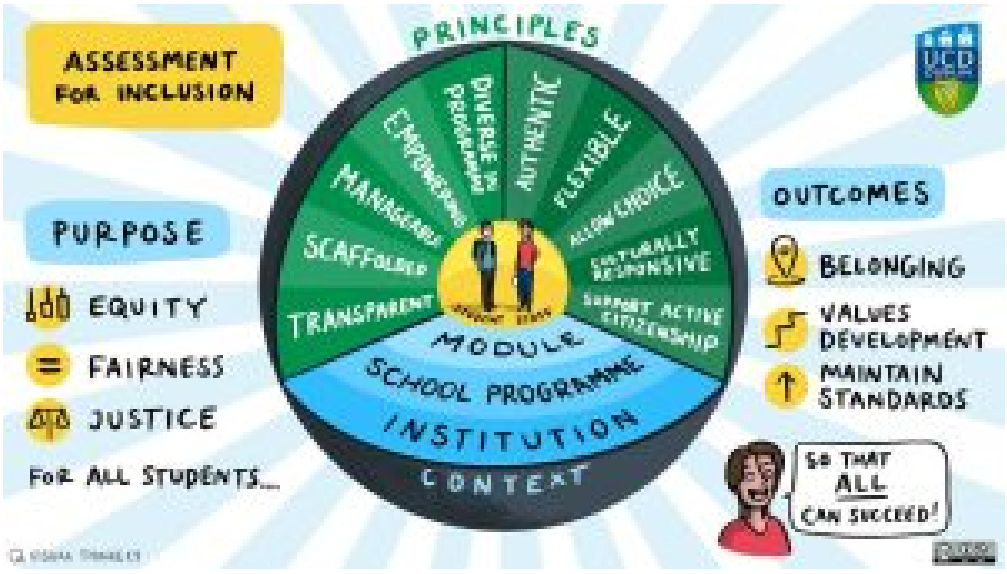
assessment formats; if nobody knows what a video essay is, then you will need to teach them about this in addition to the content/topic.

Being inclusive is about offering everyone the opportunity to do their best rather than restricting possibilities for high performance to those who already happen to know how to effectively work in specific genres.

Another approach to designing assessment for inclusion

Colleagues at University College Dublin (UCD, 2024) also offer an alternative approach to designing assessment for inclusion. In September 2024, they launched an Assessment for Inclusion Framework designed to ensure equity, fairness and justice for all students. The Assessment for Inclusion Framework is based on 10 Design Principles to maximise the chance of success for all students, and in partnership with those students. These design principles are not intended for every individual assessment task, activity or method, but serve to create an assessment literacy for the development of inclusive assessment practices and policies. As a starting point, think about the diversity of student cohort, the context (discipline, programme, module, etc.) and the stakeholders.

Colleagues at the University College of Dublin, including Sheena Hyland and Geraldine O'Neill, have also developed a framework for assessment for inclusion.



This framework includes a series of ten principles as represented in the diagram above, with a contextual focus to promote outcomes of belonging, values development, and the maintenance of standards for all to succeed.

In their elaboration on the framework, they also highlight three phases of implementation actions:

1. cultivating self-awareness
2. use the Assessment for Inclusion Design Principles: Considering where to start
3. operationalise processes for change

The framework drills deep down into assessment for inclusion design and practice at individual, team, and programmatic levels, and offers a scaffolded and well- linked pathway for developing practice. Below, Associate Professor Geraldine O'Neill introduces the University College Dublin Assessment for Inclusion framework.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/leading-assessment-inclusion/?p=364#oembed-1

University College Dublin Assessment for Inclusion Framework: Principles and Practices by Professor Geraldine O'Neill for Quality and Qualifications Ireland

When introducing inclusive assessment, there is a greater likelihood this will ensure sustainable assessment in action (where students learn to self-assess their own learning long after the programme or course) in workplaces and community contexts. For inclusive assessment to be sustainable, we are reminded of Boud's seminal work on sustainable assessment where he argued that it enables "students to meet their own future learning needs" (Boud, 2000, p. 151). It is recognised also, that this means the power relationship between teachers and learners needs to change. Students trialling this approach in a student-staff partnership identified how this worked for them and ironically how it shifted their focus from assessment and on to their learning, and for teachers "partnership in the assessment process allows us to *know* our students and to provide them with a range of means to show what they understand" (Bourke, Rainier & de Vries, 2018, p. 10).

Questions for reflection

- In your context, which purposes of assessment are most prominent?
- At your institution, what do you think the level of self-awareness is regarding inclusive assessment practices?
- For the students you encounter, what might their main motivations to participate in

assessment be?

- How much do your assessments focus on the present, and how much do they consider the future of students and society?

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4.

ASSESSMENT DESIGN CYCLES

What is your role in assessment design?

When do you start planning in relation to assessment?

What do you need to consider in designing assessment?

What types of evaluation processes occur with respect to assessment?

Assessment is more than just the task: the lifecycle of assessment design

The concept of constructive alignment reminds us that to students, the assessment is more than just the task at the point when students submit it (Biggs 1996). Assessment facilitates learning, both as students build the skills needed to complete the task and also via the task itself, highlighting the importance of alignment between tasks and all desired learning outcomes. To assessment designers, this "more than just the task" also extends to the lifecycle of assessment design within an institution.

Bearman et al (2017) investigated the practises of university assessment designers in detail, leading to the development of an Assessment Design Decisions framework. Their findings identified a range of considerations that assessment designers need to take into account. The segmented doughnut representation of the six categories suggests that all are equally important and that there is no hierarchy of how these aspects need to be attended to. This in turn suggests that potentially focussing on any of these areas would be fruitful for improving assessment design. The full framework is presented in the box below, and aligns with the earlier principles around sustainable assessment outlined in Chapter 2.

"Assessment Design Framework" by Margaret Bearman, Phillip Dawson, David Boud, Matt Hall, Sue Bennett, Elizabeth Molloy and Gordon Joughin, © Australian Government Department of Education, used with permission. Available for re-use under the original licensing conditions, CC Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 licence.

The Assessment Design Framework

Purposes of assessment

How can assessment: (1) support student learning; (2) generate grades that will form part of subsequent certification; and (3) equip learners in making future judgements?

Contexts of assessment

Which of the following attributes needs to be considered in assessment design? What specifically about each can be taken into account? How can tensions between different needs be reconciled?

- characteristics of learners/students
- institutional assessment principles and policies
- professional, vocational or employment-related requirements

- departmental, disciplinary and personal norms, expectations and ideas
- overall program and role of the unit/module
- learning environment, e.g. class size or mode (online/face-to-face/blended).

