Inclusive Curricula, Teaching, and Learning:

Adaptive Strategies for Inclusivity

Research Report

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Executive Summary

Research into the inclusivity of curricula, teaching and learning at Queen Mary University, London (QMUL) was commissioned from We Research It Ltd in early April 2016, to be completed by 31 August. The research was designed within a framework of Appreciative Inquiry as an iterative process of interviews and group discussions, to elicit candid staff views and student experiences of inclusivity, followed by meetings to discuss the initial research findings. This design received ethical approval on 16 May 2016. As the research could not begin until ethical approval was received, the deadline for completion was extended to 30 September.

Participants were difficult to reach due to the combined effects of exams, Ramadan, and the summer holidays, and the very tight research timescale. Nevertheless, students and staff from all three faculties took part and gave a range of detailed responses. Emergent coding within NVivo software enabled in-depth analysis of the data. The researchers also conducted a targeted literature review, and synthesised findings from the secondary and primary datasets to form this report. The data synthesis identified three strategic and 13 operational opportunities for QMUL. These are listed on the next page and are firmly rooted in the research findings.

Key findings include:

- QMUL collects a considerable amount of data on inclusivity. However, this is mostly used for external purposes rather than for making internal improvements.
- There is a great deal of demographic difference between schools within QMUL.
- There are a wide range of understandings of inclusivity at QMUL.
- QMUL students and staff take a broad approach to inclusivity, seeing the potential for exclusion of more groups than those identified by UK legislation, such as commuters, carers, those with invisible disabilities, and students in financial need who have to undertake paid employment alongside their studies.
- Students and staff see good communication, at all levels, as vital for inclusivity.
- Transition into university is seen as a crucial time for students to receive support, and also for new staff to receive any necessary induction, to ensure inclusivity.
- Students have a strong desire to see technological support for learning, such as Q Review, used consistently throughout QMUL.
- QMUL curricula (using a broad definition) would benefit from co-created re-development and regular review, by staff and students, to ensure inclusivity.
- More diverse methods of assessment are needed.

Theory underpins the research: Kimberlé Crenshaw’s concept of intersectionality, and Karen Barad’s diffraction methodology. It is also practice-focused. The findings build on existing positive experiences of inclusive teaching and learning to identify numerous specific changes that could be made and suggestions for implementation.

Inclusivity is enshrined in QMUL’s written Values, and the commissioning of this research shows that it is also a current priority for QMUL. The research is designed to help QMUL decide how to evolve, to move beyond the ‘widening participation’ agenda and widen opportunities for all, both within QMUL and beyond its walls.
Strategic opportunities for QMUL

QMUL could become a recognised leader of inclusive HE by:
1. Developing a deep and practical understanding of what constitutes an inclusive curriculum, inclusive teaching, and inclusive assessment.
2. Systematically collecting and using data from staff and students. That data could be used to: inform policy, strategy and practice; integrate academic research with practice; design and evaluate new interventions in partnership with other organisations; and engage in active dissemination of findings to improve a broader understanding of changing contexts.
3. Demonstrate, within the relevant strategic documents, how QMUL's distinctive understanding of inclusivity is applied to data to inform policy and practice.

Operational opportunities for QMUL

1. QMUL could develop and communicate a clear vision of success in inclusive HE.
2. QMUL could identify where responsibility sits for inclusivity within the organisation.
3. QMUL could work with QMSU to develop a theory of change for inclusivity.
4. QMUL could define its own protected characteristics, combine them with those protected by legislation, and collect and use data to map QMUL's unique ecology of intersectionality.
5. QMUL could consider the usefulness or otherwise of defining the terminology around inclusivity, given that inclusivity is a developing topic and the academic convention of prioritising definitions may itself, to some extent, be exclusive.
6. QMUL could involve students in developing a set of broad inclusivity principles for curriculum design, including feedback and assessment, to be used within all faculties and schools.
7. QMUL could widen its use of supportive technology such as Q Review.
8. QMUL could communicate good and innovative practice in inclusivity from individual schools, which would serve to inform and inspire other schools within the university (and beyond) and so build on existing success.
9. QMUL could enhance its induction programme by adding specialised sections for specific groups of students to help meet their additional needs (as it already does with some groups e.g. international students).
10. QMUL could work with QMUL to gather evidence of the anecdotally reported problems of students who need support but don't, or can't, ask for help – perhaps (depending on the nature of the evidence) to support a case for more resource.
11. QMUL could review and revise the personal adviser system with a view to improving student support.
12. QMUL could investigate the sizeable discrepancies in the proportions of students receiving DSA and bursaries in different schools with a view to ensuring there are no structural barriers in any school to the acknowledgement of, and support for, students with disabilities.
13. Any further research on inclusivity to be conducted within QMUL could be more inclusive in itself, e.g. with students trained to lead or co-lead the project, and with adequate resources of time as well as money.
Background

In April 2014 the then Minister for Business, Innovation and Skills, David Willetts, announced plans to “rebalance” the cost of supporting disabled students from central government via the auspices of the Disabled Students’ Allowances to universities as part of their obligations under the Equality Act. In October 2014 a meeting was held to look at how QMUL could respond to this challenge. Those present were the former Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning, the Head of the Disability and Dyslexia Service (DDS), the Assistant Director for Student Services (Wellbeing), and the Director of the Centre for Academic and Professional Development (CAPD). As a consequence of this meeting, a tranche of money was made available for CAPD to try and identify someone within the organisation who could review the inclusivity of teaching and learning at QMUL. The aim was to help inform the university on how to most effectively support all students’ learning, including (but not exclusively) those with disabilities.

CAPD was unable to find anyone either internal or external to fulfil this role. The funding for this research came from HEFCE so it had to be spent before the end of the 2015/16 academic session. A decision was taken by the Engagement, Retention and Success Group in November 2015 to use the money available to source an external consultant for this piece of work. The Head of DDS was asked to lead on this. Following a meeting of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group in February 2016, the Principal asked the Head of DDS to create a Task and Finish Group with academic representation from all three faculties to provide input into the remit for the consultant. The group’s members were:

Simon Jarvis, Head of DDS
Robert Sherratt, Head of Engagement, Retention and Success
Sandra Brown, Diversity & Inclusion Manager
Miranda Black, Vice President for Welfare for QMSU
Professor Julia Shelton, representing the Science and Engineering faculty
Dr Dane Goodsman, Reader in Medical Education and IPE Lead for Queen Mary and City University, representing the School of Medicine and Dentistry
Dr Robbie Shilliam, Senior Lecturer in International Politics, representing Humanities and Social Sciences

The brief asked the consultant to find out how QMUL could improve its students’ experiences with respect to the inclusivity of their curricula, teaching, and learning. After a series of presentations this project was awarded to We Research It Ltd in April 2016. We Research It were chosen for their appreciative, iterative, action-oriented and student-focused approach.
Introduction

QMUL explicitly values inclusivity. The University has six written Values that ‘shape and influence all... our activities and behaviour’. The fourth of these states that ‘We are diverse and inclusive, recognising talent and nurturing the best and brightest, regardless of background.’

This research was commissioned to investigate the inclusivity of the curricula, teaching, and learning, at QMUL. This introduction will briefly introduce the theoretical concepts underpinning the research, the wider context for the research, and current evidence of best practice.

Theoretical concepts

This research is grounded in two theoretical concepts. The first is intersectionality. Intersectional theory was developed by legal academic Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s to explain the ways in which multiple social identities relate to forms of discrimination and how people experience those systems (Crenshaw 1991). This was in reaction to policy-makers treating forms of discrimination, such as sexism and racism, separately. Yet that is a phenomenon we still see, a generation later, in European law such as the UK’s Equality Act 2010 and its ‘protected characteristics’. (The Act doesn’t mention intersectionality anywhere in its 251 pages.) Yet people you might meet on any street, such as a Chinese lesbian, a Ugandan man with a disability, and a young panromantic genderqueer, will experience discrimination in very different ways. Furthermore, the interactions of different social identities have an impact on educational success. For example, there is evidence that socioeconomic and family background, gender, and membership of ethnic minority groups are inter-related in their effect on course completion and attainment (Lundy-Wagner 2012, Crawford 2014, Crawford and Greaves 2015).

The quantum physicist and social theorist Karen Barad offers us a helpful way to understand this through her diffraction methodology (Barad 2014). Diffraction patterns are the patterns that appear when waves collide. Think about the classic image of a stone dropping into a calm pond and the perfect concentrically circular waves that radiate from the point of impact. If another stone is dropped a little way from the first, as both sets of waves meet they create a complex diffraction pattern.

The effect of discrimination on the grounds of a single ‘protected characteristic’ could be compared to the impact of a single stone: ripples radiate outward steadily through space and time. Where discrimination is multiple, the effects – like the diffraction pattern – are considerably more complex.
This means that it is also a complex task for an institution such as QMUL to include everyone fully. There are other factors in play such as: policy developments pertaining to inclusion and HE; demographic trends among students, staff and the wider population; and topical influences. It is not enough to understand intersectionality as uniqueness at the junction of race, gender and sexuality, there must be a culture that encourages empathy and awareness of power dynamics. Diffraction is more than a metaphor, it is an analytic lens to “to study the entangled effects differences make” (Barad, 2007, p. 73)

Wider context

We are living in a time of dynamic political and social change. The EU referendum in June 2016 unleashed an outburst of racism and a more uncertain future for many universities, businesses, and individuals. There are serious unanswered questions about how people’s movement within the EU, and immigration into Britain, will be affected if, as expected, terms of engagement with European institutions are radically changed. The Government’s ‘Prevent’ strategy, which since March 2015 has required universities to prevent people from ‘being drawn into terrorism’, is experienced as alienating by some people, particularly Muslims who may feel they are being targeted. The NUS’s No Platform policy was originally designed to dissociate debate from violence, but has come under attack more recently from people who think it silences too many voices. The legacy of privilege interacts with the high prevalence of mental ill-health among students and staff on Britain’s university campuses. There is considerable pressure on everyone in academia: pressure on students to achieve and succeed, often while struggling financially, and (in the case of international students coming to the UK) getting used to life in an unfamiliar country; pressure on academic and other staff to provide supportive personalised education within an increasingly regulated world of ‘excellence frameworks’. All of these factors, and more, affect work on inclusivity.

Best practice

Evidence on best practice on inclusivity in HE institutions is dominated by the ‘What Works’ student retention and success programme, which is based on case studies

3. https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/may/08/work-pressure-fuels-academic-mental-illness-guardian-study-health
of initiatives supported by the programme. You can see from the lists in appendix 1 that cases tend to come from middle-ranking universities – Russell Group universities are minor contributors to sector-wide programmes or to developing evidence for change at institutional level. Evidence can be difficult to find because individual institutions sometimes present case studies and supporting information using video or e-learning platforms. It is difficult to draw many conclusions from a range of pilot studies which, even when successful, may or may not work when scaled up or in a different context. Guidance based on this kind of evidence cannot be detailed or prescriptive, yet some general principles do emerge quite strongly (see section on policy below for more on this). The ‘What Works’ programme began two years before the Equality Act 2010 came into force and has no direct successor, and there is no statutory requirement to collect such information, so future evidence is likely to be fragmented.
Methodology and Fieldwork

Methodology

This research deployed an adaptive, participative methodology using both structured and creative methods. The guiding principles of the project are drawn from Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which is an increasingly popular approach to research which informs organisational change. AI revolves around the ‘positive core’ of the organisation; in this case, expressed through QMUL London-based students and staff perspectives on strengths, hopes, and dreams. In the data collection and sense checking phases of the project we used three AI principles which underpin the generative potential of the whole project (Cockell et al. 2012).

