

Recognising and supporting student achievement through sharing their lived experiences of further and higher education

Abstract

This chapter seeks to discuss the ways in which practitioners can work with students to support their achievements. Using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2018), which enables learning to be designed or modified for the greatest diversity of learners possible, this chapter offers suggestions for designing and teaching inclusive activities. It also considers wider strategies of inclusion and inclusive approaches to assessment and feedback. It exemplifies three case study pieces of research conducted with students at a higher education institute to consider the range of challenges, opportunities, and needs presented by learners. By using the principles of UDL, educators can create learning environments that are accessible and engaging for all students, regardless of their individual learning styles, abilities, or backgrounds. This chapter provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how UDL can be practically applied in diverse educational settings, ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to succeed. The chapter explores specific inclusive teaching practices, such as the use of multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement, which are core components of UDL. Additionally, the chapter analyses inclusive assessment strategies that move beyond traditional testing methods to embrace a variety of assessment forms that accommodate different learning needs and preferences. Feedback mechanisms are also examined, highlighting the importance of constructive, timely, and personalized feedback in fostering student growth and achievement. The case studies presented illustrate real-world applications of UDL and inclusive practices, providing insights into the successes and challenges encountered by both students and educators. These case studies shed light on the practicalities of implementing inclusive strategies and offer evidence-based recommendations for enhancing educational inclusivity. Through these examples, the chapter emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to education that considers the diverse experiences and needs of all students. Thus, this chapter not only outlines the theoretical underpinnings of UDL but also provides actionable strategies for creating inclusive learning environments. It highlights the critical role of inclusivity in education and offers practical guidance for educators seeking to support the diverse learning needs of their students.

Keywords: Attainment; Diversity; English as an Additional Language; Equality; Ethnography; Inclusion; Universal Design for Learning.

Introduction

Working in further and higher education we are gifted the privilege of being part of our learners' journeys. Increasingly, we welcome learners with a wide range of experiences and the importance of progressive and inclusive approaches to teaching and learning, evidenced by research, should not be underestimated. The key to effective further and higher education is the drive towards educational and social inclusion (Quirke et al., 2023), supporting students to build on their social and cultural capital. Access to further and higher education can improve life outcomes, not only in the financial returns of graduate level employment but include other benefits such as social mobility, better health, improved mental health and greater life satisfaction (Atherton et al., 2023).

UNESCO (2023) identify the importance of education in prompting research, innovation and the skills for thriving in an evolving workplace. They clarify that 'for students in vulnerable circumstances, it is

a passport to economic security and a stable future' and they outline their commitment to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.3. which states that they must 'ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.' As educators, there must be a commitment to developing our understanding of how our learners learn, what graduates need to be workplace ready and how we can support their subject knowledge alongside their wider skill set. Gilbert et al., (2021) discuss the importance of institutions prioritising student learning and the ways in which pedagogical practices are embedded, sustained and constrained influence outcomes for learners. Inclusion in its truest sense is a highly complex challenge and 'institutions must be mindful of being superficial in their approaches' (Stripe & Ntonia, 2023, p.4).

Day (2022, p.2) asserts that 'universities do not treat people equally' and that they serve to reinforce traditional norms and institutional bias (Fossland & Habti, 2022). Higher education participation differs significantly by socio-economic background, gender, ethnicity and age across the United Kingdom. Access to higher education is distinctly variable for under-represented groups. According to Atherton et al. (2023, p.43), these include:

- Some Black, Asian and minority ethnic students
- Disabled students
- Care Leavers
- Carers
- Students estranged from their families.
- Students from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Refugees
- Children from military families.

Stripe and Ntonia (2023) clarify that the principles of intersectionality mean that individuals may identify with multiple underrepresented groups. This is an important starting point and considers the multiple social positions individuals may experience and that intersecting inequalities will impact student outcomes (Fossland & Habti, 2022). Advanced HE (2022) reports that the number of students with a declared disability continues to rise and stands at 15.2% in 2020-2021, this included students with a specific learning difficulty, mental health conditions, two or more impairments and a long-standing health condition or illness. These students were less likely to be in graduate level employment fifteen months after graduating and their continuation and progression figures were impacted by their disability. Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students attending university has increased to 26.2% in 2020-2021 (Advanced HE) there continues to be an awarding gap with lower numbers of BAME students receiving a first to 2:1 degree compared to white students with black students least likely to get a first class degree (gov.Uk, 2023b). OfS (2022) report that 13% of care leavers progressed to higher education in 2020-2021 and those white British male students eligible for free school meals are the least likely to enter higher education.

Bolton and Lewis (2023) identify that there are barriers that impact upon equitable experiences in higher education. These include students' prior attainment, financial concerns as well as the support and advice available before and during university. These challenges continue throughout study and can impact on the continuation and progression through degree study. Atherton et al., (2023) identify students with the highest level of non-continuation including mature students, black students, and students from the lowest indices of multiple deprivation (IMD) groups. Similarly, outcomes are impacted by these barriers with the number of students in England achieving a first or upper second-class degree sharing the characteristics of women, white ethnic origin, and students from the highest Participation in Local Areas (POLAR) and IMD groups. These groups are more likely to secure graduate level employment post study, with higher earnings.

The Office for Students (OfS) (2023) detail their priorities for access and participation in higher education and recognise the need for higher education institutes to strategically commit to a widening participation agenda. Fossland and Habti (2022) call for universities to consider how issues pertaining to diversity, inclusion and equality are embedded and embodied. Under-represented groups in higher education are identified as an at-risk group and there is a need for more diverse pathways into and through higher education, alongside the ways in which access and participation is monitored and reported to improve graduate outcomes.

Aims of the chapter:

At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Recognise some of the challenges that learners face in further and higher education related to inclusive teaching and learning.
- Consider ways in which practitioner research in further and higher education can be used to develop an understanding of inclusive learning design.
- Identify a range of strategies to promote inclusive teaching and learning that support learner behaviours, student agency, learning needs and cultural capital.

Theoretical framework

Our research discussed in this chapter aims to contribute to the growing field of knowledge around inclusive teaching and learning in further and higher education. UDL (CAST, 2018) is an educational framework developed by the Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST) to guide the development of flexible learning environments that can accommodate the diverse learning needs of all students. The principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) aim to provide multiple means of representation, engagement and expression. The ultimate goal is to remove barriers to learning and make education more inclusive. Merry (2024, p.xxi) acknowledges the timeliness of reflection on one's teaching and learning practices in further and higher education citing increased numbers of students with 'learning, language and intellectual differences' and the need for courses to embrace the variability of students.