Learner outcomes

How does assessment align with, and promote, desired student outcomes, including: (1) unit/module learning outcomes; (2) overall program learning outcomes; (3) professional requirements; and (4) students' general professional or intellectual development.

Tasks

Students need to engage with a range of tasks to: (1) develop and (2) demonstrate their learning.

- What is the rationale for each task?
- How do the tasks drive learning? What do the tasks specifically require learners to do?
- How will successful completion be judged?
- How are tasks best distributed across the semester?
- How will students contribute?
- Which tasks will be graded?

Feedback processes

- How are multiple feedback opportunities achieved through the distribution and relationship of tasks across the unit/module/overall program?
- What types of feedback information will be provided and by whom?
- How will learner performance be used to influence the (re)design of later tasks?

Interactions

- How will resistance or engagement from learners or colleagues influence assessment processes?
- How will learners understand what is required in the assessment task(s)?
- What information will be needed to improve this assessment for subsequent occasions?
- What associated changes in teaching and learning activities will be required?

"Assessment Design Framework" (PDF 972KB) by Margaret Bearman, Phillip Dawson, David Boud, Matt Hall, Sue Bennett, Elizabeth Molloy and Gordon Joughin

Turning to the context of inclusion, it is then important to think about what happens over time, and the stages at which design for inclusion needs to be considered. This spans course planning, the development of the tasks, implementation, evaluation, and further planning for inclusive changes. The inclusive assessment design framework was developed by Tai et al. (2022) as an outcome of their NCSEHE funded project which explored how student experienced inclusion in high-stakes assessment settings, such as exams. The framework offers step-by-step considerations of assessment design decisions, which are fully elaborated in the box below.

The inclusive assessment design framework and lifecycle

Plan for inclusive change

Planning requires a focus on inclusive change within a unit or broader program. This may be a process of iterative articulation across several cycles of the framework. Useful first steps are:

- Consult students and accessibility staff: What are their experiences of enablers and barriers to successful participation in assessment? What problems with assessment have been encountered previously? What is the pattern of adjustments?
- Consider your student cohort: What is known about their characteristics and intersecting

identities? How can you find out?
- Reflect on the overall pattern of assessment tasks: How do assessment tasks assess what is necessary across the unit/program?
- Find exemplars of inclusive assessment: What other designs/approaches can inform you?

Develop assessment tasks

'Tasks' describe activities such as exams and assignments and form the fundamental building blocks of assessment design. Consider what you are asking students to do or know, over what time and in which space. Bear in mind inclusion is about accommodating diversity (e.g., disability, neurodiversity, social diversity and so on) and you may need to balance different tensions.

- Consider the Universal Design for Learning guidelines across tasks in a unit or program.
    - Engagement: How do the tasks align with students' diverse motivations/goals/interests but at the same time allow them to demonstrate the learning outcomes? How might authentic assessment help create this balance?
    - Representation: How can the assessment instructions, rubrics, or marking guides be communicated to suit diverse audiences? How can people with diverse backgrounds and characteristics be recognised within assessment representations?
    - Expression: How might you offer students variety or flexibility to demonstrate or express their capabilities? To what extent does the mode of expression rely on students being able to know or do things unrelated to the learning outcomes?
- Develop scaffolding for diverse students to meet the task requirements. Supports may be practical (e.g., templates), technical (e.g., accessible software), cognitive (e.g., exemplars) or relational (e.g., enable discussion about the task).
- Anticipate common assessment adjustments: How can flexibility in task mode, format or submission timing potentially avoid the need for individual modifications? How might requirements unintentionally advantage or disadvantage particular groups of students?
- Locate the task within a broader unit or program context: In what ways can all the tasks within a program shift together to be more inclusive as a whole?

Implement assessment

As students are introduced to and then complete assessment tasks, flexibility and responsiveness to unanticipated issues are required to support inclusion. An explicit, low-fuss and supportive approach to adjustments can strengthen relationships and reduce stress. During the implementation phase, consider how to:

- Communicate with assessment stakeholders: How might you ensure that students and access staff share an accurate understanding of processes and task requirements? How might you proactively reach students whose circumstances may put them at risk of attrition, and in a timely manner (e.g., before census date)?

- Expect some adjustments: In what ways can you streamline processes to reduce the effort required to request and implement adjustments?
- Adapt to unanticipated circumstances: How do students' needs and capabilities match your expectations? What types of assessment-related support might address any issues?
- Monitor for continuous improvement: What insights can you gain about the inclusiveness of your assessment design and processes through tutor feedback, moderation meetings, and informal student comments? What do you need to change on-the-fly? Who else is involved and should be included in the discussion?

Evaluate and reflect

The evaluation phase allows for iterative improvement and overlaps strongly with the planning phase. A key challenge is noticing your own blind spots when considering others' perspectives. The following considerations can help educators articulate how inclusive the assessment was in practice:

- Think about assessment design in light of student submissions: How did student work match the aspiration of an appropriate and fair way to demonstrate learning outcomes? How did the assessment task enable diverse students to express/demonstrate their capabilities?
- Consider students' experiences: Were there many requests for particular adjustments? How did the adjustments work in practice, including the unintended consequences? What patterns of underperformance or failure might need further investigation?
- Revisit what you asked students to do or know, over what time and in which space: What data or evidence, including formal evaluation, suggests that requirements unintentionally advantaged or disadvantaged particular groups of students?
- Consider resourcing: In what ways might you reallocate energy/efforts to ensure inclusivity?
- Share success: Who else would benefit from this work? What opportunities do you have to share with others?

Taken together, the assessment design framework and the inclusive assessment lifecycle offer a wider range of possibilities for moving towards more inclusive practice in assessment. In the following chapter, we will move to practical considerations in assessment for inclusion.

Questions for reflection

- Which aspects of the assessment design decisions framework stand out to you as being important for inclusion?
- Where do you contribute to the lifecycle of inclusive assessment design?
- Where are possibilities for you to make inclusive changes?
- If hands-on assessment design isn't formally part of your role, how might you influence others to design inclusive assessment?

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5.

ASSESSMENT IN PRACTICE

What are the differences between current implementation of assessment and inclusive practice?

What does implementing assessment for inclusion look like?

While assessment might be designed with the best of intentions, how assessment is enacted in *practice* where the 'rubber hits the road' (what we do – or don't do) is ultimately part of what students actually experience. This chapter begins by offering some practice principles, and then provides some examples of inclusive assessment design and practice, drawn from participants in our research projects.

Inclusive practice can offer opportunities for improving inclusion, without necessarily making huge changes to the way that assessment is designed. Nieminen (2022) offers five areas of action to promote the inclusion of marginalised students within academic communities through assessment.

Principle	**How does the principle contribute to disabled students' agency and inclusion?**
Rethinking the assessment accommodation system	Widening the repertoire of accommodations enables many forms of participation and thus agency.
Anti-ableist work	Shifting the focus from assessment design into re-shaping the ableist contexts of assessment. Anti-ableist work provides a fertile ground for inclusive assessment to flourish.
Student partnership	Reminding that AfI is not done *for* students but *with* students. Co-designing assessment directly promotes accessibility and student agency.
Celebrating human diversity in assessment	Recognising marginalised forms of knowledge in assessment. The agency of students is promoted as they are enabled to grow as future professionals through assessment with their diverse strengths and needs.
Interdependence	Emphasising the communal aspect of AfI. Without interdependence, 'inclusion' is likely to remain individualistic and performative, creating a false sense of inclusion.

From these sets of practical principles, we can see that the student, their lived experience, and many diverse capabilities are a central focus rather than being peripheral considerations.

man wearing headphones while sitting on chair in front of MacBook by Wes Hicks on Unsplash used under the Unsplash License

Assessment for Inclusion in Practice

To offer concrete examples of what Assessment for Inclusion might look like in practice, we provide four examples drawn from our research (Harris, et al. 2025). These are just some of the many examples participants shared, highlighting the many ways assessment can be made more inclusive. For each example, we share some context information, and the design considerations implementer teams made in order to enhance their assessment for inclusion practices.

1. Students choose their assessment due dates and final outputs for submission

Unit and Assessment Profile:

- First year class, 200 students, 12-week course with 11 weekly opportunities to turn in

short skills-based projects
- Students ultimately select 7 projects for final submission

Design Considerations:

- Tasks include more conventional offerings (e.g., essays), while others present more novel submission options (e.g., develop a podcast that has a full transcript)
- Choice of which tasks to engage with provides options around the timing of assessment due dates in a way that is sensitive to students' privacy and allows them to have some agency over that flexibility and choice in which assessments they will submit; for example, the student could choose to skip a project whose date doesn't sit compatibly with personal life circumstances (e.g., a busy time at work, family medical situations) without needing to disclose
- This flexibility means students don't need to automatically apply for extensions when problems arise, important because lot of students don't have the documentation in place or know how to navigate assistance planning systems, and international students (for example) aren't socialised, particularly in the first year, about how to access those sorts of systems
- The skills that they learned from looking forward to assessments that were later down the track revealed a lot to them about their skills and attributes, and they would make choices about which weeks to turn in assessments based on that self-knowledge of learning and assessment strengths or discipline interests

Practice:

- Assessment options are listed from beginning of unit to allow students to choose their preferred submission dates and modes, considering their discipline interests, assessment strengths, and 'personal life forecast'
- No single assessment option is a hurdle requirement
- Of the 11 submitted projects, students are marked on their top 7, allowing them to explore subfields covered
- University policy offers a five-day extension; this unit generalised that for the entire class, anybody who needs an extension can click a button and be automatically approved

2. Inclusive and authentic representations of workflows and teamwork

Unit and Assessment Profile:

- Undergraduate large enrolment unit; majority male school leavers and international students
- Group projects

Design Considerations:

- Assessments are authentic in the sense that they reflect the workflow and teamwork requirements in the profession, particularly around adopting a strengths-based approach to team members
- The national professional association accredits the course and requires teamwork to be encouraged

Practice:

- Most assessments are group project based; modes of assessment are varied (e.g., presentation, a report, technical skill development), allowing students the flexibility to work to their different strengths
- Mock interview (given a scenario and then they have to write down how they would approach that situation.) for the sector is also an assessment
- Groups are taught forming, storming, norming, performing dynamics (Tuckman, 1965) supported by group contracts, so students understand their own obligations
- Group mentors create Microsoft Teams space for every group and implement several checkpoints to look at the level of engagement of every team member and award 'member points' which influence their share of the group mark
- Students are required to work inclusively within their teams, knowing each member's strengths in group presentation and reporting; empowering those students whose strengths lie in presentations and allowing other team members to engage through other task types
- Group work marks are moderated by peer evaluation marks

3. Culturally Informed Program and Assessment design

Unit and Assessment Profile:

- First Nations' program for professional qualification
- 100- 200 students, mostly experienced students

Design Considerations:

- principles-based design and practice, established collectively by the school
- no grading; either pass, or progressing towards
- program delivery scaffolded to a high achievement standard

Practice:

- a number of days spent together on traditional Country and ceremonial time to build relationships
- assessment modes are the student's choice; they need to be able to communicate how they know the subject matter
- critical reflection tied to literature
- reflexive research projects on positionality with respect to professional practice
- no hard deadlines to program completions, supported by relational communication between staff and students
- staff modelling trust so that graduates will embody this as professionals

4. Formatting for neurodiversity

Unit and assessment profile:

- Non-traditional students with prior professional experience, working mothers, First-in-Family, and neurodiverse students.
- Nationally accredited course
- Escape room assessment where students play their way through the escape room to access the content; an annotated bibliography, video essay, and MOOC (massive open online course).

Design Considerations:

- To avoid copyright issues, the lecturer made their own readings and videos
- In order to promote engagement and interest, the lecturer also made little animations and sourced cartoons
- People think differently and work differently through the Coding MOOC as part

of the escape room (e.g., neurodiverse people may go through fits and starts in engagement – with the capacity to hyperfocus they can complete the whole MOOC in a day or a weekend. Learners who do not work in this sustained way can work in short bursts and still progress, find success and finish the MOOC).

Practice:

- The first assignment is an annotated bibliography; lecturer shows them how to use the AI function in PDF Adobe and AI summarises the articles.
- Students then choose one of the key ideas identified by AI, locate that content in the academic article, and then summarise that in their own words, on screen, in a video essay.

5. Choose your own proficiency

Unit and Assessment Profile:

- First year unit, 700 students, multi-disciplinary cohort, taking the class for numerous reasons

Design Considerations:

- Student cohort includes advanced students who are very enthusiastic, others who haven't done the subject since year 10 and are taking it as a core, and those who are taking it as an elective,
- The unit is split into different skills: Core and advanced.
- Core skills are the skills that are absolutely necessary to know in order to pass a unit.
- Advanced students are given additional skills that will be needed into the future if the student chooses to specialise in the subject.
- Student agency is foregrounded – individuals allocate different levels of energy to attaining certain grades and capabilities according to their own priorities

Practice:

- Lecturer identifies the options for differentiation and choice in difficulty and establishes a 'Choose your level' approach with students selecting the mark range they would ideally like to get
- Students complete the core skills first – this includes a number of skills that must demonstrate

- Scheduled tutorials include weekend mornings and other times during the week; students can attend or watch as many as they want, synchronously or asynchronously

Beyond these examples, there are many more available within the published research literature. For example, in their literature review, Tai, Ajjawi, and Umarova (2024) identify 13 studies on inclusive assessment. There are also a number of examples included within Ajjawi et al.'s (2022) book, *Assessment for Inclusion in Higher Education* (available open access). Assessment for inclusion isn't just an aspiration: it is achievable in practice.