- **Words create worlds** – the constructionist principle
- **Images inspire action** – the poetic principle
- **The questions lead to the change** – the positive principle

These principles were used as a grounding framework by researchers and participants. As the project progressed through data collection to analysis and discussion, appreciation was linked to an asset-based approach to identifying opportunities, and a focus on actionable insights for change. Cooperrider and Sekerka (2006) use research to build a model “understructure” for AI. They argue that people experiencing positive feelings developed through AI are more flexible, creative, integrative, open to information and efficient in their thinking. Furthermore, they are more resilient and able to deal with complexity, with an increased appetite for a diversity of thinking and action; inquiry focused on the nature of a desirable common identity (in this case, an ideally inclusive curriculum) is itself a generative step towards organisational transformation (Bushe 2013). AI holds in common with Action Research the assumption that the very act of asking questions will start to influence the way an organisation works. It traditionally starts from ‘where people are at’ and moves through four stages of Discovery, Dreaming, Design and Destiny (or Delivery).
In contrast to other forms of organisational development that seek to identify areas for improvement, AI builds upon the strengths and successes of organisations to underpin and energise the change agenda. It is a powerful way to stimulate potent and sustainable change through people because it provides opportunities for individuals to quickly build and share a relevant vision for change at different levels. Discourses shift and opportunities are considered in new ways when problems are redefined in ways that do not discourage action (Cooperrider and Sekerka 2006). Our view is that this asset-based approach is more helpful for a forward-looking organisation than a deficit model focusing on problems and complaints. AI does not ignore or minimise people’s difficulties, it simply looks at them from the asset rather than the deficit viewpoint. This supports senior staff in framing inclusivity as critical to the strategic choices they make in setting policy and allocating resources. Importantly, AI is considered to be an effective method of bringing out the positive student voice (Buchanan 2014, Kadi-Hanifi et al. 2014, Seale 2010) – as prioritised in the project brief – especially when deploying students as agents of enquiry (Storer 2015). Due to timing constraints our work does not go this far but is guided by the principles above and acts as a test of the approach within QMUL. (See Coghlan et al. (2003), Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) for more on Appreciative Inquiry.)

As illustrated below, this research aims to build on strengths and add value to existing activity and plans in QMUL and QMSU. The analysis and sense-making phases of the project were driven by a search for actionable insight. QMUL has already signalled commitment to integrating findings of the research with the work plans of the QMUL Model and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives. If used purposefully, opportunities identified in this report can be the foundation for an effective theory of change, destiny/delivery stages of appreciative inquiry, or a set of Adaptive Strategies for Inclusivity.
Field work

The researchers planned to engage a comprehensive cross-section of students and staff, which unfortunately proved impossible despite strenuous recruitment efforts by the researchers and QMUL staff. Recruitment of students was attempted by:

- Two ‘Your Union’ all student emails from QMSU
- Emails to student council members
- A dedicated webpage (now removed) on which students who had taken part in the research gave quotes about how engaging it was
- Facebook postings on the pages of the QMSU VP Welfare and VP Education
- Direct WhatsApp messages from QMSU officers to students likely to have a particular interest in the research
- An email to the distribution list managed by the Disability & Dyslexia Service (which students have to proactively sign up to).
- Emails to staff managing late summer examination resits for distribution to students.

Recruitment of staff was attempted by sending emails to:

- The three Faculty Operating Officers
- Academic staff in each School, via an email to the manager of each School for them to forward to their distribution list
- The Student Support Officers who work in each School (who were emailed twice)
- 23 contacts of Joy Hinson, Director of the Centre for Academic and Professional Development (who kindly offered her assistance)

The problems in recruitment were due to the data-gathering phase colliding with exams, Ramadan, and the summer holidays. However, we did engage 17 staff members from three faculties and 22 students in detailed interviews and group discussions. Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with staff; the interview questions are in appendix 2. Students were offered the opportunity to participate in interviews or group discussions using creative methods; details are in appendix 3, and some examples of data are in appendix 4. Together these methods generated over 50,000 words of data which, together with a targeted literature review, gave a worthwhile body of primary and secondary data on which to base a rigorous analysis.

All the primary data was imported into NVivo qualitative data analysis software. The researchers spent a day working together on emergent data coding, discussing excerpts from different interviews and group sessions, with the aim of extracting maximum richness. Then one researcher finished the coding and carried out a thematic analysis while the other reviewed the literature. The primary and secondary data were synthesised to create a draft report.

During the sense-making phase of the research, this report was shared with members of the Task & Finish group who attended a ‘review and refine’ meeting on 15 September to discuss the draft findings. The meeting was also attended by Simon Booy, Executive Officer (Student Experience, Teaching & Learning), who was representing Rebecca Lingwood, Vice-Principal Teaching & Learning, and by Alison Anderson from the Strategic Planning Office. On the same day the researchers held
an open ‘review and refine’ meeting, for participants and other interested people, also to discuss the draft findings. This meeting was attended by 14 people, including two members of the Task & Finish group and two students. Those attending this meeting were asked to use stars to indicate their top priorities (each person was given three stick-on stars), and dots to indicate where they would allocate resources (each person was given 10 stick-on dots). There are photographs in appendix 5 to show how this worked in practice. Further data was collected, including touch-typed notes of discussions, and prioritisation of 37 key factors identified in the draft report. The aggregated prioritisation data from both ‘review and refine’ meetings is in appendix 6. All the data from these meetings was synthesised into this final report.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study is the small number of participants, which was a direct result of the timing of the research and the tight deadline. We were able to involve staff and students from all three faculties and most schools, and we did collect enough primary data for a good qualitative study, particularly as it was complemented by a literature review. However, the real problem is that most of those who took part in the research were already quite concerned about inclusivity. Because we were not able to reach more people, we cannot say with certainty whether this is, or is not, the case more widely at QMUL. We do know that people who are interested in a research topic are more likely to come forward as participants. It may be that there are a number of staff and students at QMUL who are not interested in, or are resistant to, the prospect of increasing inclusivity.

We are also aware that there may be people at QMUL who question, or disagree with, our methodology. In a university including physicists, mathematicians, engineers, social scientists, artists, doctors, dentists and lawyers, among others, it seems virtually impossible to come up with an approach to research that would receive universal approval. Contrary to some of the comments made at one of the ‘review and refine’ meetings, the recruitment process for this research was very thorough: there was a shortlist of six, and our interview was rigorous. Also, our experience, skills, and knowledge are not insignificant. Dr Helen Kara has been an independent researcher and scholar for 17 years. She is an acknowledged expert on creative research methods, with a book on the subject\(^5\), and is in demand internationally for speaking and teaching. She is the first fully independent researcher to have been conferred as a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. Roxanne Persaud became chief executive of a national charity at the age of 29. She has 15 years of experience in organisational development with clients including central Government departments. She is a guest lecturer for postgraduates at Goldsmiths, a late stage doctoral student at Southampton, and was elected as a Life Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 2003. We worked together to design the research, on the basis of the information we had available, and to the best of our abilities. In our judgement the research design has proved fit for purpose.

Inclusive Curricula, Teaching, and Learning: Adaptive Strategies for Inclusivity

We Research It Ltd

Terminology

Inclusivity is a complex and dynamic concept. In a break with general academic tradition, we are not going to define our terms, and instead – in line with a more specific qualitative action-oriented research tradition – we will pay close attention to the way terms were used by participants. It was clear that the terminology is contested. Some interviewees commented on this, questioning the nuances of meaning among terms such as inclusivity, diversity, equality, inequality, inclusion, exclusion, and widening participation. These words and phrases have a range of meanings and are understood differently by different people in different contexts. Yet they are also normal English words that everyone we spoke to was willing and able to use in conversation. There is an opportunity for QMUL to decide on its own definitions for its own purposes, and indeed some work has already been done on this by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group. Its Equality Diversity & Inclusion Objectives 2016-2020 include definitions of equality, diversity, and inclusion. However, those definitions mention the workforce but not students or the student body. Some of the literature uses the term 'workforce' to mean the student body (e.g. Sanders and Higham 2012). However, when we shared these definitions with QMUL students, those students were very clear that they did not feel included in the definitions.

Several interviewees asked the researchers to give definitions, which we politely refused to do, explaining that we wanted to elicit existing understandings rather than to impose understanding. Most people were able to explain their understanding of inclusivity, which suggests that definitions may not be necessary, particularly as there were some identifiable commonalities among responses. Staff members from each of the three faculties spoke of inclusivity in terms of creating an environment where everyone is comfortable, all points of view are accepted, and each student can make the most of their time at university. However, the point was also made that while this may be possible within QMUL, entry to QMUL is not, and cannot be, entirely inclusive, because students have to meet intellectual, linguistic, and financial entry requirements to be admitted.

In the brief for this research, the words 'inclusive' and 'inclusivity' were used. Staff, students, and ourselves as researchers also used the word 'diversity'. They are not synonymous, but iterative, though the relationship between them is not linear. The diffraction patterns used as an analytic lens by Karen Barad (2007, 2014) offer a more useful depiction of the complex interaction between inclusivity and diversity. This lens can help us work towards an understanding of the effects of difference rather than simply understanding the existence of difference.

We prefer to avoid the term ‘non-traditional’, as it supports a deficit view of problematic and expensive students “lack[ing] the study skills and cultural capital to succeed at university” (Hockings, 2010, p.3). However, we do need to discuss this briefly here. In her synthesis of research into inclusive learning and teaching for the Higher Education Academy, Professor Hockings also lists a range of studies countering the deficit view, describing its effects variously as “invidious”, “negative”, “stigmatising”, and – at best – “administratively useful” (ibid). Exact figures are difficult to find, partly because the boundary between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' is fluid, and the categories can overlap. For example, a white middle-class male
student would be categorised as 'traditional' until he developed a mental health problem, at which point he would move into the 'non-traditional' category. It is also worth noting two final points; first, that ‘non-traditional’ may not be synonymous with ‘disadvantaged’, though it often is. Secondly, that imposed labels may not match with fluid and composite self-identity of students.

Staff and students from the more 'traditional' end of the spectrum feel poorly qualified to tackle inclusivity.

This contains implicit recognition of the fact that that so-called 'non-traditional' students, often separated into minority group categories, collectively form a majority at QMUL.
Equality and inequalities in higher education

The ‘protected characteristics’ identified in the Equality Act 2010 are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation. These evidently do not include all the grounds for discrimination. For example, there is no mention of paternity, a single lifestyle, or physical appearance, any of which can be grounds for discrimination. However, the guidance does state that everyone is covered by the Act.