UDL is a globally recognised approach to enhance teaching and learning and supports further and higher education aspirations to become more socially and educationally inclusive. It is an 'active strategy for meaningful inclusion' (Quirke *et al.*, 2023, p.40) aimed at developing mastery (Merry, 2024) and it is not confined to teaching, learning and assessment alone; it fosters inclusion in its widest definition (Fossland & Habti, 2022). This theoretical framework underpins not only our approach to the research, but also the social inclusion agenda we assign to. A UDL mindset embraces a values-driven approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Merry (2024, p. xxi) asserts that education can transform lives 'acting as a catalyst for social justice- promoting, inclusion, fairness, access and equity for all learners'.

CAST (2018) advocate three principles of UDL, which Quirke *et al.*, (2023) term the 'cornerstones of inclusion'. The UDL framework draws from research rooted in neuroscience and educational pedagogy. The model is accessible and offers ways in which the principles can be appropriately applied to learning and teaching in your setting.

Provide multiple means of ENGAGEMENT	Provide multiple means of REPRESENTATION	Provide multiple means of ACTION and EXPRESSION
<p>Provide options for recruiting interest.</p> <p>Optimise individual choice and autonomy, optimise relevance, value, and authenticity and minimize threats and distractions.</p>	<p>Provide options for perception.</p> <p>Offer ways of customising the display of information, offer alternatives for auditory information and offer alternatives for visual information.</p>	<p>Provide options for physical action.</p> <p>Vary the methods for response and navigation, optimise access to tools and assistive technologies).</p>
<p>Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence.</p> <p>Heighten salience of goals and objectives, vary demands and resources to optimise challenge, foster collaboration and community and increase mastery-oriented feedback.</p>	<p>Provide options for language and symbols.</p> <p>Clarify vocabulary and symbols, clarify syntax and structure, support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols, promote understanding across languages and illustrate through multiple media.</p>	<p>Provide options for expression and communication.</p> <p>Use multiple media for communication, use multiple tools for construction and composition and build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance.</p>
<p>Provide options for self-regulation.</p> <p>Promote expectations and beliefs that optimise motivation, facilitate personal coping skills and strategies and develop self-assessment and reflection.</p>	<p>Provide options for comprehension.</p> <p>Activate or supply background knowledge, highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships, guide information processing and visualization and maximise transfer and generalization.</p>	<p>Provide options for executive functions.</p> <p>Guide appropriate goal-setting, support planning and strategy development, facilitate managing information and resources and enhance capacity for monitoring progress.</p>

Figure 1: Adapted from the UDL Guidelines v. 2.2

Figure 1 demonstrates the connections between the three principles and the ways in which learners can be access, build and internalise learning opportunities within the UDL guidelines.

Engagement is concerned with multiple means of engagement and draws from understandings around motivation and emotion. The aim of this principle is to develop expert learners that are purposeful and motivated. Learners should be provided with topics, materials and scenarios that that motivate and sustain interest. A learner in a further and higher education environment must learn skills of self-determination, manage their emotions, and self-regulate, all of which are unique

experiences to each learner. Learning and teaching tasks that provide options for recruiting interest, sustaining effort, and self-regulation support students in moving towards mastery (Gilbert et al., 2021). UDL recognises the whole learner and adopts strategies to support the emotionality of learners in the process.

Representation focusses upon multiple means of representation - the key to this principle are the choices learners are afforded in the process of learning, teaching and assessment (Quirke et al., 2023). This principle acknowledges the different ways in which learners can perceive information. In a further and higher education environment, our diverse range of learners may also include international students and in this case learning materials may also present cultural and language challenges. In this area it is important to present information in different ways to cater to diverse learners. Materials should be designed to support retrieval and be presented in multiple formats to ensure key information is accessible to all learners. In further and higher education there is a range of subject specific terminology, this could be through a range of options for perception, language, and symbols, and a range of representations that offers a broadness of understanding. Finally, learning is a social process and offers chances in teaching and learning for students to synthesise, discuss, comprehend, create knowledge together and for learning to be scaffolded in a range of ways.

Action and Expression supports learners to demonstrate their learning and understanding, recognising the diversity in how learners may approach tasks and express their learning in a variety of ways. Homogenous approaches to teaching, learning and assessment will disadvantage some learners (Quirke *et al.*, 2023) and that assessment practices should be evaluated to ensure that no students are discriminated against because of the type of assessment or approach to assessment (Tai, 2022). For example, a narrow assessment portfolio that focusses upon essay writing, will not allow all learners to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding equally particularly if they have an individual learning need e.g. Dyslexia. Learning, teaching and assessment approaches that allow learners to express their learning in a range of ways can support student agency, for example choosing the structure of a blog, and the media used within it. Having a range of tools for construction and composition and using multimedia to aid communication are just two examples. Ideally, learners should be able to access information in a range of formats that are varied and accessible.

These principles recognise the variability among learners and emphasise the importance of flexibility in teaching and assessment methods. By incorporating multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression, educators can create a more accessible and inclusive learning environment that benefits all students (Merry, 2024), including those with diverse abilities and learning styles. It is important to note that UDL is a dynamic framework that encourages ongoing reflection and adjustment based on student need. Educators are encouraged to continually assess and refine their teaching practices to better support the diversity of learners in their classrooms.

Research Considerations

Practitioner research offers an opportunity to invest in meaningful change for the student body and can be a valuable tool for educators, administrators, and other professionals to investigate and improve their practice. It is important that researchers consider their philosophical stance towards research, which in turn will define their methodological choices. Educational research by its very nature is complex and cannot easily be affiliated to any one research paradigm as it can be characterised by ontological, epistemological, and methodological differences. The case studies in this chapter employed an interpretivist paradigm drawing upon ethnography as the research approach. Ethnography aligns closely with the interpretivist philosophy by delving deeply into the cultural and social contexts to interpret and understand the meanings inherent in the studied phenomena.