Questions for reflection

- Which inclusive practices stood out to you as most achievable and why?
- Which principles of Assessment for Inclusion (from the previous chapter) did they align with?
- Why might some practices be more, or less, achievable in your context?
- Are there any aspects to your assessment practice which you might now reconsider through a lens of inclusion?
- What might be a place to start?

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6.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR CHANGING ASSESSMENT

What opportunities and challenges exist to implementing or changing different forms of assessment?

How have others tried to address these challenges and take advantage of opportunities?

We have all experienced some of the recent big disruptors to higher education systems: COVID-19, the rise of Generative AI, mergers, restructures, policy changes, and funding changes. While many people don't feel comfortable with change and the disruption it brings, these broader forces can also represent an opportunity to grow more inclusive practices.

One way to think about opportunities and challenges is situating them not as an individual responsibility or problem, but as issues that exist within systems that shape the way that things unfold in higher education.

Naylor and Mifsud (2019) argued that the ways we view these institutional qualities and systems of practice are important for reducing structural inequality, and promoting success for all students. They identified "six dimensions of university activity that may act as potential loci for internal structural inequalities...these areas may be 'pressure points' or areas where internal inequalities may arise or be reduced — they are not aspects of university activity that necessarily promote structural inequality, and institutions may productively focus on different areas as necessitated by their individual cultures or the requirements of their student cohort" (Naylor & Mifsud, 2019, pp. 2-3).

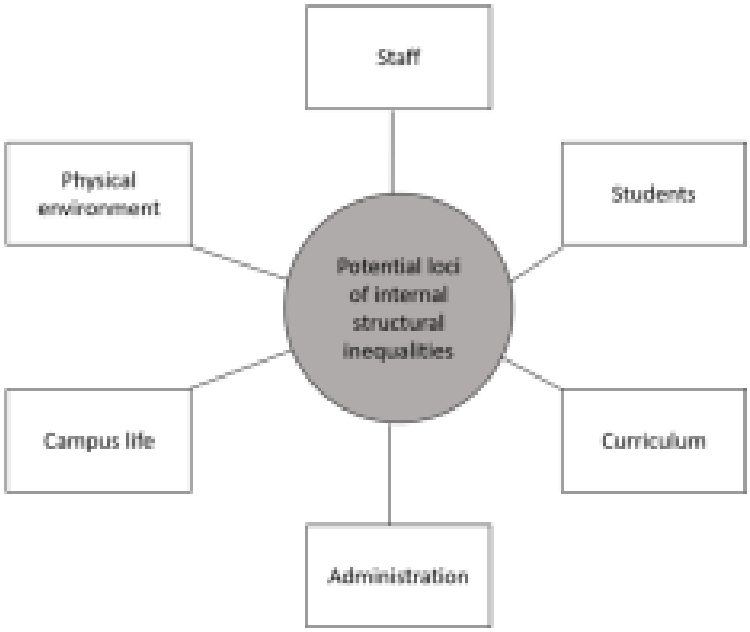

Figure 1: Internal structural inequalities in higher education

"Internal structural inequalities in higher education" , Naylor & Mifsud 2019, © ACSES (formerly NCSEHE), Curtin University, used with permission

Taking these six dimensions into consideration, you might consider how the ways that institutional structures and systems expect or determine a particular way of doing things can help or hinder the way assessment is undertaken and experienced, and how each of these areas can influence outcomes to perpetuate or minimise inequalities. Here are some more granular sub-examples of Naylor and Mifsud's dimensions for you to consider that relate directly to inclusion in assessment

In your context, are these opportunities, challenges, or some of both?

Staff

- Staff attitudes, capability, and motivation
- Pedagogies: general practices and discipline-specific instructional trends
- Socio-cultural factors in delivery: lecturer-specific 'styles', institutional cultures,

disciplinary approaches

Students

- Students' expectations of assessment, stigma around identification of equity markers, and staff-student relationships,
- Student cohort characteristics which influence curriculum delivery
- Student group expectations around hybrid learning developed in respond to COVID-19

Curriculum

- Curriculum design conventions in each discipline and academic traditions.
- Industry input into curricula, professional association literature, accreditation requirements, and competences

Administration

- Teaching and learning strategy and policies and administration resources
- AQF levels and related learning outcome phrasings
- Promotion and teaching award criteria, innovation and quality incentives
- Assessment design and quality assurance procedures: review processes, templates, options (e.g., word counts / equivalencies, approved assessment genres and descriptions)

Campus life (i.e. extra-curricular opportunities)

- Presence and role of an accessibility service
- Opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to be included in conversations about assessment and feedback
- Support services available to students

Physical Environment

- Accessibility support plug-in tools for learning management systems (e.g., Blackboard Ally) different educational technology uses, innovation tagging on units to include students' feedback
- Academic integrity technology and tools and the student experience of these
- Campus (spaces and technology), physical accessibility and design, online/hybrid modes

While there is some crossover between categories, these categories can support identification of what different strategies might be useful to employ. For instance, a physical environment focus on assessment might identify that redesigning a laboratory environment could be an opportunity to improve inclusion for lab-based assessments. Alternatively, an administrative focus might suggest implementing a policy that

students can take their lab-assessment in a different environment. Here's a small interactive activity for you to consider what might be an enabler or a barrier within your context.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/leading-assessment-inclusion/?p=99#h5p-1

desert under starry sky in this activity by Mohammad Alizade on Unsplash used under the Unsplash License

How can we do our best within an imperfect and complex system?

assorted-color textiles by Paul Hanaoka on Unsplash used under the Unsplash License

You have likely realised that many aspects of the environment can operate both as an enabler and a barrier. In the examples from our research, both practitioners and senior leaders chose particular ways to work within their institutions' systems and processes. For example, senior leaders might take a ' hands off' approach, allowing implementers to innovate. Practitioners described being creative in their practices of centring students' needs within assessment design priorities. Across the interviews we conducted in the CAULLT project (Harris et al., 2025), there were three opportunities (or challenges) that stood out as particularly important. Next, we summarise some of the different ways strategies were adopted to take advantage of these opportunities.

Introducing flexibility for the range of diverse students within a course

Leaders suggested strategies that could assist at a whole of university, program and unit levels and within particular discipline areas:

Whole of university (mainly administrative)

- Policy implementation of using 'or equivalent' for word counts, allows for more choice around the format of the task (e.g., oral instead of written – essay of 3000 words equivalent to a 5-minute video), offering equivalent assessments for supplementary tasks including allowing submission in a different form to the original assessment (e.g., Viva).
- Using a checklist to prompt assessment designers to include the following tools that diverse students can access: downloadable versions of tasks, non-written content labelled to allow screen readers to read these for students, videos with transcripts, assessment guides with voice-overs, and illustrated PDFs of tasks.
- Considering how the requirement to purchase textbooks for assessment tasks could disadvantage low SES students and providing an alternative way for students to engage with content.
- Offering short automatic assessment extensions without evidence (assisting students with complex circumstances, removing the role of the course coordinator/convenor as 'judge', and allowing students who may need to apply for special consideration the time to gain appropriate documentation).

Program or discipline area (administrative)

- Completing an overall assessment audit across a school/program enables staff to consider the design of assessment and assessment schedules to better support diverse students (e.g., not putting all of the assessment in one week, ensuring a range of assessment types are employed across a program).

Unit or module level (mainly student and curriculum focussed)

- Allowing students to create their own assessment schedules by allowing students to select their task

deadlines from a range of options.

- Providing flexibility of scheduling for timed assessment tasks to support students with complex life circumstances (e.g., examinations are open for 24-48 hours vs at a specified start time).
- Providing the option of a 'negotiated' assessment, allowing students choice in what type of assessment they use to demonstrate the learning outcomes.
- Allowing for student choice in assessment topic or the focus of an assessment piece (e.g., a business of their choice becomes the topic of a marketing plan) and/or in the grade they wish to target (students can choose to complete particular parts of a task to achieve a designated grade).
- Allowing for student choice in the number of assessment topics to complete across a unit (e.g., students complete between 5-10 possible small assessments with the best 5 marks counted towards an overall level of achievement).

a group of people holding hands on top of a tree by Shane Rounce on Unsplash used under the Unsplash License

Workload management to afford implementation of inclusive assessment

Especially in larger courses, workload was identified as a challenge for staff trying to implement inclusive

assessment, and something to be addressed. Colleagues explored different approaches that could be considered as acting upon different structural aspects:

- Staff: Including workload recognition/time for developing and implementing inclusive assessment
- Administration: Automating 5-day extensions to reduce staff administrative workload
- Student: Building in peer assessment as part of group work assessments to reduce lecturer feedback in large courses
- Physical environment: Using technology/software that provides customised formative feedback prompts for each individual student.

Concerns about Generative AI use and assessment authorship

Across higher education, universities are adopting strategies to manage the now widespread access to generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI). For some courses, programs, and universities, there has been a move back towards invigilated exams, whereas in others, this disruptor has encouraged the development and implementation of assessment genres which are harder to get Gen AI to write (e.g., reflection-based assessments). In these decisions, consideration of both the student and curriculum are necessary.

- Curriculum: Considering other ways to design assessments that are at a lower risk of AI plagiarism but which also may simultaneously promote inclusion (e.g., tasks which promote reflection or discuss students' process, including a viva where students explain their work, creation of an artifact),
- Student: Allowing students to use AI, which can be very helpful for students with particular types of disabilities, but expect students to report their use of AI and the purpose of that use.

We recognise that readers of this resource might be operating at different levels within the institution, and so not all strategies are available to all who are interested in promoting more inclusive assessment. For instance, a sessional lecturer would not be able to automate extensions across a program of study. Similarly, an Associate Dean Learning and Teaching would not be the one offering to negotiate assignment due dates with individual students. Whilst a structural approach might be useful for identifying the types of strategies and a locus of action, we also need some way of considering how people with different roles within the university environment can all contribute to improving assessment for inclusion.

Questions for reflection

- What opportunities do you see within your university for promoting more inclusive

approaches to assessment?

- What challenges to inclusive assessment are particularly salient to you and your team? What can you proactively do to mitigate these challenges?
- How can you best facilitate collaboration between people from differing areas and levels of responsibility within your university?? What might be some productive ways to work together to promote assessment inclusion?

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7.

PROMOTING ASSESSMENT FOR INCLUSION: EVERYBODY HAS A ROLE

Who can contribute to assessment for inclusion, and how?

What might be the roles of different individuals in higher education systems?

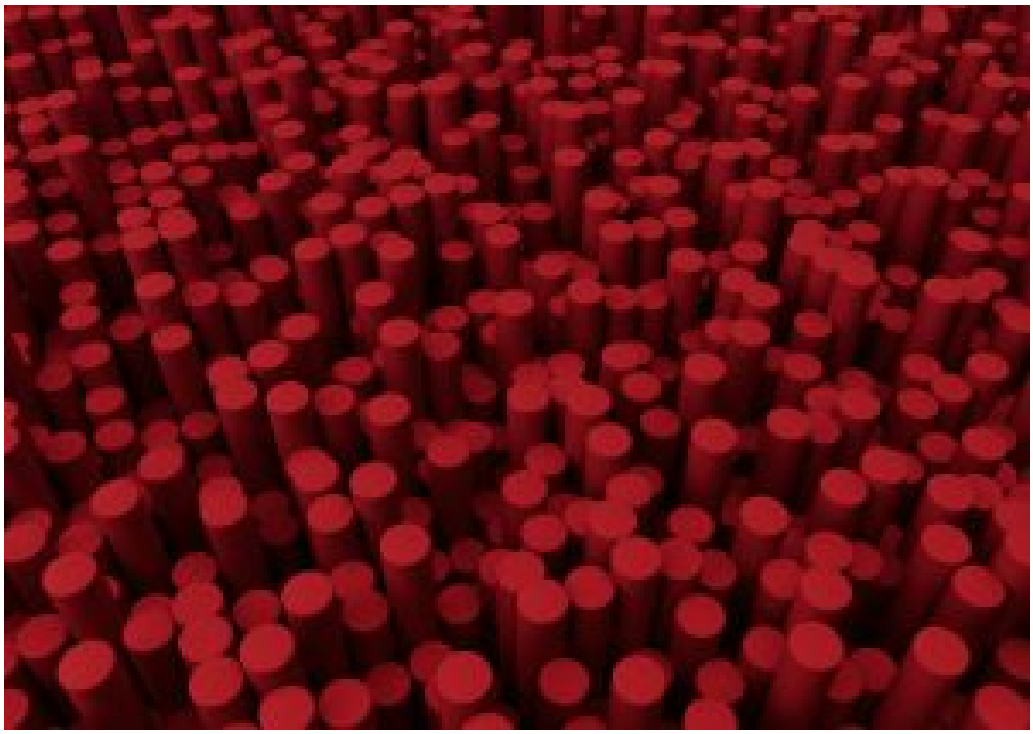
What needs to be addressed at a system-wide level?

Opportunities for Leading Assessment for Inclusion: choosing a focus

In the CAULLT funded research (Harris et al 2025), we talked to both senior leaders with responsibilities for determining how policy is designed around assessment and leaders in implementation of assessment design within their contexts. This group of people privileged the direct relationships they have with students and the ongoing influence this allows. Whilst many institutional policies, strategic plans, and senior leadership priorities can affect how assessment is systematically operationalised – formal concepts of leadership – equally, implementers of assessment for inclusion had a major impact on how students experienced assessment. This could be considered a form of shared leadership, or 'leading with license.'

Widening participation is a major goal of inclusive practice, which includes thinking of all that we do as an open and collaborative learning exercise. Hence, it is useful to reflect on what we do in our practice, rather than just focusing on student outcomes. Enabling access, ensuring inclusivity, and promoting 'practices encouraging peer learning, collaborative knowledge creation, sharing, and empowerment of learners' (Cronin, et al., 2023, p.147) can widen our spheres of influence over learning quality. This drive toward openness highlights the importance of sharing practice within groups and across organisational hierarchies, valuing the equitable participation of all who are involved. Inclusion *is* everybody's business.

However, we also know there are potential dangers of wholly shared responsibility, since it is then nobody's job in particular. Leadership – and recognising leaders – is therefore important at all levels of organisational hierarchies.



Under the umbrella of assessment for inclusion, there are many opportunities available for leadership across all levels. Here we introduce some key themes which might resonate with personal or institutional values and which could be a focus of leadership:

- **Student voice and lived realities**
  - Creating reasonable timeframes and effective staff workload feedback loops
  - Gaining appropriate community engagement around how to best embed Indigenous Knowledges and learning outcomes
  - Recognising the often imperfect nature of individual accommodations / adjustments / solutions, and creating mechanisms so there's scope for additional customisation and support to address other arising needs
  - Minimising the bureaucracy encountered, decreasing students' needing to self-advocate
- **Students as partners in collaboration**
  - Creating opportunities for student collaboration in assessment design and practice
  - Providing open and transparent communication on marking criteria / rubrics
  - Giving students agency, allowing them to aim for specific levels of achievement, select particular genres or modes, and select assessments which best align with their schedules

- **Digital Accessibility**
  - Providing screen readers and make sure all file formats are compatible with these
  - Creating alt – text on images
  - Generating captions and subtitles for video
  - Creating consistency in formatting, font style and size, and blank space in learning and assessment materials
- **Consistency of communication**
  - Ensuring that language used isn't overly abstract or theoretical / performatively academic; 'plain language' communication in, and about assessment.
  - Checking terminology is consistently used across all forms of feedback, delivery, written content online, and assessment
  - Verifying terminology is respectful and current in the context of the assessment and subject, including regular community feedback and review around this
- **Authenticity**
  - 'License and authority to lead' in accordance with own values
  - Checking assessments are meaningful, purposeful, and sustainable
  - Using 'real world' representations and scenarios within assessment
  - Linking assessments to professional skills and employability
  - Embedding realistic and diverse representations of society within assessments
  - Being culturally responsible and respectful of students' lives and backgrounds
- **Flexibility**
  - Time – allowing students to 'set their own deadlines', get extra time easily when life does not go to plan, dip in/out based on work schedules, psychological state, etc.
  - Mode – allowing student some say in the manner in which they share knowledge (e.g., to opt for spoken instead of written, pre-recorded video (supports those with social anxiety) vs on the day spoken (may help those with tech issues who find video creation difficult)
  - Topic – allowing students to work with areas where they have interest, prior knowledge/ experience, etc.

Different roles, different responsibilities

a group of rubber ducks with a crown on their head Photo by Igor Omilaev on Unsplash used under the Unsplash License

The scale of the higher education system means that there are increasingly distinctive roles required to enact quality teaching and learning. The focus in this OER on assessment has naturally centred the majority of discussion on what lecturers might do, but it is also important to acknowledge the roles of casual and sessional academics, course/program leaders, academic developers, learning designers, and more broadly, school, faculty, and senior leaders, in promoting inclusive assessment.

Casual and sessional staff

It is estimated that 50 to 80% of undergraduate teaching in universities is delivered by sessional staff (O'Kane, 2023), having significant implications for the practice of assessment for inclusion. Job insecurity and academic precarity is likely to mean a reduced risk appetite with respect to innovation (especially since poor student evaluations may mean no additional contracts). Additionally, as casual staff often sit outside the identified power structures within the university and may lack avenues for innovation (i.e.,

are 'assigned' to a course shortly before the start of the teaching period, meaning that even if assessment changes are identified, they cannot be actioned given assessment change timelines). The drive to secure further work may also mean less willingness to bend policy, since there are many reasons to want to be perceived as 'doing the right thing'.

Furthermore, sessional staff are subject (as are many others) to strict rationing and allocation of time towards students – both in interactions and in marking of assessments. Some of the innovative designs we identified did require staff to go 'above and beyond', with time in workload not considering things like a) the time cost of negotiating tasks with students, b) extra marking time needed when products may be quite different, c) time to develop materials to support students to create different assessment products. Casual staff do not have the flexibility to 'borrow time' from other tasks (e.g., administrative, research, service time) to devote into teaching. We cannot ask casual staff to volunteer, which is what is occurring when they are expected to do things that take more time than what they are being paid for, so budget allocations need to take any additional time costs relating to inclusive design into account.

Within these constraints, how can casual or sessional staff contribute to inclusion in assessment, being 'at the coalface'? If you are a sessional staff member or supporting these staff, remember that without adding additional time costs, such staff can still have agency over their attitudes, language, and practices and be ready to point students in the right direction when students do need additional support at university. This means bespoke induction materials, resources, and professional development opportunities should be available to casual staff, including programs focused specifically around developing inclusive values and practices and generating awareness of student services available and how to access them. Students value interactions with staff, which could make or break their experience (Tai et al 2023), as a casual or permanent staff member, being supportive, empathetic, normalising difficulties with assessment, and encouraging students to reach out for help are all extremely important.