Universities’ conventional approaches to addressing inequalities, focused on integrating individuals into existing institutional settings and structures, are increasingly acknowledged as counter-productive in reducing and ending disadvantage. Focusing on disadvantage as a consequence of individual or group differences locates the problem – and the solution – in the individual, concerned with identifying and offsetting their ‘deficits’. Such personalised adjustments have resulted in reactive responses to students’ circumstances and ostensible need. This deficit-based approach is increasingly recognised as having the potential to stigmatise and further marginalise students who appear to deviate from perceived norms, while overlooking those who appear to conform. Thus, many existing policies and practices aimed at reducing disadvantage (for staff and students) are inadequate due to unhelpful framing of the issue (Thomas 2015, Berry and Bell 2012).

With the Equality Act 2010, previous legislation was brought into line with the social model of disadvantage which locates discriminatory social attitudes and structural barriers to equality as the source of the problem. Individualised interventions are considered insufficient. Instead, universities should anticipate and organise to take account of an evolving and complex student (and staff) population. Recent literature on retention and success indicates that an inclusive curriculum can only be effective in a university-wide context of commitment to inclusive policy and practice.

HE is now viewed as a social institution where life chances and privileges are reproduced, and certain groups continue to be significantly under-represented and are excluded from opportunities and social privileges. In her substantial review and critique of contemporary widening participation policy and practice, Professor Penny Burke points to the dangers of ‘deficit discourses’ which perpetuate "collective and personal histories of under- and misrepresentation, as well as the ways some subjects (are made to) feel different and 'unworthy' of higher education access and participation" (Burke 2013a, p.62). Her aim is to point to the ineffective, even harmful, results of bureaucratised diversity and offer a way to rethink the less tangible, deeper and more institutionally entrenched barriers to widening participation. Critical thinking in this area takes a social justice stance and is concerned with enacting a 'culture of difference' which engages with hegemony, suppression and othering.

It is widely accepted that institutional change is necessary in order to engage a diverse range of students; both to encourage them to enter HE, and to enable them to be successful in and beyond HE. Current research on best practice to support retention in HE presents the most important activities as fostering a sense of belonging, tackling attainment gaps and engaging students in wider university life,
including ensuring access to enrichment activities outside of the core curriculum to build social and cultural capital\(^6\) (Thomas 2012, 2013).

The QMUL Model is designed to address these matters. The plan is for each student to have a personalised strand to their education, to support whatever that student wishes to do after graduation. This strand is intended to be equivalent to one module, and indeed may be a module from a discipline different from the student’s core discipline, or another activity such as working on a QMUL research project, volunteering in the community, work experience, or mentoring young people. The aim is to provide more opportunities for students during their time at QMUL, and so increase their social and cultural capital to widen their opportunities after graduation.

Our research revealed some of the debates around the QMUL Model. There are inevitable concerns around capacity and how this change will work in practice. More relevant to our theme of inclusivity were concerns about how the QMUL Model might – or might not – change the balance of power within the university. Is QMUL seeing its students as deficient in social and cultural capital, and the QMUL Model as a way of reducing these deficiencies? Are QMUL’s senior staff, who all appear to be white and middle-class\(^7\), trying to make students more like them? Or is QMUL choosing to recognise the richness of existing social and cultural capital that its students bring? Will the QMUL Model alienate students and/or staff, or foster a sense of belonging? These are not questions we propose to try to answer, but participants did point out that the QMUL Model offers a huge opportunity for the university to look outward as well as inward. Radical work is being done in other higher education establishments and networks in the UK and elsewhere, such as:

- UCL’s commitment to highlighting and dismantling racist inequality in HE, *Dismantling The Master’s House*\(^8\), and its associated MA in “race”, *Difference and Domination*\(^9\)
- LSE’s *Race in the Academy* project\(^10\) which is highlighting the visibility and invisibility of racism and sexism in the academy\(^11\)
- Publication of a new academic journal in 2016: *Whiteness and Education*\(^12\)
- The first ever black studies degree in Europe on offer at Birmingham City University from September 2017\(^13\)

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\(^6\) Current QMUL definitions: “While not precisely defined and distinguished, cultural capital refers to those things that can facilitate social mobility but are not purely economic, i.e. assets that are, for example, gained through education and a broader intellectual experience leading to increased knowledge and skills. Social capital, for us, is about membership of, and involvement in, social networks, which enable movement between social groups, and the connections, relationships that our students develop to benefit themselves but also for a common good. Other terminology is also becoming more common, e.g. cultural intelligence.” *The QMUL Model* p.1.

\(^7\) http://www.qmul.ac.uk/about/whoswho/index.html

\(^8\) http://www.dtmh.ucl.ac.uk/

\(^9\) http://www.dtmh.ucl.ac.uk/ma-race-difference-domination/

\(^10\) http://www.lse.ac.uk/DPBS/research/race-in-the-academy/Home.aspx

\(^11\) http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/equityDiversityInclusion/2016/06/reflecting-on-the-unspoken/

\(^12\) http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rree20#.VxXuKqunVpk

\(^13\) http://www.unipaper.co.uk/article/birmingham/news/may_2016/birmingham-city-university-to-offer-black-studies-degree
• The Higher Education Academy’s framework for student engagement through partnership\textsuperscript{14} and its associated toolkit\textsuperscript{15}

• A student-driven, project-led educational model developed at the University of Twente in the Netherlands\textsuperscript{16}

• The ‘Student Partners Program’ at McMaster University in Canada\textsuperscript{17}

• sparqs – Scotland-wide agency supporting student engagement\textsuperscript{18}

• Student Academic Partners at Birmingham City University\textsuperscript{19}

• Jisc Change Agents’ Network of staff and students working in partnership to support curriculum enhancement and innovation\textsuperscript{20}

This list was prompted, and some of the items on it mentioned, at one of the ‘review and refine’ meetings. It complements the list in appendix 2, albeit with a more international flavour. It is notable that these comparatively recent examples focus primarily on race/ethnicity and student involvement. They are predated by gender studies, now arguably over 100 years old; queer/LGBT studies which originated in the 1970s; and disability studies, around since the 1980s. However, all of this positive and critical work has yet to combine to create fully inclusive higher education institutions.

QMUL is committed to the process of working towards full inclusion. This research uses methods designed to elicit actionable insights grounded in an ideal sense of what is possible.

\textsuperscript{14} https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/enhancement/frameworks/framework-student-engagement-through-partnership

\textsuperscript{15} https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/enhancement/toolkits/student-engagement-through-partnership-toolkit

\textsuperscript{16} https://www.utwente.nl/tom/en/

\textsuperscript{17} http://miietl.mcmaster.ca/site/research/

\textsuperscript{18} http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/

\textsuperscript{19} http://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/celt/student-engagement/student-partnerships

\textsuperscript{20} https://can.jiscinvolve.org/wp/
Findings

Policy focus

Inclusivity has had a central role in education policy for most of this century, and that emphasis continues in the 2016 HE White Paper *Success as a Knowledge Economy*. The White Paper speaks of ‘widening participation’, particularly for ‘disadvantaged students’. The General Secretary of the University and College Union (UCU) responded, “The government must do more to address the persistent barriers to higher education for those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. We need tougher action on universities who are missing access targets, better support for part-time and mature study, and a national inquiry on our broken admissions system.”(Jutting 2016)

The White Paper identifies ‘gender, ethnicity, and disadvantage’ as important dimensions for data collection. Disability is mentioned once, in a footnote. There is no mention of the Equality Act 2010 or the protected characteristics. Similarly, the 2016 HEPI/HEA Student Academic Experience survey states “demographically, the most significant aspect is ethnicity”, makes only passing reference to gender and does not mention disability or other protected characteristics (Johnson and Universities 2016, Neves and Hillman 2016). Overall, the government focus on both protected characteristic groups and socio-economic status is narrow.

The academic literature on engagement, retention and success also has a narrow focus on inclusivity. Gender, ethnicity, and disability are the only protected characteristics that feature. While ‘multiple dimensions’ are important from a theoretical perspective, intersectionality and non-protected characteristics are conspicuous by their absence in published literature. However, an evidence-based direction centred on students’ sense of belonging is set by Professor Liz Thomas in her expert review of literature and practice for ‘what works’ in retention and success. Based on seven pilot projects (running between 2008-2011) she offers a comprehensive set of tips and recommendations for “nurturing belonging” (Thomas 2012 – details below). While it may not be possible to extrapolate from the pilots without deeper understanding of the operating conditions or the potential to transfer into routine student services, some general success factors emerge strongly. Thomas found these to have most impact in the “academic sphere” of student life and suggested that they should not be delegated or assumed to take place in personal and social life or the pastoral sphere.

Student belonging is achieved through:

- Supportive **peer relations**
- Meaningful **interaction between staff and students**
- Developing **knowledge, confidence and identity** as successful HE learners
- An HE experience **relevant to students’ interests and future goals**

(Thomas 2012, emphasis in original)
A response to government priorities from the Equality Challenge Unit calls for “a clear and distinct consideration of the potential impact of the proposals on the full range of different protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010”. A University Alliance (UA) report on inequality from 2016, *Supporting thriving communities: the role of universities in reducing inequality*, also responds to government priorities, such as the White Paper's emphasis on tackling inequality in HE to improve social mobility. This aligns with the political objective to double participation (of 2009 levels by 2020), particularly from BME and white male students from poor backgrounds. The UA report highlights the importance of early leadership on the equalities agenda, with “strong strategic commitment to reducing disparities, with Vice-Chancellor and senior management buy-in, putting in place institution-wide provision and looking across academic departments and student characteristics to identify and tackle pressure points for different groups of students.” Echoing the work of Thomas (2012, 2013, 2015), the report continues, “This is particularly important in institutions that have very diverse student bodies, as individual interventions would miss so many students, but it also helps to create a sense of belonging” 21.

HEFCE is responding to the tension between narrow definition and broad understanding of diversity and inclusivity by seeking to improve how student data is used. Given the “fragmented and not well evidenced” way the system works, a “step change” in evaluative evidence is required22. To this end HEFCE will develop a programme to support institutions in the development and rigorous testing of interventions to address differential outcomes. For example, HEFCE is piloting approaches to measuring the “learning gain” of students in higher education, including acquisition measures of knowledge, skills, social capital and work readiness23. QMUL is already collaborating in some of these evidence-building projects (on careers information with UoL and more broadly with University of Warwick24) though there was no mention of these in the primary data. Beyond these projects, QMUL is well placed to develop its own evidence principles to support the wider inclusivity and social capital outcomes of the QM Model and other initiatives, services and interventions.

QMUL should seek to build on its already extensive data collection, perhaps through strategic partnerships with QMSU and, in the view of students, local health services, to produce useful and timely reports on “sense of belonging” as articulated by Liz Thomas above.

**Diversity of QMUL**

QMUL collects a considerable amount of data about various dimensions of diversity and inclusivity. However, it is collected and held in different places and by different people for a range of reasons. Individuals may collect and hold institutional data for specific issues, such as Athena Swan in some schools. The central student record system holds all student data. Staff data is on a separate database, and seems to be


23 Read more about HEFCE’s approach to “learning gain” [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/lg/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/lg/)

24 [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/lg/projects/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/lg/projects/)
accessible by different parts of the organisation from those that can access the student data. For example, the Strategic Planning Office (SPO) has access to student data but not staff data. However, the SPO only has access; it does not hold or manage that student data. Nevertheless, SPO staff receive most of the requests for data, even though the extraction process can be fiddly and time-consuming and there are a number of teams across QMUL with the same access.

The researchers were provided with aggregated data by school about the student body in terms of overall numbers, gender (male/female), ethnicity (white, Asian, Black Arab, Chinese, mixed, other), number of mature students, domicile (home UK, EU, overseas), and numbers of recipients of Disabled Students' Allowance and bursaries.

There are 15 schools in London working with undergraduate and postgraduate students. They vary greatly in size, from the School of Geography with 392 students, to the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences with 1,572.\(^{25}\)

The gender balance varies a great deal between schools, from 79% male in the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science, to 73% female in the School of Languages, Linguistics and Film.

Age varies too: the Medical School has 39% mature students, while the School of Economics has only 6%.

Five schools have 90% or more students from the UK: English and Drama, Physics, Dentistry, History and the Medical School. Three have 50% or more students from outside the UK: the School of Politics and International Relations, the School of Business and Management, and the Law School.

Two schools have over 60% white students: English and Drama, and History. The highest proportion of Asian students are in the School of Dentistry (57%), the highest proportion of Black students in the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (10%), the highest proportion of Arab students in the School of Engineering and Materials Science (6%), and the highest proportion of Chinese students in the School of Business and Management (11%).

Given that QMUL collects such thorough and detailed data relating to inclusivity and diversity, there is an opportunity to use this data more strategically. However, it is not easy to access the data, which is held by the Strategic Planning Office (SPO). Most of the staff we spoke to were not aware that this data is collected, which means they are unable to make use of such data. Students are aware (probably because the data is collected from them) and they are concerned about the nature of the data, the status of consent (including options to withdraw data), storage of data, and how the data is used. Anyone wanting access has to have clearance, which may only be for some parts of the available data. We heard from staff who did know about the data that it is not easy to find out how to get clearance and, when you do find out, responses to requests can be slow. Of course it is important to safeguard individual and confidential data, as several of our respondents stressed. However, it is useful

\(^{25}\) All figures from 2014. Percentages rounded to the nearest integer.
to be transparent about anonymised and aggregated data, and to make this available for others to use.

The SPO publishes a number of reports which are openly available on the QMUL website. These are mostly compliance-related, focusing on student data; the SPO has the capability to do more detailed analysis but not, at present, the capacity. Also, there is no equivalent information about staff, presumably because the SPO doesn't have access to staff data. To offer an example, there are some reports against the HESA widening participation performance indicators. One of these states that 'HEFCE uses receipt of DSA as a proxy for the number of disabled students in an institution'⁴⁶ and praises QMUL for exceeding the HESA benchmark and in fact placing first of all 24 universities in the Russell Group. However, this report also identifies some discrepancies within QMUL, i.e. that the School of Medicine has the most DSA claimants, while the School of Business and Management has the fewest – but these discrepancies are not interrogated in the narrative.

We also found that the data on financial support for students suggests that there may be some inequalities within QMUL. The Medical School has the highest proportion of students receiving Disabled Students' Allowance, at 13%. The School of Business and Management has the lowest proportion, at 1%, and the School of Economics and the Law School each have 2%. The highest proportion of students receiving bursaries, as a percentage of those eligible to receive bursaries, are in the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (68%). The lowest proportions are again in the School of Business and Management (36%) and the Law School (38%). Of course there may be reasons other than inequality to explain why the School of Business and Management and the Law School have the lowest proportion of students receiving DSA or bursaries. However, there is an opportunity for QMUL to investigate these discrepancies to ensure that there are no structural barriers in any school to the acknowledgment of, and support for, students with disabilities.

Some examples of the data from 2014, by school, can be found in appendix 7.

The most inclusive HEIs in the UK are responding to gaps, ambiguity and complexity in the policy and regulatory environment by using "sense of belonging" as a guiding principle. QMUL has an opportunity here to build on its 'compliance plus' approach to data (primarily collected and used for compliance and regulatory purposes).

QMUL has the opportunity to show leadership in inclusivity by:

- Using "belonging" as an indicator of social capital in the QM model.
- Re-analysing existing student demographic and satisfaction data to make links between existing KPIs and a sense of belonging.
- Making existing diversity statistics and reports more accessible: for example, by publishing headline figures and trends on the intranet or the public web pages of each school or faculty, and examining them regularly in oversight committees.

• Finding out how data is being used or could be used, by asking academic and managerial staff and QMSU officers what information they need to inform planning for inclusivity.
• Creating the necessary capacity within QMUL to respond, in a timely fashion, to the identified information needs of academic and managerial staff and QMSU officers.
• Making explicit links between data and policy.

Understanding of inclusivity

The primary data showed big variations between departmental understandings and practices of inclusivity. Some of this can be explained through subject differences. For example, inclusivity is embedded in the research and practice of some disciplines such as drama and linguistics. In others, it’s peripheral, particularly STEM subjects that primarily involve the teaching of facts and practical techniques. In others still, it varies, such as law. For example, some case law is drawn from the 1300s onwards, long before ideas of inclusivity and equality were considered relevant or important, though where there are cases from recent decades there will be more scope to teach those with elements of diversity. Also, the legal profession in the UK is still dominated by white men, but QMUL guest speakers are chosen to reflect the diversity of the student body more closely.

Medical practitioners regard inclusivity as very important because they need to be able to deal with people from all corners of society. Yet medicine as a discipline is not entirely inclusive, for understandable reasons driven by professional and compliance standards, such as the GMC requirement that any doctor must be physically able to examine a patient.

Subject differences are not the only reason for different understandings of inclusivity. Another factor is that the staff we spoke to don’t know what other departments are doing with respect to inclusivity; there is no systematic sharing of ideas. Inclusivity is divided between a range of groups and teams dealing with areas such as: Equality and Diversity; Engagement, Retention and Success; Disability and Dyslexia; and Strategic Planning, as well as individuals working at school level on initiatives such as Athena Swan. Also, there is no clear direction from the top/centre of the organisation, though a positive view of inclusivity is implicit in measures such as signing up to the Athena Swan charter and rolling out training on unconscious bias. Nevertheless, at present, those who are working on inclusivity seem to be doing it mainly as a result of personal interest/commitment.

There are opportunities here for QMUL to: develop and communicate a clear vision of success in inclusive HE. Steps to this include; identify where the responsibility for inclusivity sits within the organisation; work with QMSU to develop a theory of change for inclusivity; and communicate good and innovative practice in inclusivity from individual schools. For example, it would be useful to have inclusivity as a standing agenda item on all staff/student committees and teaching/learning committees at school level. Without a clear organisational vision supported by

27 ‘Theory of change’ is a model for identifying how an organisation can get from where it is to where it wants to be.
structures of good communication (more on this below), it is not surprising that people's understanding of inclusivity varies. Of those interviewed, students' understanding in the abstract was more limited than that of staff. One student commented:

I don't think other students will know what we mean by inclusive to be honest. It's one of those jargon words... I think when approaching this with students the jargon needs to be a lot more simplified.

Bearing this out, when students were prompted with sticker maps, empathy maps, and screenplay exercises (Kara, 2015), some showed a much more sophisticated understanding of inclusivity and intersectionality than they displayed in the interviews. This supports the use of creative methods in inclusivity research. Such methods, along with action orientation, were used by us to demonstrate ways in which QMUL can uncover complex and subjective views which can be translated into clear and actionable insights.

Only one of our respondents actually referred to the concept of intersectionality, but several demonstrated understanding of this concept in other ways. Here are some examples:

If we learn only about white abled heterosexual men for instance we don't actually get the full picture when it comes to the vast majority of history or the arts or anything like that.

I monitor classroom contributions to ensure as many people as possible speak across a range of identity positions (insofar as it's possible for me to tell).
These examples bear out Case’s (2016) assertion that the intersection of social identities changes each person’s experience in a situation, and an understanding of how privilege perpetuates systems of inequality. Analysis of privilege at QMUL is beyond the scope of this report, yet it is the privileged who control access to HE and therefore often exclude – whether intentionally or unintentionally – because to do so serves their interests. So the influence of privilege should be borne in mind as we go on to discuss other dimensions of diversity identified as pertinent to student experiences at QMUL.

Dimensions of diversity

In terms of the protected characteristics, disability was the most frequently mentioned by respondents in this research, followed (in order) by race, sexual orientation, age, religion and belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, sex, and marriage/civil partnership. Because the protected characteristics don't cover all the grounds on which people can be discriminated against, we developed an 'inclusivity map' for use with students which outlines a range of other characteristics we knew could be relevant or important for students at QMUL (see appendix 8). We also used exercises such as the empathy map and screenplay exercise which enabled students to define the characteristics they thought were important. Interviews with staff similarly elicited characteristics of QMUL students that they view as important but which are not protected by legislation. Characteristics defined as important by students and staff include:

- Alcohol-free lifestyle
- Commuter
- Parental responsibilities
- Caring for dependent relative(s)
- In paid employment as well as studying due to financial need
- Invisible disability e.g. mental health problem, dyspraxia
- Living with complex and difficult circumstances

This offers an opportunity for QMUL to define its own protected characteristics, combine them with those protected by legislation, and collect and use data to map
QMUL’s unique ecology of intersectionality. That would help target resources to local conditions.

One unexpected thread running through this research was communication. We didn't ask any direct questions about communication, but respondents had a lot to say about it – more than about anything else except curricula. Communication is seen as key to inclusivity, and poor quality communication is seen as a potential barrier to inclusivity.

There are some pointers to good communication in the data, which can be summarised as follows:

- Recognise that communication involves both transmission and reception – transmission alone is not communication
- When transmitting information, keep it as short and relevant as possible, pace it well, and use accessible language
- When receiving information, make the effort to absorb and understand what you are being told
- Give praise where merited as readily as critique where needed, at every level from individual to institutional
- Read emails and their attachments
- Reply to emails
- Review and share practice from other schools, faculties, universities

These suggest a strong influence of organisational systems and cultures on students’ sense of belonging and consequent retention and success. Bureaucracy should not be treated as trivial: it is structural and can contribute disproportionately to the exclusion of the majority of QMUL students.

Ideally inclusive learning experience

We collected some examples of good practice in inclusive teaching and learning from around QMUL. As our sample was smaller than we had hoped, we don't plan to showcase those here, because we are not confident that we can give a full and
accurate picture. However, we did collect enough views on what would constitute an ideally inclusive learning experience to give some pointers. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but to provide a foundation from which QMUL can build.

- Good transition into QMUL for new students whatever their initial level or understanding of the course subject
- QMUL = a community where students' thoughts and feelings are valued by their peers, by other academics, by students services and where students also value the thoughts and feelings of others
- Students are aware of their own learning styles
- Staff are aware of the composition of the group they're teaching
- Students are easily able to access learning materials in advance and during class
- All students are easily able to participate in all learning activities, and to be heard
- Students are able to access and use spaces easily
- Students are able to request additional support when needed
- Teaching uses a variety of pedagogical strategies tailored to individual student needs and learning styles
- Curriculum includes a diverse range of materials, relevant to those from different ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, social classes etc, and draws attention to disciplinary inclusions and exclusions
- Support is available for students with particular needs, including from specialist services beyond QMUL where appropriate
- Every lesson is an environment where all viewpoints are valued
- There are diverse forms of assessment for every module
- Teaching makes best use of QM Plus and other assistive technology
- Lecturer is available immediately after each session for any student that has further questions
- Learning is embedded in students' families and communities, particularly (but not exclusively) those geographically close to QMUL

Clearly some of this is already happening in some parts of QMUL.

We arrange a broad variety of learning encounters which will cater to the unique learning methods of individual students, by which I mean to say that some learn best from lectures, some from tutorials, some from electronic self-directed learning. We accommodate different learning styles.

However, it remains little more than an aspiration in others.
The issue of physical space is a serious one. Concerns were raised by several participants about the inclusivity of existing spaces which may not be accessible for those with mobility problems; or at a suitable temperature for a student to stay awake through a lecture if they are tired from paid work, caring, or parenting; or appropriate for students of non-binary gender to use to change their clothes for sport or exercise. Also, the number of students at QMUL is increasing with the removal of student number controls, yet the space remains the same. This too raises concerns about inclusivity.

It's easy to say that QMUL should look at alternative, radical models of learning space such as those at the University of Twente. Yet it is not helpful to ignore the very real constraints on QMUL in terms of making environmental changes. The main campus at Mile End is bounded by the Mile End Road in front, the hospital behind, the Regent's Canal to one side, buildings all around, and the Underground below, plus it has the Grade II listed Jewish cemetery at its centre. Remodelling or rebuilding existing buildings would be time-consuming, expensive, and put even more pressure on the remaining buildings for the duration of the work. On the plus side, any reorganisation of buildings or structural changes would present an opportunity to seek creative and practical ideas from people who use the campus who currently have to navigate and work around the physical constraints. However, given the reports of serious problems with the physical space, there appears to be a tension that may be hard to reconcile between the continuing expansion of student numbers and QMUL's stated desire to provide high quality personalised and inclusive student experiences.

https://www.utwente.nl/en/education/
Transition

Transition to university is a huge change for students, particularly young people with little or no experience of living away from home. On the whole, in line with our findings re Thomas & May (2010), staff see the priorities here as to raise students' awareness of different learning styles and required learning outcomes, and to help them make the change to independent self-directed learning. Students agree with this but tend to go much further, seeing the transition more in terms of a whole life change. Of course this varies between individual students but, speaking very generally, for UK students who have moved away from home it may involve making many day-to-day decisions for the first time, such as what and when to eat, how to shop and how to budget. Even for students who continue to live at home, joining a university can be a sizeable culture shock, where the student is exposed to many new ideas and customs. And for international students, on top of all this they have to manage work in an unfamiliar language while learning how to live in a strange country where everything from using public transport to accessing health care is completely unfamiliar.

There was unanimous agreement, at the 'review and refine' meetings, that 'good inward transition for students whatever their initial level or understanding of the course subject' is vital. Students do need to learn how to learn at university, and they need to learn that fast. They also need help in making the change to university life and culture. Induction is a key process for creating a sense of community, informing students, and helping to manage their expectations. At QMUL some groups of students, such as international students, have additional induction on top of the core induction to help meet their additional needs.

Transition into HE is a key moment and an opportunity to establish behaviours for studentship in the longer term. Mindful of this, Thomas (2015) highlights the value of targeting recruitment and entry to HE with “transition pedagogy” (Kift et al. 2010) including for emerging challenges focused on the BME postgraduate learning experience. The 2013 Race Equality Charter encourages institutions to address issues of progression of BME students into postgraduate research and academic careers. QMUL has an opportunity to take a less functional and more inclusive approach to developing its own ‘transition pedagogy’ for first year modules at

29 http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/race-equality-charter/
undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Staff and students can use this to negotiate a shared understanding of responsibility for learning performance, including relationships, attitudes and beliefs which support inclusivity.

Staff who join QMUL also make a transition. The point was made by some participants that staff, as well as students, need to understand what is expected of them and why. Staff induction would be a good time to ensure new staff have a good understanding of what inclusivity means specifically at QMUL, and to clarify what is expected of them in terms of inclusive teaching and assessment.

Student support

Thomas and May (2010) note that student diversity can incorporate difference across four dimensions, summarised below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity dimensions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Level/type of entry qualifications; skills; ability; knowledge; educational experience; learning approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispositional</td>
<td>Self-esteem; confidence; motivation; aspirations; expectations; preferences; attitudes; assumptions; beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstantial</td>
<td>Age; disability; geographical location; parenting/caring responsibilities; financial situation; access to IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Language; values; cultural capital; religion and belief; nationality; social class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(adapted from Thomas and May (2010) p.5)

Student respondents to this research focused more on the dispositional dimension, with some awareness of the circumstantial and a little awareness of the cultural dimensions. Students said very little about the educational dimension. Staff respondents focused least on the dispositional dimension and most on the educational dimension, with some awareness of the circumstantial and cultural dimensions.

Most of the staff we interviewed are professional educators so it is not surprising that they focus on the educational dimension. However, the disparity between the two groups, in terms of focus, was so great as to be surprising. This disparity suggests that staff view university as an educational institution for students, while students view university as a life experience. That is likely to have a significant impact on the expectations and practice of student support, from transition (see above) onwards.

People at the 'review and refine' meetings were almost unanimous in their view of the importance of students being able to 'request additional support when needed', with all but one respondent saying this is 'vital' and the other saying 'useful' (nobody regarded it as 'not essential'). Respondents in these meetings also thought it worked
quite well, with five saying it ‘usually’ happens, eight saying ‘sometimes’, and only one saying ‘rarely’. Similarly, there was a high level of agreement about the importance of support being ‘available for students with particular needs, including from specialist services beyond QMUL where appropriate’. All but two respondents said this is ‘vital’ and the other said ‘useful’ (again, nobody regarded it as ‘not essential’). And again respondents thought this worked quite well, with six saying it ‘usually’ or ‘sometimes' happens, and only two saying ‘rarely’.

The primary data may hold clues about why student support doesn’t always happen. For example, there are a number of comments in the primary data, from both staff and students, about how hard it is to support students who don’t, or can’t, ask for help. This difficulty may be due to a number of structural and/or individual factors: cultural imperatives, stigma, staff focusing primarily on education, students’ lack of confidence, and so on. QMUL is praised for treating students like adults, and part of that is the implicit expectation that students will ask for help when they need help. However, that places the emphasis on the individual in classic neoliberal style, ignoring the fact that it may at times be difficult for students to know they need support, due to e.g. inexperienced or a mental health problem. Also, there are very real structural barriers to asking for help, including cultural imperatives and stigma, as well as students’ awareness of huge staff workloads and under-resourced support services. There is an opportunity here for QMUL to work with QMSU to gather evidence of this reporting gap which could support a case for more resource.

One suggestion in the primary data is that the personal adviser (PA) system is the key to this, but that system is also evidently under-resourced and under-supported. The opportunity here may be for QMUL to work with students to review and revise the PA system – which we understand is already in the pipeline as part of the QMUL Model.

**Technology**

While technology has become a core means of providing an inclusive curriculum, through online or blended teaching and learning, there are concerns about risks of isolation or disengagement (Hockings, 2010). At QMUL, students are clear about the benefits of using technology to support learning. Students were very much in favour of Q Review, and so were some staff. Benefits cited by respondents include:

- Ability to go back over something a student found hard to understand
- Catching up on the start of a lecture if late
- Not missing out if unable to attend the lecture in person
- For students with physical disabilities: not missing out if your amanuensis was unable to attend
- For students with learning disabilities: being able to re-view the lecture as many times as needed
- Catching up if the lecturer goes too fast
- Useful for international students or those with English as a second language
- Enables students to make more detailed and accurate lecture notes
- Increases options for revision in the run-up to exams
Students were also in favour of the use of 'clickers', which enable more interactive teaching, and also give lecturers the opportunity to check students' levels of understanding without individual students needing to admit that they don't understand in front of the whole group. These benefits identified by respondents at QMUL give a finer grained reflection of benefits identified in the literature, e.g. Taylor (2008).

Students were vocal about their desire to see technology used consistently across QMUL. The fact that Q Review isn't used consistently suggests that there are some barriers to its use. One barrier is that of confidentiality, such as a patient's medical information or commercially sensitive business information, and another is that equipment sometimes breaks down or there are power cuts, but these kinds of barriers can be communicated and are readily understood by students. Also, it's not always appropriate, such as in highly interactive sessions where much can be learned by doing but very little by watching and listening. Some departments have higher rates of people using the available technology than others, so there may be other barriers. None of the staff who participated in this research spoke against the use of technology to support teaching in these ways.

QMUL has a dedicated e-learning unit which works to ensure that technology is available, as far as possible, when and where it's needed. Some faculties and schools have an opt-out policy for Q Review, such as the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the School of Science and Engineering, while others have an opt-in policy, such as the School of Medicine and the School of Dentistry. Of course not all types of teaching lend themselves to being recorded. For example, with interactive work or class exercises, the learning is more in the doing than in the watching and listening. There is also the option of 'personal capture' i.e. staff and/or

I do always think sometimes the lecturers do go a bit too quickly, in terms of, yeah going through the lecture slides. People have a two-hour lecture in biology for example, I know some lecturers tend to just whizz through the slides; there's 50, 60 slides... you know, two minutes per slide... sometimes I feel they just go through the slides just to make sure they've completed the slides, rather than making sure the students are understanding. I do understand that they shouldn't spoon feed you and make sure you get everything in the lecture, you know, you have to do your own research and what not, but I do feel we have quite a wide variety of students at Queen Mary in particular. I do feel that a lot more could be done to be more inclusive of students.
students arranging to record lectures themselves, which students can – and do – do with their smartphones.

As the data seems clear that the use of technology promotes inclusive teaching and learning, there may be an opportunity here for QMUL to widen its use of supportive technology. This could be done, for example, by ensuring that some KPIs of the Q Review system are related to retention, engagement and success (which may already be the case) and/or by making the opt-out policy consistent across the university.

Curricula

'Curriculum' is itself a contested term. For some people it is simply the course content, while others use a broader definition, including aspects such as course materials, learning goals, teaching methods, and assessment types. We are using a broad definition here.

We recognise that any work done by QMUL on curriculum development will need to align with the impending Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). It is too early in the TEF timescale for us to establish how this alignment can be made; that work will need to be done by the QMUL TEF working group that is currently being set up.

Curriculum content can contribute to marginalisation and disengagement of disadvantaged groups (Thomas and May, 2010). For example, the NUS ‘Race for Equality’ report highlighted 42% of BME students did not believe their curriculum reflected issues of diversity, equality and discrimination, and 36% in higher education felt unable to bring their own backgrounds into their learning. While this is a powerful illustration it should be noted that attainment gaps are just one of many pieces of evidence of inequality and disadvantage experienced by BME and other groups. The HEFCE Report ‘Differences in Degree Outcomes’ indicates even when controlling for entry qualifications, BME graduates in 2013-14 have an unexplained difference of 15 percentage points for ‘good’ degree results compared with white students. The picture at QMUL is similar, with a reported attainment gap of 20% between BME and white students (including SMD).