The interpretivist approach supports a relativist ontology where the 'situation studied has multiple realities' (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p.33) and that the interactions between the researcher and the participants allow the data to be viewed through different lenses. The choice of paradigm reflects the researcher's beliefs and perceptions of the world they live in. This has implications for the research methods and the data analysis tools used and the interpretation of the results yielded. Qualitative research methods were deemed to be most appropriate for studies of this type as the emphasis remains on meaning and processes and assumes that the researcher is the primary 'tool' in data collection. It is concerned with building data and is therefore inductive and descriptive. This allows the researcher to consider the deeper meaning behind the data; it is not about undertaking the research; it is more about sharing the research with the participants in a way that allows their views to be honestly and truly reflective of the occurrences.

It is unavoidable that interpretive paradigms employ an element of interpretive analysis as it relies upon researchers to interpret their findings and it is the case that data transforms from a participant's account to a researcher's phenomenological description of that event. This relies on a relationship underpinned by fairness, in that the researcher will represent their views in an honest and authentic manner.

Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic research in further and higher education contexts involves the systematic study of the culture, behaviours and social interactions. It seeks to understand the social and cultural dynamics within educational institutions. Ethnography is particularly concerned with the cultural context in which social phenomena occur. As an ethnographic researcher you can immerse yourself in the environment, observing and interacting with participants to gain insights into the lived experiences of students, and staff. These insights might include the exploration of unwritten rules, norms and cultural practices that shape an education environment.

Context

The three case studies demonstrated in this chapter aim to contribute to the development of culturally relevant curricula and teaching practices and identify areas for improvement in the student experience. The University of Northampton's strategic priorities (UON, 2023) include developing 'a truly inclusive academic community' (p.17) and a commitment to supporting our diverse range of students to improve continuation data. The learning and teaching priority again reemphasises inclusive practices, and 'inspiring, inclusive and accessible' teaching that includes 'authentic and stretching assessments and real-world learning experiences' (p.16). The University of Northampton has several strategies in place to support inclusive practices, the case studies in this chapter offer small scale nuanced research to compliment and inform the wider practices used.

All cases studies use an ethnographic approach to investigating the interpretations of the participants. All involve student researchers in the commitment to increasing social and cultural capital in our student body (UON, 2023). They aim to understand how the culture of higher and further education institutions can contribute to equality, diversity and inclusion and to inform educational policies and practices, contributing to more effective and culturally responsive approaches.

Case Study 1: Understanding Level 5 sport and exercise students' perspectives of the barriers to progression and attainment at the University of Northampton.

Introduction

This study aimed to target the access and participation challenges of recruitment, retention, progression and completion of students specifically in the sport and exercise subject area. It investigated student interpretations of barriers to their undergraduate Level 5 progression and used entry and interview data to identify other perceived barriers. The access and participation plan identified characteristics that are more likely to impact students' attainment and progression at university. The access and participation plan specifically details access, non-continuation, attainment and progression; furthermore, it highlights the at-risk groups including global ethnic majority (GEM) students, mature students, disabled students and care leavers.

The University of Northampton has a commitment to supporting young people to flourish and learn, particularly in improving opportunities for young people and mature students from the wards of Northamptonshire that are within the lowest 40% IMD and those located in POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 wards. There is a continuing commitment to narrow the gaps in attainment and graduate outcomes across a range of protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act (2010) and improving the performance of global ethnic majority (GEM) students. Level 5 students were selected for this study due to their experience of one year in higher education meaning they had a greater understanding of the teaching, learning and assessment practices associated with university study. The University of Northampton's 2020-25 Access and Participation Plan presents some stark statistics regarding the gaps between GEM and white students. The University's student body consists of 39.3% GEM students which is 5% higher than the sector average. Level 4 to 5 continuation rates for the University of Northampton's GEM students over a five-year period (2016-17 to 2020-21) shows an average of 82.1% continuation rate.

Aims of the research

- To explore the range of student characteristics across the sport and exercise subject area.
- To investigate the lived experiences of Level 5 sport and exercise students and their interpretations of barriers to progression, retention and completion in their subject area.
- To evaluate, using case studies, opportunities to reduce the impact and perception of these barriers.

Method

This project used a mixed methods investigation to research the perceived barriers to attainment and progression in Level 5 sport and exercise students. The study had two parts. Firstly, an analysis of the 2021-2022 Level 5 sport and exercise students demographics and entry data to provide context and understanding. Secondly, an investigation of the lived experiences of 15 Level 5 sport and exercise students using semi structured interviews.

The interviews were conducted by our post graduate student researcher – Mark. The use of a student researcher facilitated peer-to-peer discussions to counteract the possible power relationships that students may perceive if interviewed by an academic member of staff. We were keen to minimise the perceived power differential for this piece of research because the relationship between participant and researcher is of paramount importance when conducting interviews. The depth and honesty in the data becomes reliant on the participant feeling that they can 'open up' to the researcher.

Using interviews with students from a range of indices, we aimed to offer a set of rich case studies exploring the interpretations of our students' lived experiences and challenges. Semi-structured interviews added a personal interpretation of our students' unique, and lived experiences and gave a voice to the participants' experiences and interpretations. The interview design aimed to understand

the complexities of success in higher education (which are often far beyond entry qualifications, indices of deprivation and POLAR characteristics) to offer a first-hand account of student perceptions and interpretations to the barriers of their university experience.

Sample

The sample of this study is small but representative of the wider population of sport and exercise at the University of Northampton. The total sample was 15 Level 5 sport and exercise students (two females and 13 males) and the age range was 19-24 years. Nine students lived at home whilst studying and 13 were the first to attend university in their family. All entered university via the BTEC sport route. Two participants identified as GEM and two had been diagnosed with dyslexia.

Inclusion Criteria: Level 5 sport and exercise student in the 2021-2022 academic year

Ethics: Ethical permission granted by the Faculty of Arts Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee.

Data analysis

This investigation yielded qualitative data that reported on the students' feelings, reflections and opinions. The project used member checking and participation ratification of their accounts; this involves participants reviewing their data for accuracy. This is commonly used in ethnographic research to validate and confirm the trustworthiness of recounts. The coding structure was intended to emerge from the data in line with an interpretive paradigm.

The inductive coding procedure was completed independently by the three researchers (two academic staff and a postgraduate researcher). Then a second round of coding took place, which aimed to consolidate and agree upon the over-arching categories. We then aligned to the analysis approach of Braun and Clarke (2020) where they discuss reflexive thematic analysis. This allows a pragmatic and flexible approach and encourages reflexivity in the development of themes. This process therefore yielded five over-arching categories: Transition, Emotions, Communication, Balance and Support.

Findings

Ethnographic research relies heavily on the researcher to represent the participants' data honestly, reflexively and truthfully. Therefore, our findings are presented as vignettes of three imaginary students, written in the first person and aimed to be reflective of our participants' voices as well as representing the themes that were drawn from the coding procedures. *(Please note: These vignettes have been shortened for the purpose of this case study.)*

Charley

I am Charley, a 23-year-old sport student at the university. When I was in 6th form, I did Level 3 BTEC in sport. I chose sport because it is what I enjoy most. I do play a sport, but it was not entirely the reason I chose the course. This is my second year on the course having previously had a stalled start elsewhere. I first enrolled into university in 2018, but I didn't like it, so I stopped. I did a PE sport apprenticeship instead. I couldn't progress on to the Level four apprenticeship because one of our modules was to do with holding an inter-school competition, but obviously due to COVID children weren't at school, so I was unable to do that. So, uni was the best next thing. That is how I have ended up on this course.

I want to do as well as I can on the course, but I've got a job. So that's barrier in terms of time; mixing and matching my time, like I've said before, the juggling of time. The truth is that I am just happy to do okay as I need a proper life – family, friends, having time for a social life...that kind of thing. When I am in Northampton it is entirely for uni purposes. My family lives in London, it is where I consider home to be. For example, over the Christmas break, I made sure I got all my assignments done while I was still in Northampton, because I still see my home as my place of rest. So, I see Northampton as, just about my academic study and I see my home as just that - my rest place.

In the end, it is like this, if I just try my best, that's all I can do. There's no point putting extra pressure on myself. So, I kind of just look forward. And I found that if I'm really organised, I think overall, in terms of, my grades and stuff, they're decent. I'm not really a high achiever.

Figure 2: Charley

Charley (Figure 2) represents learners that are struggling with a range of commitments. A student that commutes from London. These learners demonstrate compartmentalisation in how they approach their studies; when they are in university they study, when they are at home they do not, and they strongly prioritise other things. They exemplify the ways in which students measure their own success, view their grades and approach their studies that are different to that by which universities measure academic success.

Andi

Hi - I am Andi and I'm 19 years old studying sport at the University of Northampton and I come from Northampton. I enjoy playing sport, especially rugby and a lot of my social life revolves around rugby. I went to a local college, and I studied a BTEC sport qualification. I wasn't gonna do, like, join uni at all. And then it kind of got to about two months before and I was like, actually I think I wanna do something. I thought everyone else seems to be doing it - so I'll follow suit. I applied through Clearing. It was the closest university, so it helped with living at home and costs of living. I was a little bit worried. And just nervous about a fresh new start. And then I guess, like, some relief comes with that as well, like fresh start. I just got to the stage where I was like, alright, I'm gonna prove people wrong 'cause my GCSE's...well, I didn't do very well. I think the phrase is 'I scraped through' and then A-levels. We never really got to see what I was, what I would have got cause it was predicted grades in the end. My mum was surprised and proud of me - no one in my family has been to university before so we were excited as a family.

I am dyslexic, it's been a massive life change. I was diagnosed in my first year at uni, and it's been like so much more difficult than I thought. I hadn't reached out to any sort of learner support services until I was diagnosed with dyslexia, but everyone has been really kind and helpful. And I've had to contact lecturers and stuff to like say, like, I need some extra support, or what can I do? So, it's been...it's been a challenge. But I'm sure, I'm sure, we'll get through it.

Lecturers keep mentioning "be critical in your work", but I'm not always sure what this means or how to do this. If I need people's advice, I choose people I know and trust, so family and friends. I would not choose the Personal Tutor at uni as I don't know them very well, I would more likely go to a module lecturer. My course mates are great- we've got a very good relationship in the fact that we can support each other and because we're doing the same course, it kind of just gives you that extra little. Have you done that? Can you explain that to me? Y'know, that type of thing, which is quite nice. I just need the constant reassurance that I'm actually doing alright... that my work isn't just a load of waffle, that it's actually ok.

Figure 3: Andi

Andi (Figure 3) was created to represent the body of students who are diagnosed with a special educational need or disability (SEND). They are a local student attending their local university, and the first one in their family to do so. Andi describes the struggles they have with their disability as well as other challenges including approaching the academic staff to ask them for help and the strong need for affirmation that they are on the right track with their studies.

Dionne

Hi, I'm Dionne, a 24-year-old second year sport and exercise science student who currently has a grade average of A-. I joined the course as I loved the open space of the campus and because of the enthusiasm displayed by the staff on the Open Day I attended. It was also the biggest university I could attend in the local area. The locality was definitely the overriding factor as it would allow me to keep costs down due to transport needs and it being less complicated to arrange childcare to bring up my 2-year-old daughter.

Being a 24-year-old I have been out of full-time education for some time and I recognise that teaching has changed in that time. Online sessions and systems were not consistent things I had to contend with when I was in school and although I consider myself technology literate, I am still anxious about using it as it is such an important part of being successful. Having said this, my anxiety in this regard has lessened a little due to how useful I have found it with the uploading of key resources from sessions on our learning platform and receiving information about assessments I need to complete.

The delivery of the course has been a positive experience, and I think this has been reflected in the grade average I am currently on. However, I would like more practical sessions to make me understand what is being taught as I don't have time to dedicate to volunteer positions outside of university to consolidate my learning. I really feel this will help me with my grades even more.

Figure 4: Dionne

Dionne (Figure 4) represents our mature students. As a high achiever they demonstrate the anxiety some of our participants described around study skills such as digital capital. Dionne is designed to exemplify the thought process behind choosing a university including proximity and other family or parental commitments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this study concluded a complex set of circumstances contribute to the perception of barriers and experiences of the participants. They highlight the need for educators to have an awareness of the entry level data of their students and a consideration of their journey to date. It is also crucial to appreciate the ways in which our participants measure their own success as this is often distinctly different to the way in which the university measures the academic success of its students. Often students were prouder to have been accepted to university in the first place rather than their grades once on the course; they were happy with their academic grades as long as they felt they were doing their best. What is apparent from this study, is the raised awareness of the multiple commitments that the participants are managing, for example studying, working, caring for others and socialising. The participants in this study often did not make effective use of the university support services available to them, instead relying on their friends and family. What was most clear from our study is that our participants valued face-to-face interactions with their lecturers extremely highly. This was because in this space they felt heard, could ask questions and gain reassurances that they were on track to progress through their Level 5 studies.

As a result of this study, the sport and exercise department has implemented several strategies to raise awareness and support students further. Following Faculty level training for all staff by the research team, we have appointed a continuation and progression lead tutor who analyses entry data, submission data and attendance data to identify students needing early support. This leads to targeted interventions for the students- these are supported by the universities professional and academic staff. We have employed a 'greenlighting' approach where academic staff accompany students to make initial contact with support services, increasing the likelihood that they will use them. We have

also appointed a student mentoring lead who recruits, trains and supports a small team of student mentors. Their role is to offer peer support to sport and exercise students, direct students to further services and to be a relatable sounding board for any issues the students may have.

The sport and exercise department ascribes to a culture of making no assumptions. Key terminology is defined and shared with students at the beginning of each teaching session. Importantly, this reduces the power relationship between staff and students and builds cultural capital. The key content is taught in such a way that it is seen in an applied or practical context using case studies and applied practice. This, in turn, creates work-ready graduates who have skills they can use in a range of contexts.

Case Study 2: The lived experiences of neurodiverse learners at the University of Northampton.

Introduction

This research project was an internally funded bid where academics work with undergraduate students on a research idea. Our student, Sam, was conducting his dissertation on the lived experiences of children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in their physical education lessons. Along with Sam, we decided to re-purpose his survey to expand the topic and population involved.

The University of Northampton welcomes a wide range of learners including those with complex neurodiverse needs. By understanding their experiences, we hope to use their experiences and suggested strategies to inform our practice. The notion of neurodiversity is increasingly better understood; however, it is also a term that covers a wide range of experiences. Neurodiversity is an umbrella term for learning needs, mental health needs and other health needs. It is associated with diagnosed conditions including 'autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, developmental language disorders' (Hamilton and Petty, 2023, p.1).

Neurodiversity is used to describe the variety in how human brains operate. It is a term that does not view these differences as a deficit but instead looks to embrace the different ways of thinking, learning and behaving. One of our participants describes their perception of neurodiversity as follows:

“Neurodiversity may be different in relation to social preference, ways of learning, ways of communicating and perceiving the environment.”

Participants described their neurodiverse conditions by disclosing their clinical diagnostic status with accompanying terminology, while others alluded to having a 'super skill' or a 'brain that works differently'.

Aims of the research

- To understand the preferences, strategies and methods that neurodiverse learners suggest as helpful for their learning journey.
- To explore the experiences of neurodiverse learners during their time of study at the University of Northampton.
- To produce a set of recommendations for staff at the University to support neurodiverse learners on their programmes.

Method: Online Survey

Ethics: Ethical permission granted by the Faculty of Arts Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee.

Sample: The sample populations used in this study are defined as 'purposeful sampling' as the sample was drawn from the student body - all phases and all subjects were invited to participate. The final sample included 25 students from Levels 4-8. 20 identified as female, 4 males and 1 nonbinary. Their age range was between 19 and 70, with the average age being 31 years old.

Inclusion Criteria: Current students studying between Levels 3 and 8 at the University of Northampton who considered themselves to fall into the range of categories for neurodiversity.

Data analysis: Data obtained via the online survey will be analysed thematically, using Braun and Clarke's (2022) six steps of thematic data analysis (1. Familiarisation; 2. Generation of initial codes; 3. Searching for themes; 4. Reviewing themes; 5. Defining and naming themes; 6. Write-up of themes). Demographic data was used for analysis by characteristic e.g., gender, level of study.

Findings

Participants reported their wide range of experiences of teaching and learning.

'I don't do well absorbing and understanding teaching where assumptions need to be made, or if the information/fact isn't absolutely clear.... leaves too many possible interpretations.'

While emotional factors are a complex issue, feelings of stress and anxiety can have adverse effects on neurodiverse learners (Clouder et al., 2023). Many participants experienced anxiety, overstimulation, or panic where they could not have regular breaks, ask questions, move around, or take extra time to consolidate shared information.

Some described the social difficulties they faced fitting in:

'I find breakout groups and discussions with strangers very difficult.'

'I have no friends. I find campus a very lonely place. I find the spaces very overwhelming and loud with nowhere else I know of that I can go and sit.'

While some noted that misconceptions about neurodiversity remain;

There is still a lot of stigma about this that we are "lazy".

The analysis of responses and a series of inductive coding led the research team to categorise the factors impacting learning into two categories; 'physical' and 'emotional' (Figure 5). Feelings of stress and anxiety may adversely impact neurodiverse learners, and both physical and emotional factors can be intrinsically linked - for example, a loud space (physical) can elicit an emotional response (e.g. increased stress). Physical factors include environmental factors such as noise, smell and seating position (Hamilton and Petty, 2023).

'Table/chair placements mean I've either got my back or side to fellow students or the lecturers, although I understand round tables make it easier for group work/collaboration.'

<p>Physical things that help me to learn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual cues and diagrams • Quiet with frequent breaks • Practical activities • Demonstrations and being guided • Face to face interactions 	<p>Physical things that stop me from learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise and loud open spaces • Big groups • Overstimulation (multiple tasks or messy slides) • Fatigue • My phone
<p>Emotional things that help me to learn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassurance and support (from peers and lecturers) • Being able to ask questions • Interesting content • Staff having time for me 	<p>Emotional things that stop me from learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big groups • Non-direct instructions with abstract interpretations • Expectations of socialisation • Feeling stressed and anxious.

Figure 5: Physical and emotional factors impacting learning

Accessing the teaching resources was also raised as a challenge, many participants suggested that how the teaching material is presented heavily influences their engagement and understanding. Overcrowded PowerPoint presentation slides were viewed as distracting and challenging to interpret. Similarly, tasks open to interpretation – such as the choice of topics in an assignment or vague instructions – could induce self-doubt, anxiety and lead to the need for further reassurance or guidance from tutors. Strategies that would help to counteract these included:

- Clear, concise slides and instructions.
- Definitions and key points are clearly articulated.
- A context or worked example to show new theoretical models or learning.

Many learners suggested that having resources in various formats – such as video and digital artefacts – helped them engage more readily and made tasks more active and engaging.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our study concluded that accessibility by design, such as: through the Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018), use of anticipatory approaches and building positive relationships could be used to better understand the nuances and strengths of neurodiversity. A safe emotional environment supports neurodiverse learners to feel more secure in navigating environmental challenges. Being inherently valued as a contributing member of the learning community is important and neurodiverse learners have much to contribute to wider class discussions and debates those other learners may not have considered.

Figure 6 demonstrates the recommendations from this study and practical actions that staff and students can use.

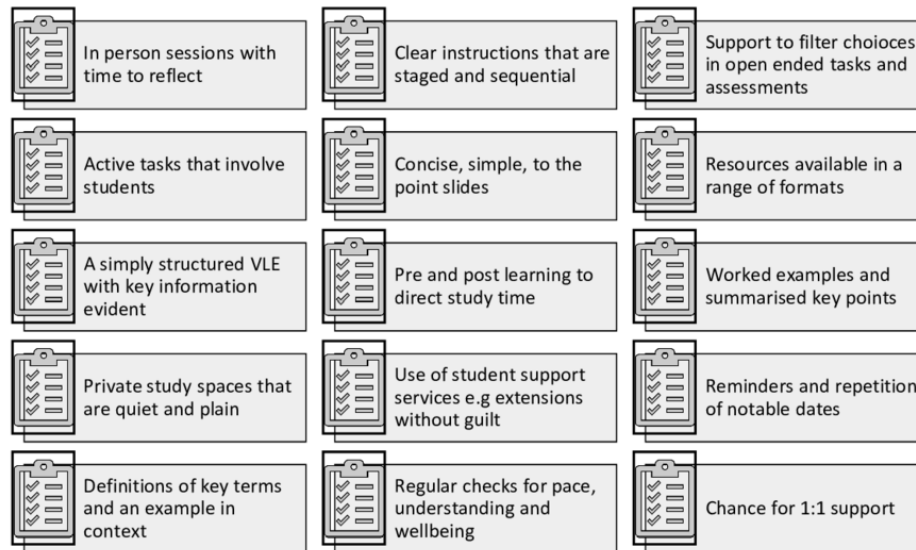


Figure 6: Practical recommendations for supporting students who have neurodiverse needs

Case study 3: Using active digital education in online learning to support English as an Additional Language students.

Introduction

Active Digital Education (ADE) places a strong emphasis on 'learning by doing' in a digital environment. Students actively engage with content, sensemaking activities and dialogue. ADE emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing knowledge through technology-enabled exchanges and social interactions. In many instances, learners interact with content dynamically, generating shareable products for others to engage with.

This case study advocates consistent structure to online sessions to facilitate experiences that happen naturally in an in-person environment and at the advantages of providing session content in advance. This case study demonstrates how digital tools can add pace, collaboration, and engagement to synchronous and asynchronous online learning with a focus on English as an Additional Language (EAL) students.

The ADE approaches in this case study exemplify how learners drive the re-discussion and re-mixing of content. Using the University's learning management system combined with online collaborative spaces and live documents can provide a structured yet flexible environment for online learning adding pace and a range of methods by which students can engage. In the case of EAL students they face the challenges of learning how to learn in an additional language and may also be learning about a different culture.

Methods

Method: Module feedback and student dialogue

Ethics: Ethical permission granted by the Faculty of Health, Education and Society

Sample: This study was conducted with 90 international students undertaking the MA Education via distance learning.

Inclusion Criteria: MA Education international students 2021-2022

Data analysis: Casing examples drawn from feedback to support colleagues in developing their online practices.

With thanks to Helen and David for their examples.

Example 1: Consistency of module layout to aid navigation

The University of Northampton uses the Learning Management System Blackboard Learn. This acts as a central point of reference for students in terms of the information they need access to, to progress in their studies. Students are enrolled on various module sites that form the basis of their programme of study. Each module site will contain uniform information specific to that module. Ensuring consistency of format between module sites aims to minimise the cognitive load needed for students with EAL to navigate and retrieve the required information provided on NILE.

The 'Week by week' content folders provide a structured study pathway for students. The inclusion of a pre learning task provides students with a guide to the content that will be covered in the session allowing for students with EAL to prepare and research the upcoming session. By having this structure each week, students with EAL become familiar with the approach and can spend more time exploring and understanding the content than the format.

Creating such familiarity aids in developing a student with EAL's confidence to engage in independent learning and asynchronous tasks. Online sessions are held in the online classroom hosted by Blackboard (Blackboard Collaborate). Using Blackboard Collaborate consistently aids in developing familiarity with the functions of the platform and the expectations of students when engaging with the platform. Within Blackboard Collaborate there are also different functions that the tutor can use to support familiarity and interaction. For example, the whiteboard function allows students contribute to anonymously and there is a breakout room to facilitate smaller group interactions.

Blackboard Collaborate provides familiarity for students with EAL, the 'raise-hand' function and 'breakout room' function allow for group activities and discussions to take place in a collegiate and constructive manner. Allowing students to work in the same breakout groups for several sessions can increase students' familiarity and relationships with each other as informal learning opportunities are not as prevalent in online cohorts. Structuring feedback for students with EAL from group activities encourages students to speak English. For example, each week a different student takes responsibility for feedback from the breakout group to the rest of the cohort. This structures the expectations and supports the development of teamwork through familiarity.

Example 2: Tools to promote collaboration and collective knowledge building

Blackboard Collaborate supports links to external tools. Using a small number of online tools consistently allows the learners to become familiar with the functionality of those tools. Padlet and Miro are examples of external tools that can be used to promote collaborative learning. This is helpful for EAL students as they can contribute to the tasks in a written or visual format if they prefer not to speak. Padlet and Miro provide a digital artefact that can be used, reused, and returned to synchronously and asynchronously. Online collaboration spaces such as Padlet and Miro encourage the recording of information through text and images, which can then aid a student with EAL in their feedback to their group and cohort.

Padlet and Miro support collaboration and co-construction amongst students with EAL. Working in familiar groups, tasks encourage students to cooperate and produce responses in the tools in a multi modal manner via text, images, audio, and video. For example, a Miro board was used to capture and

facilitate student's understanding in relation to the prompt of what 'good teaching' was by drawing on examples from their own experience and beliefs and making links to relevant literature.

Within Miro, each group can be assigned a space to draft and discuss their response. This Miro board further served as a resource for students in the group by having access to each other's artefacts and responses. The curation and collation of such a resource in a collective and intuitive way is an advantage of using Miro.

Using the same breakout groups for several sessions, and hosting activities on Miro or Padlet within the virtual classroom promotes a sense of community that would not be established if students always worked in random breakout groups without the requirement to produce and feedback. The shared ownership over what is produced serves to further enhance the co-creation process and make learning more engaging and effective. The visual and interactive nature of these combined tools minimizes language barriers and supports understanding.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This case study has introduced the concept of Active Digital Education. Our conclusion highlights the lessons learned from applying ADE and UDL principles to create inclusive and engaging online learning environments that enable students to become active co-creators who expand the original session content through their shared online experiences.

The two examples demonstrate that ADE values experiential learning in a digital environment. By engaging with metacognition and sharing ideas together learners are supported to make sense of the knowledge and tasks presented. Collective knowledge building is a powerful tool, building agency and valuing student voice. ADE facilitates rhizomatic learning, that evolves as the learners interact, respond build and share their learning in an evolutionary way. Dialogue is central to effective ADE teaching and learning practices.

This case study recommends that, when planning for inclusive teaching and learning in an online environment:

- Value the process as well as the end product. Plan for a dialogue rich and creative learning environment that values collective knowledge building.
- Embrace technologies that offer learners multimodal means of representing their knowledge and understanding.
- Promote effective learning habits for EAL learners that build confidence through familiarity and routine.

Summary and Recommendations

This chapter aimed to offer examples of ways in which practitioner research can inform inclusive learning and teaching. Drawing from UDL (CAST, 2018) the premise of inclusive learning design can be used in this context to support provision aimed at breaking down barriers to attainment and progression and be used proactively in planning for learners needs.

The three case study pieces of research in this chapter have attempted to demonstrate the broadness of inclusive practice and to highlight the challenges that students face in studying in further and higher education. Quirke et al., (2023) suggest that UDL offers a framework by which to reflect upon our own understanding of inclusion. To consider inclusive practice in the widest sense of the word by planning from 'a place of empathy' and to rethink, redesign, and to recognise exclusion. Applying UDL in a

further and higher education context involves providing diverse and flexible ways for students to access, engage with, and express their understanding of the course material. This helps create an inclusive learning environment that caters to the varied needs and preferences of a diverse student population that appreciates intersectionality and addresses systemic inequalities (Fosslund & Habti, 2022).

From this research the following practical interventions can be offered for a range of inclusive considerations based on the findings of the research in this chapter. Table 1 summarises these suggestions under the broad categories of supporting learning needs, supporting cultural capital, supporting digital agency, and supporting learning behaviours as they correspond to the three of principles of UDL.

	Supporting learning needs	Supporting cultural capital	Supporting digital agency	Supporting learning behaviours
Multiple means of representation	<p>Provide information through a range of modes (e.g. visual aids, use of multimedia and real-life examples that give an applied context.) This allows students to access the information in a way that appeals to them.</p> <p>Offer students choices in assignments or projects. Allowing them to choose topics or formats that align with their interests and strengths can increase their engagement and confidence in the assessment process.</p>	<p>Provide learning materials in various formats, ensuring that they are accessible and affordable. This may involve offering electronic versions of textbooks, providing resources online and recommending low-cost or free reliable educational materials.</p> <p>Integrate contextual learning opportunities into the curriculum that allow students to apply their knowledge in real-world settings. This not only enhances their learning experience, but also provides valuable community engagement.</p>	<p>Ensure that all online materials, including course readings, videos and documents, are accessible to students with various needs. This might include providing alternative text for images, closed captions for videos, and text that can be easily resized.</p> <p>Utilise online platforms for discussions, forums or collaborative projects. This allows students to engage at their own pace and provides opportunities for participation even for those who may be less confident in face-to-face settings.</p>	<p>Use visual aids, charts and diagrams to complement verbal explanations. Visual representations can enhance understanding and provide additional support for students who may struggle with confidence in verbal or written expression.</p> <p>Demonstrate processes and expectations through modelling. This can include examples of well-executed assignments, problem-solving approaches, or effective study strategies.</p>
Multiple means of engagement	<p>When planning assessments offer students a choice of topics or allow them to choose between different formats. This</p>	<p>Provide constructive and supportive feedback to help students improve. Offer additional resources or assistance if needed and create a</p>	<p>Offer resources and support for developing digital literacy skills. This includes guidance on using online platforms, accessing electronic</p>	<p>Clearly communicate course objectives, expectations and grading criteria. Providing an overview of the course and key assignment dates helps to</p>

	<p>provides students with a sense of autonomy and allows them to engage with the material in a way that aligns with their interests and strengths.</p> <p>Provide timely and constructive feedback that focuses on improvement rather than just grades. Offer specific guidance on areas for improvement and highlight the strengths of the work.</p> <p>Provide access to online resources that support learning and skill development. This may include tutorials, interactive modules or virtual labs that allow students to practise and build confidence in a self-paced environment.</p>	<p>supportive environment that fosters a growth mindset.</p> <p>Recognise that students may have to work or have family responsibilities. Provide flexibility in scheduling, such as offering evening classes, online options or record lectures to accommodate diverse schedules.</p> <p>Ensure students are aware of resources to help with the cost of education, textbooks and other essential needs. Ensure that any technology required for coursework is readily available on campus or provide alternatives that do not require expensive tools.</p>	<p>resources and leveraging technology for educational purposes.</p> <p>Customise the university's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to be more user-friendly and accessible. Provide clear navigation, organise content logically and offer options for students to adjust settings according to their needs.</p> <p>Use online platforms that facilitate collaboration and communication among students. This can provide additional means of engagement and expression, allowing students to work together and share their understanding through various mediums.</p>	<p>alleviate anxiety and uncertainty.</p> <p>Foster a collaborative and supportive learning environment. Group activities, peer support and collaborative projects can help students build confidence through shared experiences and encouragement from peers.</p> <p>Make yourself available for one-on-one discussions during office hours. Additionally, direct students to support services on campus, such as Learner Development centres or counselling services, where they can receive personalised assistance.</p> <p>Establish mentorship programmes where students can connect with more experienced peers, Faculty members or professionals in their field. Having a mentor can</p>
--	--	--	---	---

				provide guidance and boost confidence.
Multiple means of expression	Develop an assessment portfolio that uses a range of methods, such as essays, presentations, group projects, multimedia projects or demonstrations. This allows students to showcase their understanding in a way that best suits their strengths and preferences.	Use examples and case studies that are relevant to the students' lived experiences and communities. This helps connect academic content to their real-world experiences.	Organise networking events, workshops or seminars that connect students with professionals in their field of study. This can create opportunities for mentorship and increase access to valuable networks.	Provide positive and constructive feedback regularly. Celebrate successes, no matter how small, and offer guidance on areas for improvement. Encourage reflective practices. This could include journaling, self-assessment or small group discussions where students can reflect on their learning progress and set goals for improvement.

