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Creating inclusive briefs

Creating inclusive briefs: design guidance

Why use this tool?

Inclusivity in teaching practice is about valuing the diversity of our students. Through placing diversity and inclusivity at the core of our teaching approaches, we enable equality of access to a transformative education for all students. Focusing on designing inclusive assignment briefs benefits you and your students.

- The easier it is for a student to understand the brief, the more resources they can invest into the assignment itself.

- An inclusive assignment brief reduces the amount of time tutors spend supporting individual students to understand what they have to do.

- Inclusive practices reduce the need for individual adjustments and support.

How should it be used?

This tool can be used by any tutor individually or collectively to review and plan briefs. In accordance with the Equality Act (2010), as a university we need to continuously think about potential barriers to learning and achievement and make changes to remove those barriers. This includes considering how we present, deliver and support students with assignment briefs. An assignment brief can be said to be inclusive if its design is accessible to all students, and its content enables students from diverse backgrounds to engage with the task and demonstrate their ability.

"Through inclusive design... [and] individual reasonable adjustments where required, assessment tasks [should] provide every student with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement. (QAA, 2013)

This tool was originated by staff in the UAL Disability Service. For further information and assistance, contact disability@arts.ac.uk

Design guidance for creating inclusive briefs

Language

Style:
- Use plain English. Refer to *Plain English Guide*: http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html
- Use shorter sentences.
- Use an active voice, e.g. "include…", "describe…"
- Be consistent: use the same instructional terms throughout the brief.

Awareness of student knowledge:
- Use only well-known academic verbs/terms.
- Use only common sociocultural references or provide an explanation.
- Provide a glossary, including definitions of different 'task types' (e.g. essay, report).

Density and tone:
- Put each instruction into a new sentence.
- Adopt a neutral tone.

Design and structure

Design:
- Use a readable font, e.g. Arial size 12. Use bold for emphasis.
- Use adequate horizontal spacing between sections of text.
- Use visuals to illustrate instructions where appropriate. Visuals should be accompanied by descriptive text.
- Provide links to additional useful documents.
- Refer to UAL's 'Accessible information guide'.

Structure:
- Keep briefs concise.
- List tasks in a logical order, e.g. title, core task, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, submission deadline.
- Use sub-sections, numbered lists or bullet points.
- Make core tasks stand out.

Expectations and guidance

Task type:
- Be clear about what the student is expected to submit, e.g. "create a product catalogue".
- Be clear if the student should adopt a role, e.g. "write as a representative of a design company".
- Make the purpose of the task clear, explain less familiar tasks, and state possible methods for achieving the task.
- If the nature of the task cannot be made explicit, explain why this is so.

Academic requirements:
- Be clear about type and extent of research required.
- Be clear about word count and referencing requirements.

Guidance:
- Provide clear timelines.
- Break the task into stages. Where appropriate, use diagrams to illustrate the stages.
- Be clear about where and when the student can get help, e.g. staff, lectures, books.

Additional considerations:
- Does the assignment brief enable students from diverse backgrounds to engage with it and draw on their experiences in responding to it?
- Are there alternative means for students to demonstrate their ability e.g. presentation? Can this choice be provided to all students in the brief? An inclusive approach from the outset reduces the requests for reasonable adjustments.
- Testing the brief: before issuing the assignment brief, can you get feedback from colleagues or students? Consider consulting Academic Support, Widening Participation, or the Language Centre.
- Consider attending Clear and Accessible English training, available to all UAL staff as part of the Language Centre's Intercultural Communication Training offer.

Supporting students with the assignment brief:
- Present the brief in a range of formats: digital (posted on Moodle) and hard-copy.
- Provide a session to introduce and explain the brief. Consider providing the brief digitally in advance of the session. Consider making a video recording of the briefing session to post on Moodle.
- Consider holding an interactive session to "unpack" the brief, providing students the opportunity to check their interpretation of the task and receive clarification.
- Remind students where they can get additional support.
- Provide opportunities for formative feedback prior to the submission date. Consider a range of methods (face-to-face; Skype, email etc). Refer to the 'Eliminating inequality in formative assessment' worksheet.

Notes

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List of resources:

- *Equality Act 2010 Implications for Colleges and HEIs*: **http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/external/equality-act-2010-briefing-revised-08-12.pdf**

- *Assignment Brief Design Guidelines* (Gilbert & Maguire) Oxford Brookes University 2014

- Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED): **https://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/public-information/equality-objectives-and-reports**

- Disabled Student Sector Leadership Group report 2017: **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-teaching-and-learning-in-higher-education**

- Equality Challenge Unit: Resources on equality and diversity considerations for academics and teaching staff as well as specific guidance on admissions, attainment and making adjustments: **http://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/inclusive-environment/ http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ECU_Understanding_competence-standards-FINAL.pdf**

- Elise Roy, Ted Talks 2015: **https://www.ted.com/talks/elise_roy_when_we_design_for_disability_we_all_benefit/**

- UAL Accessible information guide: **https://artslondon.sharepoint.com/sites/CanvasContent/Documents/Accessible-Information-Guidelines.pdf**

Academic Enhancement Model
Toolbox

Creating inclusive briefs is one of a series of worksheets brought together by the Academic Enhancement Model (AEM) team, part of the UAL Teaching and Learning Exchange. The current series includes:

- Creating inclusive briefs
- De-biasing strategies
- Eliminating inequality in formative assessment
- Internationalising the curriculum
- Reducing referrals and resubmissions
- Rethinking industry engagement
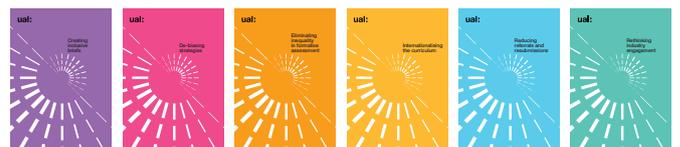
To request digital versions of the worksheets email **AEMsupport@arts.ac.uk**

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