A review of evidence on the experience of students with disabilities (Rickinson 2010) found more emphasis on adjustments to assessment than to the curriculum as a whole. Despite decades of policy and programmes, evidence for contemporary initiatives remains largely below the radar of publication outside centrally-funded collections of projects. It is not clear whether individual institutional initiatives fit into a broad strategic plan (as does the OU work on Universal Design, described below), or are more opportunistic or locally driven.

http://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/student-recruitment-retention-attainment/student-attainment/degree-attainment-gaps/
http://www.hr.qmul.ac.uk/equality/data/
Inclusive Curricula, Teaching, and Learning: Adaptive Strategies for Inclusivity  

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In a broad summary of the literature on retention and success, generally based on small projects and pilot studies, we can aver that curricula should be (re)developed, with cognisance of students' needs, backgrounds and expectations. This is supported by people at the 'review and refine' meetings who felt strongly that it was important for staff to be aware of the composition of the group they're teaching, but that this rarely happens at QMUL. There was also a high level of agreement that lecturers and guest speakers should reflect the diversity of the student body: in the open meeting this received the third highest level of resource dots. Participants also felt strongly that the curriculum should look at different perspectives, including those from minority groups, and should include readings whose authors reflect the diversity of the student body as a minimum (and ideally go further). Curricula should also promote academic and social engagement through, for example, induction programmes, collaborative learning, new curriculum content and increased communication between staff and students. Finally, curricula should encourage engagement activities in which students take responsibility for their own learning, learn from self-reflection and from collaborating with others. The respondents to our research placed a high value on these qualities and rarely engaged in institution-blaming.

There is not a great deal of literature focusing on the curriculum, so good practice is less well developed or documented than in other areas. The focus on curricula in this research represents a positive stance by QMUL. Our findings present an opportunity for QMUL to 'learn by doing' and to establish, inclusively, 'what good looks like'.

To respondents, an inclusive curriculum means:

- Providing information that is relevant to students' backgrounds
- Looking at different perspectives including those from minority groups
- Not giving out negative stories about types of people or nationalities
- No introduction or reproduction of stereotypes
- A more holistic curriculum, so e.g. include information about beliefs as well as facts, students' experiences as well as lecturers' experiences
- Readings whose authors reflect the diversity of the student body as a minimum, and ideally go further
- A curriculum co-created with students from a range of backgrounds
- Where possible, including information about the impact of topics on minority groups; where this is not possible, drawing attention to it and discussing the reasons and implications
- Where possible, using examples or case studies based on the experiences of people from minority groups; where this is not possible, drawing attention to it and discussing the reasons and implications
- If a curriculum (or part of a curriculum) is necessarily dominated by e.g. white people and/or able-bodied men, drawing attention to this, discussing the reasons and implications, and introducing students to methods to enable more inclusive approaches to research in these areas
- A curriculum that is regularly reviewed for both relevance and inclusivity by people who have had unconscious bias training
- Reducing competition and encouraging co-operation
- Providing relevant information from different disciplines or fields
• Inclusive assessment methods

It was interesting that one of the top priorities for participants at the 'review and refine' meetings was 'A curriculum co-created with students from a range of backgrounds.' At the open meeting in the afternoon, this was unequivocally top priority, receiving nine stars (the next highest priorities received five stars) and 14 resource dots (the next highest priority received 10). There was also a high level of agreement on scoring across both groups, who felt this rarely happens (one person said 'sometimes'), and that it was either useful or vital, with nobody regarding it as unessential. There was also strong agreement that the curriculum should be 'regularly reviewed for both relevance and inclusivity by people who have had unconscious bias training', with nine people saying this is 'vital', two saying it is 'useful', and nobody saying it is not essential.

Although some good work is being done at QMUL to improve assessment and make it more accessible, there is still a great deal of reliance on academic writing. This is a skill which, after graduation, will only be of use to the minority of students who pursue an academic career. Written assessments can be easier for staff to manage than other kinds of assessment, but they are not necessarily the most beneficial approach for students. At the 'review and refine' meetings, there was strong agreement that 'inclusive assessment methods' are vital with just one person saying they are useful and nobody saying they are not essential. Nobody said that such methods are often used at QMUL; four people thought they are sometimes used and six people thought they are rarely used. There was also a high level of agreement that QMUL should offer diverse forms of assessment for every module.

Some innovative work is being done around assessment. For example, the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science has used peer marking which they have found to engage students more thoroughly with learning outcomes. EECS and the Medical School have used direct assessment of practical work where feedback is given immediately in class. The Medical School now provides this feedback electronically, in some detail, so students can reflect on it after the session. This is more structured and captured than traditional verbal feedback, and so enables students to create their own action plans. Ensuring that tutorial participation levels form part of the overall mark that students receive encourages participation and indicates that students' commitment to their learning is worthy of recognition alongside other factors such as assignment quality and exam success.

We may not have the disciplinary knowledge to do it, but we're not going to have the disciplinary knowledge unless we do do it.
Another strand in the literature features an adaptive form of curriculum design, which requires a fundamental restructuring of thinking, policy and practice based on critical reflection which anticipates diverse ways students will engage with the curriculum. This approach to the curriculum is known as “Universal Design” (UDL – for learning, or UDI – instruction). In the UK, the UD principles are recommended as a curriculum design process which reduces pressure on students to disclose “hidden differences” (Thomas and May, 2010). Provision can be made in the curriculum for students to draw on their own experiences, thereby building diversity into teaching materials and methods. UDL has been comprehensively adopted by De Montfort University as core principles for inclusive teaching and learning and has informed the Open University’s institutional approach to curriculum design for over a decade.

Literature in this area is nascent but the approach is growing in popularity. Crucially, a UD curriculum carries an obligation to listen and respond to learners; it operationalises inclusivity as a process which values participation and makes constant efforts to facilitate meaningful participation of students (Bruch 2003). UD principles require the curriculum to offer multiple means of representing and engaging with content.

QMUL students want to be respected for their uniqueness while receiving equal treatment with others. This idea recurs in the body of literature on the student experience and a well-used quote is worth repeating:

Students’ sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (teacher and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class. More than simple perceived liking or warmth, it also involves support and respect for personal autonomy and for the student as an individual. (Goodenow 1993, cited in Bran and Millard 2013, Parkes 2014, Thomas 2012)

Teaching in an inclusive way means finding a balance between supporting those with additional needs while not singling out those who are different. Pigeonholing, for example, by offering specific technical assistance is counterproductive (Madriaga 2007). Thus there is a risk that individualised responses to disadvantage and discrimination may themselves constitute systematic oppression (Healy et al. 2010). By contrast, ‘what works’ for WASRS is achieved by positioning the student body as a “workforce” to be nurtured (Sanders and Higham 2012). When linked with findings from other WASRS literature (Thomas and May 2010) we recognise this as an opportunity to view student body as an asset, that their informal and peer relationships in the academic sphere (other students, tutors, lecturers and supervisors) are resources to be valued for their influence on engagement and retention.

For respondents to this research, inclusive teaching means:
• Lecturers and guest speakers who reflect the diversity of the student body
• Field trips (where appropriate) to a diverse range of settings
• Consistently making best use of technology to enable students to get the most out of teaching and materials
• Working interactively whenever possible
• No logistical difficulties leading to missed or cancelled sessions
• Checking students' levels of understanding of subject matter
• Making sure students understand what is required of them and why

One or two lecturers use the system of having blanks in some of their lecture slides and you have to try and fill it in as you attend the lectures. I personally feel that works fairly well in terms of making sure students attend and be inclusive.

A good lecturer, which I found really good, towards the end of lectures asked a list of questions that were covered in the lecture to make sure different people understood and had those group conversations.

The second highest priority for participants at the 'review and refine' meetings was 'Teaching uses a variety of pedagogical strategies tailored to individual student needs and learning styles.' At the open meeting in the afternoon, this received five stars and 10 resource dots. There was also a high level of agreement on scoring across both groups, who felt this sometimes (n=5) or rarely (n=7) happens, and that it is either useful (n=5) or vital (n=7). Nobody thought it happens often or is not essential.

The current direction of work on improving student outcomes puts learning and teaching at the heart of institutional responses, rather than targeted or prescribed interventions. Inclusive teaching is about negotiating structural disadvantages while upholding academic quality standards.

What QMUL needs to change to promote inclusivity

There were wide variations in people's views of what QMUL does well in terms of inclusivity. With respect to inclusivity, two people said QMUL didn't do much well, while eight thought it did some or most things well, and three people described QMUL as having good intentions. Two people viewed this research as a positive step. Some respondents mentioned local or specific positives. These are listed in appendix 9.
Respondents came up with a wealth of ideas about what needs to change at QMUL to bring inclusivity into the mainstream. These are listed in full in appendix 10. Broadly, themes were:

- More resources for work on inclusivity, including curriculum and assessment development and student support, and involving students
- More time for work on inclusivity, including curriculum and assessment development and student support, and involving students
- Better communication at all levels
- More training in relevant subjects for staff, students, and personal advisers
- Better accessibility (in the broadest sense) of physical spaces
- Embedding of inclusivity in committee agendas, conferences etc
- Better support for students, particularly those with visible and invisible disabilities, commuters, gender-fluid students, students in paid employment
- Better and more consistent use of technology by teaching staff
- Recognition of inclusivity and diversity as pedagogical principles

There were some interesting overlaps between what people thought QMUL does well and what they thought needed to change. Broadly, these were:

- Well-intentioned institutional approach to inclusivity AND needs to be a higher priority and better resourced
- Good work on inclusive curricula/assessments in some areas AND needs to be much better across the board
- Good use of technology AND patchy – needs to be more consistent
- Good unconscious bias training AND needs to be available to more/all staff and students
- Good communication about inclusivity-related issues in some ways/places AND needs to be good across the board
- Good student induction AND needs to be more closely tailored to needs of specific groups with more on inclusivity-related issues
- Good student support in some ways/places AND needs to be better, more comprehensive
- Good quality support for students with mental health problems AND inadequate quantity – more resource needed

**Implementation**

People at the ‘review and refine’ meetings had some useful constructive criticisms to make which have been taken into account in producing this final report. However, they were broadly supportive of the research, and are keen to see it used to make a difference at QMUL. They had some ideas about how this could happen:

- Streamline the current fragmented responsibility for inclusivity (ERS, DDS, E&D, etc) and decide where the responsibility for inclusivity sits within the institution, at both strategic and school levels
• Ensure that future work on inclusivity is properly resourced rather than just being allocated as an extra responsibility to staff who already have a lot of extra responsibilities
• Make inclusivity a standing agenda item on all staff-student liaison committees and teaching/learning committees
• Work closely with QMSU at school level as well as university level to make best use of the Union’s expertise and ensure that students’ voices are heard
• Include feedback on inclusivity in module evaluation forms
• Look at the management of inclusivity in other universities worldwide for more ideas

It should be noted that a ‘joined up’ approach is essential if changes are to take hold. Isolated initiatives risk being undermined by the multi-layered effects of disadvantage faced by existing and prospective students.
Opportunities for QMUL

An inclusive culture is an anticipatory approach which favours flexible policies and practices with an ambitions focus on success for all. This is in contrast to reactive approaches which create exceptions for particular individuals or special policies and practices for particular groups. The menu of opportunities for change offered in this report is comprehensive, based on the information at hand, but not exhaustive. More will doubtless appear in the coming year. To be useful as objectives in a set of adaptive strategies means paying attention to institutional level change and how the student experience changes at individual level. When prioritising and choosing which to take action on, it is important to remember that changing one has implications for the other. To be inclusive, simultaneous adaptation of both policy and practice is necessary, achieved by working in partnership with individual students, QMSU and other involved organisations.

Inclusive curriculum, teaching and learning offers an opportunity for QMUL to:

• Meet legislative duties to promote equality.
• Enhance reputation by demonstrating core institutional values.
• Enhance the quality of learning and teaching.
• Improve student satisfaction.
• Share ownership for learning.
• Increase student retention and success.
• Expand from 'widening participation' to widening all students' opportunities.

Research traditionally presents 'recommendations'. However, recommendations are often quite specific and limited. In line with the Appreciative Inquiry framework for the research and its constructive approach, our view is that this research offers some opportunities for QMUL to take up, in whole or in part, if the organisation chooses to do so. These include three opportunities for sector leadership and 12 internal opportunities.

QMUL could become a recognised leader of inclusive HE by:

4. Developing a deep and practical understanding of what constitutes an inclusive curriculum, inclusive teaching, and inclusive assessment.
5. Systematically collecting and using data from staff and students. That data could be used to: inform policy, strategy and practice; integrate academic research with practice; design and evaluate new interventions in partnership with other organisations; and engage in active dissemination of findings to improve a broader understanding of changing contexts.
6. Demonstrate, within the relevant strategic documents, how QMUL's distinctive understanding of inclusivity is applied to data to inform policy and practice.

Internal opportunities include:

14. QMUL could develop and communicate a clear vision of success in inclusive HE.
15. QMUL could identify where responsibility sits for inclusivity within the organisation.
16. QMUL could work with QMSU to develop a theory of change for inclusivity.

17. QMUL could define its own protected characteristics, combine them with those protected by legislation, and collect and use data to map QMUL's unique ecology of intersectionality.

18. QMUL could consider the usefulness or otherwise of defining the terminology around inclusivity, given that inclusivity is a developing topic and the academic convention of prioritising definitions may itself, to some extent, be exclusive.

19. QMUL could involve students in developing a set of broad inclusivity principles for curriculum design, including feedback and assessment, to be used within all faculties and schools.

20. QMUL could widen its use of supportive technology such as Q Review.

21. QMUL could communicate good and innovative practice in inclusivity from individual schools, which would serve to inform and inspire other schools within the university (and beyond) and so build on existing success.

22. QMUL could enhance its induction programme by adding specialised sections for specific groups of students to help meet their additional needs (as it already does with some groups e.g. international students).

23. QMUL could work with QMUL to gather evidence of the anecdotally reported problems of students who need support but don't, or can't, ask for help – perhaps (depending on the nature of the evidence) to support a case for more resource.

24. QMUL could review and revise the personal adviser system with a view to improving student support.

25. QMUL could investigate the sizeable discrepancies in the proportions of students receiving DSA and bursaries in different schools with a view to ensuring there are no structural barriers in any school to the acknowledgement of, and support for, students with disabilities.

26. Any further research on inclusivity to be conducted within QMUL could be more inclusive in itself, e.g. with students trained to lead or co-lead the project, and with adequate resources of time as well as money.

Writing about AI, Bushe (2013) says “The better the communication and relationships among stakeholders, the more likely a challenged system will reorganize at a higher level of complexity.” True organisational transformation relies on knowing what success looks like, and AI provides a path to that knowledge.
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Appendix 1: Evidence building for inclusion in HE

“Building engagement and a sense of belonging” is the headline conclusion of phase 1 of the ‘What Works’ programme of pilot projects seeking to improve student retention and success. No results have yet been published from phase 2, which aims to embed the learning from phase 1 across whole institutions. Links are provided to reports on pilot projects in phase 1, and full statements of ambition for phase 2. Other examples of UK work on inclusive curricula in HE are also linked to below.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglia Ruskin University</td>
<td>A comparative evaluation of the roles of student adviser and personal tutor in relation to undergraduate student retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aston University</td>
<td>Peer Mentoring Works! How Peer Mentoring Enhances Student Success in Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumbria University</td>
<td>Dispositions to stay: the support and evaluation of retention strategies using the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottingham Trent University</td>
<td>HERE! Higher education retention and engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Leicester</td>
<td>‘Belonging’ and ‘intimacy’ factors in the retention of students - an investigation into student perceptions of effective practice and how that practice can be replicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Reading/ Oxford Brookes University</td>
<td>Comparing and evaluating the impacts on student retention of different approaches to supporting students through study advice and personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Sunderland</td>
<td>Good practice in student retention: an examination of the effects of student integration on non-completion</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham City University</td>
<td>The University and Students’ Union (SU) will work in partnership to create a greater feeling of student belonging within the learning community. This encompasses a focus upon not only academic life at university, but also social and pastoral elements. The approach will target prospective and current students and will weave both SU and academic inputs through the transition into and through the first year experience. This will provide students with a multiplicity of avenues for support and guidance, establishing ‘early alert systems’ to trigger proactive support mechanisms. We believe this joined up approach will ensure a smoother and more successful transition that leads to greater student and organisational success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Glasgow Caledonian University</strong></td>
<td>GCU is committed to improving retention especially that of students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds; care leavers and articulating students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newman University</strong></td>
<td>Our vision is to deliver institutionally coherent and participatory educational practices that promote successful progression through strategies which enable our heterogeneous student body to succeed. It is informed by our institutional catholic mission and ethos to offer a high quality, supportive yet challenging formative education to all sections of society. We recognise that non-continuation, and conversely retention, are part of a complex cultural and social picture, thus, we aim to achieve this through building staff capacity that enables us to take these complexities into account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>St Mary's University College, Twickenham</strong></td>
<td>Our aim is to ensure that we enhance engagement with our students and strengthen our sense of belonging across the institution: in doing so we aim to build upon our strong community base of mutual respect in line with our Catholic ethos and identity. In addition we aim to identify specific discipline based issues associated with attrition and under-performance and use this as the basis for further development and improved practice across the institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staffordshire University</strong></td>
<td>Our aim is to provide a step change in level 4 retention as part of our developing culture and continuing to put our students at the heart of all that we do. This will be achieved by fostering an improved and increased sense of belonging, through co-curricular activities such as personal tutoring, peer mentoring, embedding of Staffordshire Graduate attributes and a revision of induction activities. This will involve award leaders, central service staff and senior managers working together to change behaviours and attitudes and increase engagement and development of culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University of Brighton</strong></td>
<td>The University of Brighton is committed to delivering a transformational student learning experience. Students at the University will value their learning as active participants in learning communities, engaged in the co-production of knowledge across a broad range of professional and academic disciplines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University of Chester</strong></td>
<td>Our aim is to promote a more strategic, cohesive and integrated approach to enhancing the student experience through better implementation, monitoring and evaluation of student progress and success factors. This will enable the University to continue to provide a distinctive and responsive learning environment. Particularly, we aim to encourage staff to engender a strong sense of “belonging”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Glasgow</td>
<td>Our aim is to give every student the best reasons in the world to be studying at Glasgow and to support them and all staff to create a culture of belonging. Meaningful change will help us to achieve highest levels of student success and retention. Coordination of intelligence and collaboration across the University at strategic and programme levels will be the focus of our retention and success projects...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Salford</td>
<td>Our aim is to increase student engagement in learning and teaching because we believe this will lead to improvements in learners’ university experience, their sense of ‘belonging’ at Salford and in their retention and success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of South Wales</td>
<td>Our aim is to see retention rates, following year of entry, for all full-time first degree entrants increasing from 87% to 91%. In addition the University will reach its strategic target of 75% of students obtaining a degree from the current attainment level of 67%. We wish to achieve this aim because it fits closely with the current institutional strategy on retention and student success and provides a timely opportunity to link institutional change with developments in the wider sector. The aim will be achieved by embedding the learning from the ‘What works’ programme into a review, evaluation and implementation planning in the institutional context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| University of Ulster | Our vision is for meaningful staff student partnerships that engender a shared responsibility and which are underpinned by a positive student experience within a supportive learning environment.  
  - To develop students’ knowledge, skills and confidence through active learning experiences which engender a sense of student belonging and identity  
  - To develop supportive peer relations amongst and between staff and students throughout their entire student journey  
  - To provide a safe, yet challenging learning environment, that supports students to engage and learn with fellow students from diverse backgrounds and identities  
  - To encourage curriculum innovations that are designed to increase employability of students and promote civic responsibilities within students  
  - To improve student retention and success by developing a shared institutional vision of what works and why through evidence based evaluation and practice. |
| University of... | Our aim is to develop dialogic assessment practices... |
because our evidence points to critical links to this and success. This will be achieved by participative action research with students, programme teams and educational researchers. As evidence emerges we hope to deliver a compelling case for institutional embedding. This will involve three programme action research teams and periodic Consensus Oriented Research Approach with students. This project will regularly report to the University Student Experience Committee.

**York St John University**

Our aim is to improve student retention and success in hard to reach pockets by actively engaging students in their learning development as part of a learning community and thereby better supporting students and teaching staff. This is important because every student matters at YSJU and student success has strategic and financial implications.

**Other examples of inclusive curricula initiatives and resources**

This is an illustrative rather than an exhaustive list since the names, content and web locations of project information changes over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HE Academy</th>
<th>Subject specific guides to inclusive curriculum design</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources from a programme with Scottish HE institutions on Embedding Equality and Diversity in the Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglia Ruskin University</td>
<td>TeachInclusive resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham University</td>
<td>Guidance on Inclusive Curriculum Design and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester Metropolitan University</td>
<td>The MMU Inclusive Curriculum Design and Delivery Project Inclusive curriculum toolkit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plymouth University</td>
<td>Research-informed resources, guidance and videos about inclusive teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Birmingham ‘Inclusive Curriculum Working Group’</td>
<td>Remit and Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hull</td>
<td>Innovations in Student Learning (ISL) list of projects funded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wolverhampton</td>
<td>Learning to teach inclusively - Open Educational Resources module</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Sheffield</td>
<td>Inclusive learning and teaching handbook Sheffield SEED programme: first UK implementation of a US-based equality and diversity programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: interview questions for staff

Preamble: assurance of anonymity/confidentiality; there are no wrong answers; any questions before we start?

1. What is your understanding of inclusivity?

2. How inclusive would you say the curricula are at QMUL, and why?

3. Can you tell me about the best example of inclusive teaching that you have experienced or heard about at QMUL?

4. From your perspective, what do you think QMUL does well in terms of inclusive teaching?

5. What (if anything) do you do differently to get the best from teaching and learning opportunities?

6. In your view, what would constitute an ideally inclusive learning experience?

7. What do you think needs to change at QMUL to provide such experiences for more students?

8. What would be our guiding principles if QMUL were a perfectly inclusive organisation?

9. Imagine it is three years into the future and QMUL is just as diverse and inclusive as you would want it to be. What has changed, and how have you contributed to this?

