FAQs: Classroom Inclusivity Guidelines

1. Are there UNSW-wide inclusivity guidelines?

The Faculty of Science Classroom Inclusivity Guidelines were developed in light of the absence of comprehensive guidelines that cover inclusivity, broadly construed.

The UNSW Teaching Gateway provides advice on Teaching Diverse Groups, including a Diversity Toolkit with tips on implementing principles into teaching practice. The Faculty of Science Inclusivity Guidelines complement these central resources.

2. Why are these Guidelines important?

Research indicates that students are more likely to flourish academically and personally in academic settings that acknowledge and respect their personal experiences, identities and backgrounds.

Creating an inclusive classroom environment enables students to feel supported and creates a strong sense of belonging, regardless of identity or background. Creating inclusive learning communities stands as a pillar of the Scientia Education Experience.

3. There are a lot of guidelines. Where should I start?

We have provided “Top Five Guidelines,” which are a great place to start. These provide condensed, straightforward advice for how to enable classroom inclusivity. They also highlight available resources at UNSW.

We’d suggest picking one suggestion from the guidelines and have a go at implementing it, for example: highlighting the Disability Services Unit in your first lecture of the term making lecture slides available to students on request

After the “Top Five Guidelines,” we provide more detailed suggestions broken down by diversity area. Here, we would suggest reviewing those areas where you feel you have the most potential to improve your practice. Again, choosing one change to implement at a time can be an effective approach.
4. What’s the best way to implement these in large classrooms?

Most of these guidelines can be easily implemented in classrooms of all sizes. For example, the following guidelines are not constrained by size: using inclusive language, incorporating diverse course content, highlighting support resources available at the university.

Other guidelines, such as asking for names and pronouns, are more challenging in larger classrooms. In these cases, we advise you to utilise the “don’t assume” approach. For example, rather than trying to remember the correct pronunciation of a student’s name or guessing a student’s gender, you might call on them by referring to where they’re sitting.

5. What if I get something in these guidelines wrong?

Staff are encouraged to display respect and embrace diversity as outlined in the UNSW Values in Action: Our UNSW Behaviours. These guidelines aim to assist you with achieving these goals and adhere to the UNSW Staff Code of Conduct and UNSW Student Code of Conduct.

In the case that you do make a mistake, such as calling a student by the incorrect name or using the wrong pronouns, it is best to apologise quickly and do your best not to make the same mistake next time. Use your discretion as to whether the apology needs to occur discreetly.

If someone in one of your classes says or does something that you feel isn’t inclusive or respectful, use your discretion to address the behaviour in the manner that is most appropriate for the moment. Such situations may include: addressing it in the moment, setting classroom rules, reporting disrespectful behaviour to the Designated Officer Student Conduct and Integrity for investigation.

References: