

Guide for inclusive teaching

A cooperative effort by the Coordination Centre for Gender Studies and Equal Opportunities, the Disability Resource Centre, and the Integrative Education and Curative Educational Psychology Section at the Institute of Educational Sciences at the University of Graz.

Prepared by Katja Muhl, B.A., Mag.^a Barbara Levč and Caroline Breyer, Bakk.^a MSc.
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Preface

Dear teachers,

We are providing the following information to support you in designing courses that are more inclusive for students with disabilities or significant health impairments, with as few barriers as possible. The guiding principles of the Universities Act (UG) of 2002 envisage special attention being paid to the needs of students with disabilities or chronic illnesses. According to the 2015 Student Social Survey, 13% of all students at the University of Graz are affected, and two thirds of these students have impairments that are not visible. The tips and suggestions in this guide include how you, as a teacher, can build trust that encourages this group of people in particular to express their needs.

We have provided concrete and practical suggestions in this guide to support you in implementing inclusive teaching and coping with challenging situations, thus enabling all students to successfully participate in your course. In many cases, these suggestions are not just solutions for individuals; they also increase the diversity and attractiveness of courses for all students.

The Disability Resource Centre will be pleased to provide further information and advice on specific questions.

Inclusion is ...

- ... showing the same appreciation for all students and colleagues
- ... a point of view that sees differences between students as opportunities for shared learning and not problems that must be overcome
- ... recognising that all students have a right to a good education
- ... increasing the participation of all students in the culture and community of the university, as well as the subjects being taught
- ... dismantling barriers to learning and participation for all students
- ... the further development of the culture, structures and practices in educational institutions for the purpose of facilitating diversity
- ... emphasising the importance of educational institutions for building community, developing values and increasing performance
- Inclusion in education is a central aspect of inclusion in society

At the beginning

Making contact

In order to enable inclusive teaching, it is important to ensure that each and every student feels welcome and equally respected from the start. Your course design can support all students in developing a positive understanding of differences and at the same time encourage the participation of all students. To do this, however, you will need to know about your students' needs. Often impairments are not visible at first glance. However, in order to enable all students to participate successfully and without limitations in your course, it is advisable to discuss and actively address additional support options in the first class.

This enables students to participate in your course in the best possible way right from the start, and you, as a teacher, can prepare the subsequent course sessions accordingly.

In order to address support options, we recommend an appropriately formulated statement in the first session of the semester that respects student privacy and reduces inhibitions (for example, "If any of you needs support now or later due to an impairment or chronic illness, please contact me at the end of the class or send me an e-mail").¹ You should also offer students the opportunity to contact you in person, for example during your office hours.

Personal meetings

Personal meetings are particularly well suited for recognising and understanding the needs of students with impairments. Give your students the opportunity to arrange a personal appointment with you to discuss the planning and design of the course. You can include the following questions in a personal meeting in order to be better informed about the needs of your students:

- "What problems arise, and when, in classes?"
- "What kind of support is indispensable in the course, and what kind of support is desirable?"
- "What about exams?"
- "Should the impairment be taken into account during examinations, and should compensation for disadvantages be claimed?"
- "If so, what is the best way to do that?"

¹ You can find proposed language for statements in the course description at <https://diversitaet.uni-graz.at/handlungsempfehlungen/fuer-die-lehre>.

Communication tips

Visually impaired or blind students

- Offer to escort the student. Talk about your actions.
- Communicate in a way that relies on verbal signals as little as possible.
- Make handouts and PowerPoint presentations available to students electronically preferably before the respective course date (see page 8 for information on barrier-free design).

Hearing-impaired or deaf students

- Minimise noise.
- Turn to the affected person when you are speaking and make sure to supplement clear articulation with gestures and facial expressions.
- Avoid moving back and forth when speaking.
- Be careful not to speak too fast.
- Plan enough time and breaks to ask questions.
- Supplement spoken material with handouts and PowerPoint presentations so that students can better follow the lessons.
- Even if an interpreter is present, speak directly to the student.

Students with mobility impairments

- When selecting a room, pay attention to accessibility, and consider movement restrictions.
- Remove the chair for your students if they are in a wheelchair.
- If you feel that help is needed, offer your assistance and wait to see if they accept it.

Students with a chronic (psychological) illness

- Maintain strict confidentiality regarding the illness.
- Nevertheless, make it clear that it is probably necessary for the student to speak about the illness in order to be successful.
- Let the student inform you about the study-related limitations arising from the illness; this allows adequate solutions to be found.

The affected person is an expert in his/her problems and support needs.

In the course

When it comes to presentations, strive for ...

... a clear design, not too much text, an appropriate font size and a high-contrast presentation. Please avoid red-green combinations, because 1% of men and 0.1% of women have a so-called red-green visual impairment, i.e. they can hardly distinguish between the colours red and green.

With video and audio files, pay attention to ...

... the verbalisation of all visual content for visually impaired or blind students, and the need to write down spoken material for hearing-impaired or deaf students (e.g., in the form of a written summary, subtitles, etc.).

Ensure peace and quiet in the lecture hall

Most people with hearing impairments do not hear less; they just hear differently. Although hearing aids amplify and increase the volume of sounds, they cannot replace what the hearing-impaired person cannot hear acoustically. Similarly, the hearing aid cannot distinguish between speech and background noise. The latter is therefore perceived as particularly loud and annoying. This means it is particularly helpful for those affected if you ensure peace and quiet in the lecture hall.