10. Is there anything else you would like to say that could help us improve the inclusivity of the curricula, teaching and learning at QMUL?
Appendix 3: details of fieldwork with students

In order to make the research as inclusive and accessible as possible, a range of traditional and creative methods were used for participants to contribute data. Eight participatory workshops were offered for groups of students in May and June. Some sessions were poorly attended; in these, students were interviewed using similar questions to the staff interviews detailed in appendix two,

17\textsuperscript{th} May - evening session with QMSU liberation officers
26\textsuperscript{th} May - 2 open sessions at Mile End campus
8\textsuperscript{th} June - open session at BLSA campus Whitechapel
9\textsuperscript{th} and 28\textsuperscript{th} June – 2 open sessions each day at Mile End campus

Each of the creative techniques outlined below can be used with individuals, pairs, or groups of people. The results were probed using range of questions from the relevant AI literature. Activities during the workshop sessions varied with numbers of participants (between 2 and 8). All sessions included small group discussions and sticker maps. Some sessions included empathy maps and screenplay exercises.

The \textbf{life-sized lecturer} is a life-sized outline figure on a large sheet of paper with labels indicating what kind of person they are, e.g. 'a typical QMUL lecturer' and 'an ideally inclusive lecturer'. These were displayed for students to write and draw on during research sessions. In addition, a life-sized lecturer poster was left in The Hub at QMSU for two weeks.

\textbf{Sticker maps} are maps of organisational inclusivity on which participants can place small stickers of different colours to indicate areas of good practice and areas for further improvement.

\textbf{Empathy maps} are tools to help participants consider how other students or staff in different situations think and feel; what they see, say and do; and where they might experience 'pain or gain' with respect to inclusive learning.

The \textbf{screenplay} is where one or more participants write a very short screenplay depicting an interaction between a student and a very inclusive lecturer, or between a student and a less inclusive lecturer. This will include dialogue and may also include information about characters' attributes, the setting, and so on.
Appendix 4: examples of data from students
Inclusive Curricula, Teaching, and Learning: Adaptive Strategies for Inclusivity

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[Image of a hand-drawn diagram with various annotations and symbols]
Appendix 5: photographs of data sheets from open 'review and refine' meeting
Appendix 6: aggregated prioritisation data from meetings on 15.9.2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCLUSIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>How often does this happen?</th>
<th>How important is it?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good inward transition for students whatever their initial level or understanding of course subject. 1* £4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QMUL = a community where students' thoughts and feelings are valued by their peers, by other academics, by students services and where students also value the thoughts and feelings of others.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are aware of their own learning styles. 1*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff are aware of the composition of the group they're teaching.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are easily able to access learning materials in advance and during class. £3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students are easily able to participate in all learning activities, and to be heard.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Count 1</td>
<td>Count 2</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students able to access and use spaces easily. 1* £8</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are able to request additional support when needed. £3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching uses various pedagogical strategies tailored to individual student needs and learning styles. 5* £10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum includes a diverse range of materials, relevant to those from different ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, social classes etc, and draws attention to disciplinary inclusions and exclusions. 3*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support is available for students with particular needs, including from specialist services beyond QMUL where appropriate. £5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Every lesson is an environment where all viewpoints are valued.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>There are diverse forms of assessment for every module. £1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching makes best use of QM Plus and other assistive technology. £6</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturer is available immediately after each session for any student that has further questions.</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning is embedded in students' families and communities, particularly (but not exclusively) those geographically close to QMUL. 2* £3</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCLUSIVE TEACHING EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>How often does this happen?</td>
<td>How important is it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturers and guest speakers who reflect the diversity of the student body. 1* £9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field trips (where appropriate) to a diverse range of settings. 1*</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consistently making best use of technology to enable students to get the most out of teaching and materials. £5</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working interactively whenever possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>No logistical difficulties leading to missed or cancelled sessions. £2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Checking students' levels of understanding of subject matter. 1* £2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making sure students understand what is required of them and why. 5* £6</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM</td>
<td>How often does this happen?</td>
<td>How important is it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing information that is relevant to students' backgrounds.</td>
<td>Usually 0</td>
<td>Sometimes 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking at different perspectives including those from minority groups.</td>
<td>Usually 0</td>
<td>Sometimes 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not giving out negative stories about types of people or nationalities.</td>
<td>Usually 4</td>
<td>Sometimes 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>No introduction or reproduction of stereotypes.</td>
<td>Usually 1</td>
<td>Sometimes 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>A more holistic curriculum, so e.g. include information about beliefs as well as facts, students' experiences as well as lecturers' experiences.</td>
<td>Usually 0</td>
<td>Sometimes 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Readings whose authors reflect the diversity of the student body as a minimum, and ideally go further. 2* £5</td>
<td>Usually 0</td>
<td>Sometimes 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>A curriculum co-created with students from a range of backgrounds. 9* £14</td>
<td>Usually 0</td>
<td>Sometimes 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where possible, including information about the impact of topics on minority groups; where this is not possible, drawing</td>
<td>Usually 0</td>
<td>Sometimes 3</td>
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attention to it and discussing the reasons and implications.

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<th>0</th>
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<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<tr>
<td>Where possible, using examples or case studies based on the</td>
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<td>experiences of people from minority groups; where this is not</td>
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<td>possible, drawing attention to it and discussing the reasons</td>
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<td>and implications.</td>
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<td>If a curriculum (or part of a curriculum) is necessarily</td>
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<td>dominated by e.g. white people and/or able-bodied men,</td>
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<td>drawing attention to this, discussing the reasons and</td>
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<td>implications, and introducing students to methods to enable</td>
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<tr>
<td>more inclusive approaches to research in these areas. 3*</td>
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<tr>
<td>A curriculum that is regularly reviewed for both relevance and</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>inclusivity by people who have had unconscious bias training.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reducing competition and encouraging co-operation. 3* £1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing relevant information from different disciplines or</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>fields.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive assessment methods. 1* £6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: total numbers vary as not everyone completed every line.  
Each person had three stars to indicate their top priorities. Results given against each experience as e.g. 2*  
Each person had 10 dots to show what they would resource. Results given against each experience as e.g. £2
Appendix 7: examples of QMUL data from 2014 by school

**Gender by school, 2014**

![Bar chart showing gender distribution by school in 2014](image1)

**Number of mature and non-mature students by school, 2014**

![Bar chart showing number of mature and non-mature students by school in 2014](image2)
Appendix 8: inclusivity map used with student respondents
Appendix 9: what respondents think QMUL does well in terms of inclusivity

- Good support for parenthood
- Disability and Dyslexia Support
- Mental Health Co-ordinator
- Student support system (which, in the medical school and perhaps others, has received national commendation as a result of external review)
- Use of technology e.g. online provision of reading lists and course materials
- The QM Model
- Active engagement with the local East End community
- Using names from a variety of cultures for characters in case studies
- Sign-up to Athena Swan
- Roll-out of unconscious bias training
- Giving tutorials outside office hours for distance learners based outside the UK
- Catering for different learning styles e.g. by offering tutorials, lectures, and electronic self-directed learning
- Early communication in the last academic year about a student with a particular disability, enabling appropriate support to be put in place and monitored effectively
- Clear recommendations for staff about how to support students with particular disabilities
- Additional induction tailored to the needs of international students
- Listening to students, treating them like adults not children, making use of their input
- QMUL’s willingness to disagree with government agendas at times, e.g. Prevent
- Reviewing and changing methods of assessment
- Work to ensure that, as far as possible, assessment dates do not coincide with any religious holidays
- Examples from the Department of Drama:
  - revised first year launched in 2015/16 that was designed to include considerably more material relating to cultural and ethnic diversity and a module designed to support transition to university study, including advice on accessing help and support
  - compulsory Level 5 module, Cultural Politics and Performance that is attentive to multiple differences
  - new level 5 module – Race and Racism in Performance – to be launched in 2016/17
  - long-running Level 6 module – Performance, Sexuality Identity
  - attentiveness to the range of materials programmed at the level of individual modules
  - staff reflection on the curricula with respect to race (scheduled as an Away Day item for discussion in July 2016)
Appendix 10: what respondents think needs to change at QMUL to promote inclusivity

- More resources for work on inclusivity
- More time for work on inclusivity
- Clearer communication about the needs of individual students
- Unconscious bias training for staff and students
- Training for staff on how to support and refer students with dyslexia or dyspraxia
- Training on preparing inclusive teaching materials (maybe as an online module)
- Training on inclusivity/access for teaching associates
- More funding for staff time to support students with mental health problems (at present only one staff member to do this for the whole of QMUL)
- More accessible, less public, reception area at Advice & Counselling
- Clearer organisational structures to support students with mental health problems (e.g. relationship between Mental Health Co-ordinator and Advice & Counselling)
- More accessible teaching spaces, including specialist rooms e.g. laboratories and theatres
- Better access for wheelchair users across the campus
- Gender neutral bathrooms
- Include a statement on inclusive curricula and access in annual programme review documentation
- Include inclusive curricula and access as a standing item on agendas for e.g. Staff Student Liaison Committee, Teaching and Learning Committees
- Include sessions on inclusivity as part of the annual Teaching and Learning Conference; consider inclusive curricula as the theme for 2018; ensure diversity of keynote speakers
- Deliver an inclusive curricula festival to share best practice (this could be tagged to showing the results of funded projects)
- Funding to develop innovations in developing/enhancing inclusive curricula
- Review of all teaching spaces to ensure they comply with guidelines on accessibility
- Smoother integration of Reading Lists Online with QM Plus
- Customised, supported and detailed curriculum review sessions which are subject-specific and include unconscious bias training and examples of more inclusive curriculum designs, with student involvement as appropriate
- Time off for teaching for staff to properly redesign the curriculum
- More co-creation of the curriculum with students (e.g. modules that invite students to explore pedagogical issues of inclusivity as part of their assessments)
- Recognition of inclusivity and diversity as pedagogical principles
- Better communication between students and staff
- Support for students who commute
- Support for students who are also in paid employment
- Encourage self-directed learning and research; flip classrooms
- Diversify methods of assessment, e.g. ensure that tutorial participation is part of the overall mark students receive
- More resources for student social welfare and occupational health support
- Elicit verbal feedback from students and listen to what they say; involve students' voices at every level of decision-making
• Instil values of equality/inclusivity/lack of discrimination into QMUL students
• Communicate about resources etc in a more timely fashion (e.g. some staff only found out about the Student Opportunities Fund for students with disabilities shortly before the application deadline)
• Clarify what QMUL sees as inclusivity and what staff should be doing and how
• Ensure technology is up-to-date and works
• Ensure technological options, e.g. uploading slides, recording lectures etc, are used by all staff
• Make sure teaching spaces are at an appropriate temperature and well ventilated
• Publicise good practice in inclusivity within QMUL
• Start from induction
• Encourage closer relationship between student and personal adviser
• More comprehensive training for personal advisers
• Use a range of assessment activities and provide alternative forms of assessment when appropriate
• Formulate clear rubrics for assessment, with well defined learning outcomes, and share these – and their rationale – with students
• More support after exam failure