

Knocking Down Walls: Embedding Inclusion into Real-World Learning Environments

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When designing learning environments that are representative of the real world, educators engage in a process of not just developing a student's practical skills and knowledge but also contribute to the development of the student's citizenship. Manoharan (2021) states that due to the diversifying student population it is vital that universities facilitate significant real-world experiences at scale so that all can reap the benefits without relying on extra-curricular activities. It is also important to develop an inclusive and decolonised curriculum that promotes access for students with disabilities and different backgrounds, allowing engagement with a greater diversity of thought within the subject domain (Grace & Gravestock, 2008; Wimpenny et al., 2022)

Early-career academics across the University of Suffolk studying the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP) for the 2024/25 academic year have been engaging in a collaborative learning process which encourages staff to share their experiences about their practice, including how to embed inclusivity within their curriculum and strategies for supporting and developing real-world learning environments.

Our poster features a collection of pedagogical and practical strategies currently being adopted, as well as collaborative opportunities across schools and support services, that we report to promote student engagement with inclusivity within real-world learning environments. These practices focus on developing inclusivity skills including self-awareness, understanding unconscious bias, cultural awareness and competence, and professional curiosity. All of which contribute to the broader development of citizenship skills in preparation for employment.

Our poster makes recommendations to academics designing or developing real-world learning environments. Primarily, we encourage academics to acknowledge their responsibility to challenge power structures and to interrogate one's own assumption of what constitutes 'real' knowledge or 'valuable' experience. Fostering students' engagement with inclusivity skills requires an intrinsic motivation from the educator to design experiences which embed that knowledge within the curriculum.

References

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