



Principle 1: Assure inclusive practices for assessment

What the principle means

Universities have statutory and moral responsibilities that all students of the university have equivalent if not identical opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and capabilities notwithstanding any disabilities or other additional needs.



Questions to consider with your course team and students

- ✓ Have you considered from the outset the implications of students who will be seeking reasonable adjustments, for students with special or additional needs? It saves a lot of time ultimately if you do this from the outset rather than trying to retrofit alternatives for students for whom standard assessments may not work due to disabilities, specific learning difficulties, mental health concerns or other limitations.
- ✓ Have you planned in 'alternative and inclusive assessment practice, i.e. forms of assessment that do not necessitate the provision of "special arrangements" for disabled [and other] students' (Waterfield and West, 2008, p. 97)? More inclusive assessment designs look beyond simplistic categories (such as disability or social equity groups) which position students in deficit, moving instead toward considering and accounting for diversity on many spectra in an effort to ensure diverse students are not disadvantaged by assessment (Tai et al., 2022). For example, Ghandi (2016) discussed the use of patchwork text assignments to replace a 3,000-word essay as a means of improving student engagement and found it had significant benefits in terms of inclusivity.
- ✓ Have you planned how to cope with students who miss an assessment timed for a particular date (for example, an unseen time-constrained exam, OSCE or on-site presentation) and what you are going to do about re-sits?
- ✓ Have you planned for business interruption resulting in the inability to run on-site exams? (Wood, 2020a, 2020b; Brown and Sambell 2020-2021)
- ✓ What else strikes you as you consider this principle?

Setting goals for assessment and feedback enhancement

Having reviewed and discussed Principle 1, as a team can you identify areas that you know to be priorities for enhancing your programme assessment and feedback strategy in the coming three years? All areas are important, but selecting too many can make genuine actionable proposals unachievable which is demoralising. Concentrate on what is feasible.



Once you have agreed on the priorities, you may wish to use the below/overleaf table to record your plans for enhancement under Principle 1.



Principle 1 worksheet - Assure inclusive practices for assessment

Principle focus	Specific actions you will take:	Responsible leader:	Help/resources needed to make this happen:	Milestones (timescale for implementation):	Performance indicators:
e.g. Inclusivity	e.g. Review of assessment approaches with reference to the principles of Universal Design for Learning	e.g. Dr Jolanta O'Neill	e.g. UDL resources and guidelines Support of CTL, Access Office and Exams Office colleagues Colleagues to take UDL open course	e.g. Two academic years: year 1 awareness raising and team learning about UDL; year 2 review of assessment approaches and planning for integration of UDL	e.g. Completion of UDL open course by team. Team conversations about UDL. Agreed process to review of assessments. Review of assessments. Agreed plan for integration of UDL in assessment processes across the department.



About this resource

This resource is drawn from the Principles-based Toolkit for Effective Assessment Design (Brown and Sambell). This resource focuses on 'Principle 1 – Assure inclusive practices for assessment.' The resource can be used by teams who wish to review how this principle is enacted in their work, and who wish to plan to enhance their practice regarding this principle. The resource can be used as a stand-alone thinking and planning tool for teams, as well as being considered in the context of the toolkit as a whole.

As part of the Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' project, Professor Sally Brown and Professor Kay Sambell designed a toolkit for effective assessment design. This toolkit has been designed to provide course teams at Maynooth University with guidance on periodical review of their assessment and feedback practices, in support of student success. The toolkit involves twelve principles which were proposed by Brown and Sambell, and shaped and modified by the Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' Advisory Group. The toolkit is available at in the Maynooth University [Assess for Success Hub](#).

The principles and the toolkit taken as a whole set a substantial agenda for action, but Brown and Sambell stress that the toolkit can primarily help local teams to set short- and longer-term prioritised targets to enhance assessment by focusing on activities that would help to ensure that assessment tasks, assignments and feedback could fully contribute to student engagement and positive outcomes.

References:

Brown, S. and Sambell, K. (2020-2021) *Assessment, Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, Sally Brown. Available at: <https://sally-brown.net/kay-sambell-and-sally-brown-covid-19-assessment-collection/>

Ghandi, S. (2016) 'Lessons from the coalface: supporting inclusivity. Lessons of an accidental inclusivist' in 'Equality and diversity in learning and teaching in HE: compendium of papers', Advance HE. Available at: http://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/ecu/ED-in-LT-Section-B_1573211644.pdf

Tai, J., Ajjawi, R., Bearman, M., Boud, D., Dawson, P. and Jorre de St Jorre, T., 2022. 'Assessment for inclusion: rethinking contemporary strategies in assessment design', *Higher Education Research and Development*, DOI: [10.1080/07294360.2022.2057451](https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2057451)

Waterfield, J. and West, B. (2008) 'Towards inclusive assessments in higher education: case study', *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, (3), pp. 97-102.

Wood, G. (2020a) 'Preparing students for take-home and open book exams: A Student Guide'. Available at: <https://www.garycwood.uk/2020/05/preparing-for-take-home-and-open-book-exams.html>

Wood, G. (2020b) 'Sitting your take-home and open book exams: A Student Guide'. Available at: <https://www.garycwood.uk/2020/05/sitting-your-take-home-and-open-book-exams.html>



How to cite this resource:

Brown, S. and Sambell, K (2022) *A principles-based toolkit for effective assessment design. 'Principle 1 - Assure inclusive practices for assessment' worksheet*, Maynooth: Maynooth University.



CC BY-NC-SA: This license allows re-users to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format for non-commercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator. If you remix, adapt, or build upon the material, you must license the modified material under identical terms.