Speak to the students

People with hearing impairment or deafness often read lips and pay more attention to facial expressions and gestures in order to follow along. It is therefore particularly helpful for those affected if you turn to them while speaking and, above all, position yourself where you can be clearly seen. Also, make sure to avoid moving back and forth while speaking. If you write something on the blackboard, it makes sense to turn back to the participants and only then explain what you have written.

Methodological variety: Interactive elements promote concentration

People think and learn differently. Promote learning together to take advantage of your students' diverse learning styles, and adjust your lessons to the students. For students with learning and concentration difficulties, and also for students with other impairments, it is particularly helpful if you repeatedly incorporate interactive elements and regular breaks in your lessons. Interactive methods such as individual or small group work not only promote concentration and motivation, but also give students (with impairments) the opportunity to become better involved in the group and to participate actively, as well as to overcome any inhibitions by removing questions and ambiguities in a more protected setting. In addition, various interactive methods also allow students the opportunity to get to know each other and to network, to learn from and with each other, thus increasing social participation.

Studying takes time

People with impairments are not equally resilient. Barriers, pain, concentration disorders, doctor's or therapy appointments, necessary rest breaks, etc. cost energy and time and can interrupt the everyday life of a university student. By providing relevant study materials and scripts for preparation and follow-up, you enable students to participate in a self-determined way.

Furthermore, we recommend that you avoid an examination marathon as well as block courses. In this context, it is also particularly important to plan for sufficient breaks and to give students the opportunity to indulge in self-determined rest periods. This requires a certain flexibility and sensitivity on your part in order to be able to react appropriately to the needs of your students, and thus create the best possible learning conditions for them.

Use a microphone

If available, you should use a microphone for better acoustic intelligibility. It is important that you repeat answers and comments from students through the microphone. This makes the discussion comprehensible for everyone. The microphone is especially important when students use a device that transmits directly from the microphone to a hearing aid.

How to support aids and assistance

For students with impairments, aids such as notebooks with integrated additional equipment, blackboard cameras, a recording of the course, sign language or written interpreting, etc. often make studying much easier. Therefore, you should support the use of such aids as far as possible and offer them if necessary.

However, there are a few things to consider:

- Some aids require your declaration of consent as a lecturer, e.g. audio recordings by students.
- There are aids for which your cooperation is necessary, e.g. the use of an FM system which enables direct speech transmission to a hearing aid even in poor acoustic conditions. For this device to work you would need to wear a radio microphone.
- If you have any technical questions, please contact the University's IT Service Desk or the Disability Resource Centre.

Script to go: Accompanying documentation

People with impairments often have problems with their ability to concentrate, and therefore may have to allow themselves a break every once in a while, or may not be able to participate in some course sessions at all. For this reason, there is a need for students to be able to obtain the contents of the lecture as an alternative to attending class.

It can be particularly helpful for students if you provide written material in digital form. This enables students to prepare themselves for the course in advance, for example by having the documents read to them with the help of appropriate programs, or by increasing the size of the documents to make them easier to read. Such measures offer students the opportunity to become more actively involved or to consider questions in advance. At the same time,

supplementary written documents support students with hearing impairments and deaf students, who usually read lips and can only perceive a fraction of what is said.

Barrier-free digital documents

These can be read by visually impaired, blind or motor impaired people via magnification programs, speech output and braille display. Barrier-free documents offer, for example, descriptive texts for pictures, keyboard links, and easier navigation via headings and a linked table of contents. Creating such documents requires some effort. However, they are often extremely helpful, or actually necessary for affected students.

Many tips and instructions for creating barrier-free documents are available on the Internet. A selection of links can be found on the last page.

The Disability Resource Centre also provides support on this issue and adapts scripts and handouts to barrier-free formats. If this service is required, the documents should be made available a few days before the course.

In examinations

Students with impairments can be disadvantaged by classical examination procedures. The Universities Act (UG) 2002 (Section 59 (1) 12) provides for an alternative examination method for students with disabilities. The method used depends on the respective impairment and on the form of the examination, and varies greatly from one individual to another, e.g.:

- Oral instead of written examinations, or written instead of oral examinations;
- Examinations with sign language interpreter, assistance or technical aids;
- Examinations with 50-100% more time;
- Examinations in separate rooms;
- Alternative assessment of performance (e.g. written work instead of excursion participation for students with reduced mobility; e.g. written work instead of a presentation for students with a speech impairment).

The Disability Resource Centre will be happy to advise you on modified examinations and, if required, will also organise and carry them out.

Practical support

Documents from the University of Vienna regarding the preparation of teaching and learning documents

Practical tips on fonts, PowerPoint and PDFs

↪ <https://barrierefreielehre.univie.ac.at/unterlagen/>

Einfach für alle

Tips on creating barrier-free PDF documents

↪ <https://www.einfach-fuer-alle.de/artikel/pdf-barrierefrei-umsetzen/>

Contact at the University of Graz

Disability Resource Centre

Universitätsplatz 3, Parterre, 8010 Graz

Tel.: 43 (0)316 380 -2227 oder -2226

E-mail: zis.sekretariat@uni-graz.at

↪ <https://integriert-studieren.uni-graz.at/>

University Library

Literature service for the blind and visually impaired

Beethovenstraße 8, 8010 Graz, ground floor to the right

↪ <https://ub.uni-graz.at/de/dienstleistungen/literaturservice-fuer-blinde/>

Service: Digitisation of printed black texts for visually impaired and blind people (scanning and proofreading). It is possible to obtain the texts as digital versions or as braille printouts in braille full text or braille short text.