

Imaginary students: group activity

Collection: Inclusive teaching

Resource: Imaginary students

Approximate duration

40 minutes

Learning Outcomes

After completing this activity

1. lecturers will have heightened their awareness of some of the key problems affecting individual students in seminars and lectures;
2. lecturers will have gained an increased understanding of the importance of designing teaching activities in an inclusive way;
3. lecturers will be sensitive to the importance of treating each student as an individual.

Introduction

It is important to treat students as unique individuals, avoiding prejudging them as stereotyped representatives of a particular condition, whether in terms of race, culture, medical condition or sexual preference. This activity will help lecturers think in terms of individual students and their requirements.

The activity

1. Divide the class into four groups
2. Give one of the following descriptions of imaginary students to each group. Each group should have a different student description. A 'Word' file with the



1 | This resource is part of a set of professional development resources for Higher Education English (including English Literature, English Language & Creative Writing) called 'The Pool'. The resources were developed by the English Subject Centre in 2011 as part of a JISC/HEA Open Educational Resources (OER) Project.

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descriptions on different pages can be downloaded as a 'Word' document from the same folder as you found this resource in HumBox.

Jo

Jo is a 28-year-old single mother. She dropped out of school before A levels, having become involved with a 'bad crowd'. Her child, whom she has been bringing up single-handedly, is now 11. Always interested in books, she completed an access course at the college where she is now on the third year of a degree. She is a voracious reader of 19th-, 20th- and 21st-century novels but is impatient with literary theory, modernist poetry and anything written before 1820. She is very articulate in seminars but has problems in keeping up with the coursework, as she is juggling child-care, a part-time job and anxiety about her father, who is very ill.

Peter

Peter is a highly intelligent, naturally scholarly, first-year student who does well in exams. He is hard of hearing in both ears, but is reluctant to disclose this condition to anyone. Accordingly, he finds it difficult to follow complicated lectures and seminars, and often worries that he has not taken sufficiently detailed notes. He would like lecturers to provide more supporting material for their sessions as he often comes away from a seminar or lecture confused. He is a very talented creative writer, but reluctant to share his work.

Mary

Mary, on the second year of her course, has a prosthetic left arm and is naturally right-handed. She frequently makes jokes about her arm. She is a fundamentalist Christian and the first person in her family to go to university. She is upset by flippant comments about religion and morality. She is a hard-working student on the 2.1/2.2 borderline, who gets irritated by students who seem to her to be lazy.



Adrian

Adrian, a first-year student educated at a public school, has a statement of special educational needs relating to his dyslexia. He can read font size 12 providing the text is not too dense, but his reading is slow and inaccurate, even when he uses a yellow overlay. Adrian does not like his dyslexia being referred to in public and has said he does not want to be given special conditions in exams. He often makes very imaginative points in seminars, but his written work tends to be extremely basic.

3. Ask each group to spend five minutes individually reading about their student.
4. Ask everyone to think back to a recent session that they have taught. How do you think the imaginary student would have responded to that session if they had been in it? Would they have faced particular barriers? Are there things that could have been done differently that might have helped them?
5. Ask each group to discuss their findings amongst themselves.
6. In a final plenary, ask each group to report back, first reading out the description of their student and then summarising their discussion.
7. Use the points raised as the basis for a general discussion of the inclusive approach to teaching.

Links & References

- Student diaries (from various disciplines) [2009](#) and [2010](#). Vivid testimony in the voice of disabled students, from the BBC's superb disability website, [Ouch!](#)
- [Staying the Course: The Experiences of Disabled Students of English and Creative Writing](#). An English Subject Centre report containing many vivid quotations from disabled students about their experiences when studying our discipline.

Relationship to the Professional Standards Framework

- **Professional Values 1:** Respect for individual learners
- **Professional Values 4:** Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity



More information about the Professional Standards Framework can be obtained from the summary factsheet in the *Subject & Pedagogy* collection in HumBox.

<http://humbox.ac.uk/2731/>

Resources in the inclusive teaching Collection

- Inclusive teaching: introduction to the collection
- Imaginary students: resource overview
 - Imaginary students: individual activity
 - **Imaginary students: group activity (*you are here)**
- Inclusive lectures: resource overview
 - Making lectures inclusive: individual activity
 - Making lectures inclusive: group activity
- Inclusive seminars: resource overview
 - Making seminars inclusive: individual activity
 - Making seminars inclusive: group activity
- Inaccessible documents: resource overview
 - Making 'PowerPoint' more accessible: individual activity
 - Making 'PowerPoint' more accessible: group activity
 - Making 'Word' documents accessible: individual activity
 - Making 'Word' documents accessible: group activity
- Students, comments, conditions: resource overview
 - Inclusive teaching quiz: individual activity
 - Inclusive teaching card sort: group activity
- Departmental audit: resource overview
 - How inclusive is your department?: individual activity



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