'Third space' professionals: academic developers, learning designers, disability liaison officers

Third space professionals have a powerful role to play as they operate across multiple units and programs and could act as substantial co-ordinators of inclusive assessment practice. Selecting a focus (from the many possibilities in the lists above) which aligns with university priorities can support broad impact. They might also support school, faculty and senior leaders in particular policy or institution-driven missions for educational uplift or change which could be harnessed for the purpose of improving inclusion.

The role of the diversity and inclusion team is also important, and usually encompasses an accessibility centre. Such staff might have a role in advocating for inclusive assessment, as well as offering the mechanism for ensuring students can access the accommodations they are entitled to these. These staff can also actively work to reduce barriers to accommodation access (e.g., simplify paperwork, streamline processes so outcomes are quickly achieved) and improve awareness (e.g., improve centre/lecturer communication, make sure staff are aware of what particular accommodations entail and how to set these up).

Tai et al. (2022) found that involving disability liaison officers in conversations around assessment

design was illuminating for educators, who valued the deep experience from which liaison officers could draw upon to highlight how particular assessment design decisions might impact different groups of students. Importantly, these staff can help bring to light problems with particular tasks or types of tasks (e.g., identifying trends around tasks with high levels of accommodation requests) and suggest alternative designs based on knowledge of students and their needs.

Course/program directors and unit/module chairs

Inclusive assessment design and practice cannot sit with individuals such as unit coordinators: a programmatic approach to inclusive assessment design becomes essential so students have a consistent experience in relation to assessment. Keeping inclusion on the agenda is important, and at this level, it may be helpful to consider patterns of student characteristics and backgrounds within particular cohorts, to target approaches to inclusion, and offer a narrative "why" which resonates with the discipline or profession. Many leaders and educators in our research saw inclusion as being about meeting the needs of 'all students' versus having a narrower focus on a particular characteristic (e.g., disability, cultural background). While this broad lens is valuable, it does mean that specific student needs can get overlooked as nothing can be well suited to 'all students' (e.g., a spoken task may suit students with dyslexia or from cultural backgrounds which privilege oral traditions but may disadvantage students with particular forms of anxiety).

Hence, individual tasks will always prioritise some needs over others (perhaps the most visible, or those whose needs are more 'manageable' or easy to adjust for). Focussing on needs for specific equity groups is also important (e.g., What might First Nations students need in assessment?) but this should not lead to generalisations or homogenisations of the needs of a particular equity group.

School, faculty and senior leaders

In the CAULLT project, we identified many simple and strategic actions which senior leader took to support assessment for inclusion. These included:

- creating policy which included specific practice examples,
- monitoring digital infrastructure, making sure systems remained compatible with inclusion goals
- providing innovation incentives and awards
- considering good practice around inclusion in academic promotion criteria
- allocating additional staff time or creating workload adjustments when tasks had greater administration or marking timeframes
- promoting scholarship of teaching and learning on inclusive practice
- providing mechanisms that allow timely changes to be made to existing assessments
- adopting a more 'hands off' management style, empowering staff with the agency needed to innovate on assessment practices

- encouraging innovation (i.e. a flag celebrating experimental assessment design)
- volunteering to be on committees and advisory boards where decisions will be made about university policies that may impact on inclusion
- developing communities of practice and professional development opportunities

There were many examples encountered of good practice in the research. For example, one university gave staff the option to activate an 'assessment innovation flag' via the assessment change process when they designed something new. This 'flag' meant that while student evaluations were still gathered after implementation, they were considered with the knowledge that this was a new task and the expectation that there might be a level of initial dissatisfaction as students adjusted to a new way of working and/or staff experienced unforeseen challenges in the teaching of and execution of the task.

Another university had carefully considered the time costs involved in marking of tasks which required expertise in Indigenous knowledges and/or dealt with potentially sensitive content (e.g., student reflections about impacts of colonisation, racism). Here, staff were provided with some additional marking time to enable them to respond appropriately to student work. These are just a couple of examples of practical ways leaders can encourage staff to innovate and recognise the work involved in inclusion.

Developing a university-wide approach to inclusive assessment

blue and white academic hat by Joshua Hoehne on Unsplash used under the Unsplash License

Within the universities involved in our research, it was also important to tackle inclusion with a whole of

university approach through policy, as well as building the capability of educators across the university. Here are some of the university-wide approaches taken:

- Developing university principles that support inclusion, including a focus on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and including all staff in the conversation about how assessment can be more inclusive,
- Providing opportunities for sharing inclusive assessment design and implementation practice examples in workshops/communities of practice led by learning designers and inclusive assessment champions (at the school/faculty/whole of university levels),
- Providing tools that staff can use to design inclusive assessment (e.g., digital accessibility tools, assessment toolboxes that include examples from a range of disciplines/other universities, checklists based on frameworks such as the UDL guidelines and ASCILITE TELT Standards to guide the design process),
- Providing policy guidance on assessment program plan designs, including a focus on the need to use a variety of assessment tasks, with limits on examinations (e.g., no more than 50 percent exams/multiple choice) except where timed assessments require students to demonstrate the learning outcomes in ways that are relevant and authentic to a profession/context,
- Supporting assessment designers to consider the types of changes at the unit level by examining what is merely historical (traditional) and what can be changed,
- Recognising inclusive practice through awards (e.g., inclusive Vice Chancellor's award),
- Ensuring that students have access to clear and comprehensible policies that make transparent the processes involved in accessing support. This includes ensuring consistent naming of documents and webpages to facilitate easy access,
- Prioritising students as partners programs. Allowing students to have a voice in assessment design and an opportunity to provide feedback to academics on assessment design decisions.

Questions for reflection

- In your institution, what are your current foci for inclusion? Are there any additional foci that you believe are important? How could those be brought forwards to leadership for consideration?
- Who drives the conversation about inclusion (at whole of university, school/faculty, discipline, program levels)? How can you become involved in these discussions?
- Considering your own university's staff, context, and student body, how might leadership at your university incentivise and reward assessment design innovation

(through promotional criteria, or 'innovation flags' on units, for example)?
- Are assessment adjustment and accommodation processes centralised? How are such systems evaluated? What mechanisms exist to allow lecturers' experience and knowledge of the students to be taken into account in relation to key decisions (i.e., extension approvals, academic integrity, progression, unit and assessment design approvals)?
- Is policy on inclusion and assessment consistent with practice? What are the gaps?

As we draw to the end of this OER, what are the biggest concerns for you? What are your enablers and barriers? Where do you hope to make a difference? How might you become a leader in assessment for inclusion?

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8.

ASSESSMENT FOR INCLUSION RESOURCES

What more do you need to know about assessment for inclusion?

This OER was intended as an introduction to assessment for inclusion in higher education. We haven't covered absolutely everything that exists in the world about assessment design, nor inclusive education. It's up to you as to where you go next: this might be a sufficient foundation, or you may have particular interests that you'd like to pursue further. Here we have compiled a small selection of curated resources which offer different perspectives and foci as a complement to the OER. You can also access the full CAULLT project report (Harris, et al. 2025).

We recognise also that there are many problems related to inclusive assessment that still require research to address gaps in our collective knowledge and understanding. Hopefully this work has also spurred your interest in this area. Indeed, one of the advantages of open education resources is their ability to be built upon, and we hope that future researchers and practitioners will choose to expand on this OER.

Please share this OER and these resources widely within and beyond your institution!

Digital inclusion – accessibility basics

This guide focusses on the accessibility of content in digital learning environments. This is likely to be relevant to developing assessment documentation and how you communicate about assessment.

Student Views on Inclusive Assessment Practices

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/leading-assessment-inclusion/?p=105#oembed-3

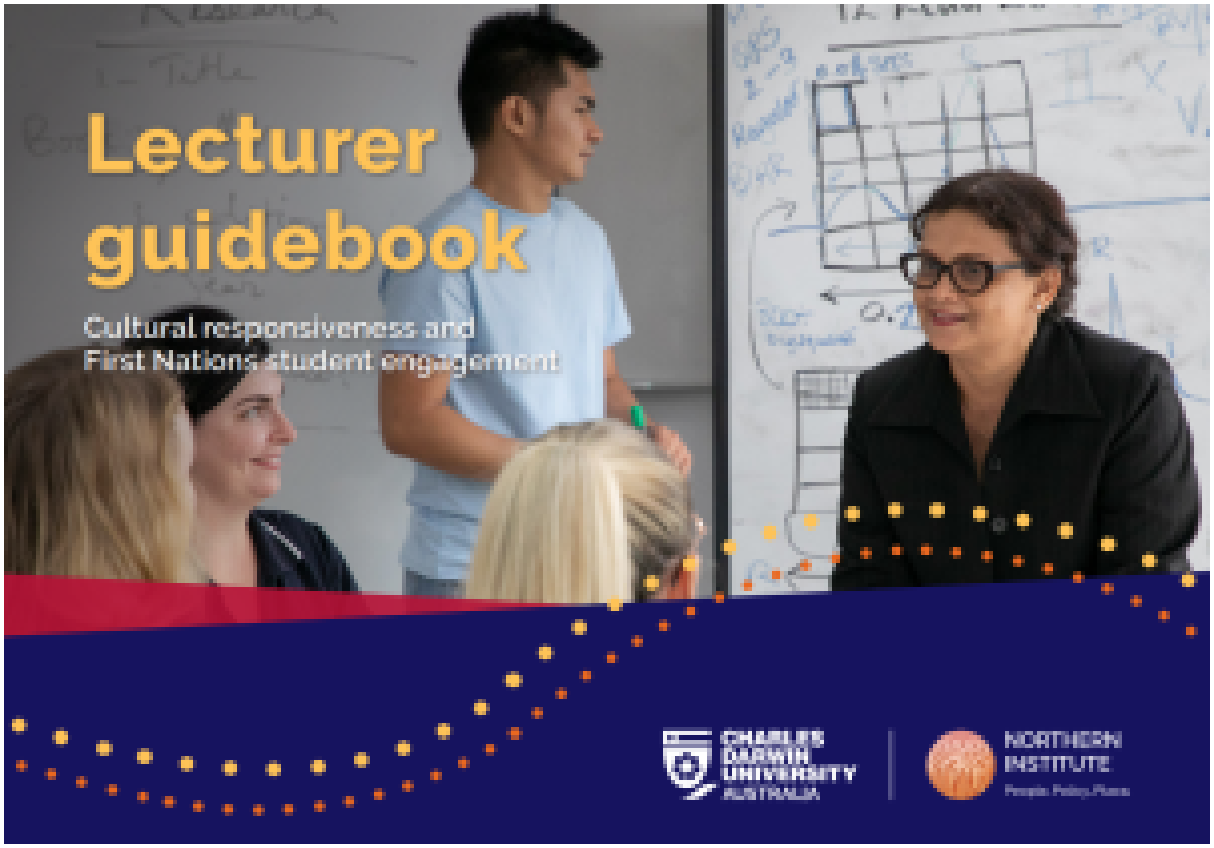
Student views on inclusive assessment. Irish tertiary education students give their views on equity and assessment. AHEAD. YouTube.

Design suggestions for assessment for inclusion

The Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE) also offers some suggestions for designing inclusive assessment, drawn from previous research conducted by the team.

Cultural responsiveness and First Nations Student Engagement

This guidebook shares important information about cultural responsiveness in higher education, a focus on First Nations' Australians, lecturer best practice, supportive strategies and services.



Lecturer Guidebook: Cultural responsiveness and First Nations student engagement. Northern Institute and Faculty of Arts and Society, Charles Darwin University (2024), CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Direct link to Universal Design for Learning guidelines

This link takes you to a set of guidelines for implementing UDL in your setting, regardless of your role.

Link to Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET)

Australia's leading resource on disability in tertiary education for disability practitioners, educators, and students.

Interactive Oral Assessment; an authentic and integral alternative to examination.

Griffith University's guide to using interactive oral assessments as an alternative.

Perspectives on inclusive assessment – study support

In the following video, hear from Dr Juanita Custance about her work with study skills advisors, and the common patterns she sees with respect to assessment and inclusion.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/leading-assessment-inclusion/?p=105#oembed-1

Perspectives on inclusive assessment – implementation in a large undergraduate unit

In the following video, hear from Dr Alexander Mussap about what he's implemented in his undergraduate psychology unit.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/leading-assessment-inclusion/?p=105#oembed-2

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HOW DID YOU GO? SEEKING FEEDBACK ON THE OER

Thanks to CAULLT and Deakin University for supporting the development of this resource.

This first edition of the Leading Assessment for Inclusion Open Education Resource is intended to have a 'soft launch'.

As such, we are inviting feedback from all readers.

If you'd like to share your thoughts on the resource, how you think it's helpful, and what could be improved, please click here to head to the survey.

If you have any more general questions or queries, please contact Jo at joanna.tai@deakin.edu.au

VERSIONING HISTORY

This page provides a record of changes made to this textbook. Each set of edits is acknowledged with a 0.01 increase in the version number. The exported files reflect the most recent version.

If you find an error, please contact joanna.tai@deakin.edu.au

Version	Date	Change	Details
1.00	April 2025	Initial set of 8 chapters published	