Table 1: Practical recommendations for fostering an inclusive learning environment

Finally, UDL principles can be applied in both further and higher education contexts to support a range of learners. This involves planning for and incorporating multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. UDL can address barriers to education by providing accessible resources, applied examples, flexible scheduling, and collaborative learning opportunities to build social and cultural capital (Fossland & Habti, 2022). Effective use of accessible digital platforms, resources, tutor availability, and mentorship programs are additional tools to enhance confidence and overall success in students' academic journey.

Educators should use various modalities such as visual aids, multimedia, and real-world examples to present information, ensuring accessibility for all students. Assessments can offer choices, allowing students to select topics or formats that align with their interests and foster autonomy and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, using diverse assessment methods that foster students' strengths and preferences, and supportive formative feedback can further empower students. Clear communication of expectations, modelling processes, and fostering collaborative learning environments can contribute to building learner confidence.

Practitioner research in a further and higher education setting offers the chance to be a pracademic. It provides practical, hands-on experience in our field with an academic background and involvement in research and education contributing to both the theoretical understanding and practical application of knowledge in their field. Practitioner research allows us to challenge the status quo and reflect on the ways in which power relations, social justice issues, equity and diversity can be mitigated. It bridges the gap between theory and practice, bringing valuable insights from our practical experience into academic discussions and research, while also incorporating theoretical knowledge into our everyday work.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank to Sam, Mark, Helen and David for their contributions.

References

Advanced HE (2022) Equality in Higher Education: statistical reports 2022. [online][Equality in higher education: statistical reports 2022 | Advance HE \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](#) [Accessed 21.12.23]

Atherton, G., Lewis, J., & Bolton, P. (2023) Commons Library Research Briefing Higher Education in the UK: Systems, policy approaches, and challenges. [Online] [CBP-9640.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#) [Accessed: 20.22.23]

Bolton, P., & Lewis, J. (2023). *Equality of access and outcomes in higher education in England*. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9195/CBP-9195.pdf> [Accessed:23.11.23]

Braun, V., & Clarke. V. (2022) *Thematic Analysis: A practical Guide*. SAGE, London.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2020) Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I not use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches. Methodological Paper. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12360>

Clouder, L., Karakus, M., Cinotti, A., Ferreyra, M. V., Fierros, G. A., & Rojo, P. (2020). Neurodiversity in higher education: A narrative synthesis. *Higher Education*, 80(4). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00513-6>

CAST. (2018). *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines*. CAST. <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/> [Accessed 23.10.23]

Day, A. (Ed.). (2022). *Diversity, inclusion, and decolonization: practical tools for improving teaching, research, and scholarship* (1st ed.). Bristol University Press. <https://doi.org/10.56687/9781529216677>

Fook, J. (2017) *Leading in Uncertain Times series: Higher Education: What is it good for? Inspiring Leadership*. Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. [Online] [leadership insight leading in uncertain times higher education what is it good for 85645 1574089233.pdf](https://www.leadershipinsight.org.uk/leading-in-uncertain-times-higher-education-what-is-it-good-for-85645-1574089233.pdf) [Accessed: 20.11.23]

Fossland, T., & Habti, D. (2022). University practices in an age of supercomplexity: Revisiting diversity, equality, and inclusion in higher education. *JPHE : Journal of Praxis in Higher Education*, 4(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.47989/kpdc355>

Gilbert, A., Tait-McCutcheon, S., & Knewstubb, B. (2021). Innovative teaching in higher education: Teachers' perceptions of support and constraint. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 58(2), 123–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2020.1715816>

Gov.UK (2023) Equality Act 2010 [online] [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15) [Accessed 12.12.23]

Gov.UK (2023b) Undergraduate degree results [online] [Undergraduate degree results - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/) [Accessed 21.12.23]

Hamilton, L. G., & Petty, S. (2023). Compassionate Pedagogy for Neurodiversity in Higher education: a Conceptual Analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1093290>

Kivunja, C. & Kuyini, A.B. (2017) Understanding and Applying Research Paradigms in Educational Contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*. 6 (5) pp.26-41

Merry, K. L. (2024). *Delivering Inclusive and Impactful Instruction: Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education* (First edition.). CAST Professional Publishing.

Office for Students (2022). The Office for Students annual review 2022. [online] [Chief executive's commentary - Office for Students](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/consultation-summaries/office-for-students-annual-review-2022) [Accessed 21.12.23]

Office for Students (2023). Regulatory notice 1: Access and participation plan guidance [online] [Regulatory notice 1: Access and participation plan guidance \(officeforstudents.org.uk\)](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/regulatory-notice-1-access-and-participation-plan-guidance) [Accessed 8.12.23]

Quirke, M., Mc Guckin, C., & McCarthy, P. (2023) *Adopting a UDL Attitude within Academia Understanding and Practicing Inclusion Across Higher Education*. London. Routledge

Stripe, K., & Ntonia, I. (2023). Twenty-two recommendations for inclusive teaching and their implementation challenges. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, 28. <https://doi.org/10.47408/jldhe.vi28.1034>

Tai, Joanna., Boud, David., & Jorre de St Jorre, Trina. (2022). *Assessment for Inclusion in Higher Education: Promoting Equity and Social Justice in Assessment*. Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003293101>

UNESCO. (2023). What you need to know about higher education | UNESCO. [www.unesco.org. https://www.unesco.org/en/higher-education/need-know](https://www.unesco.org/en/higher-education/need-know) [Accessed: 23.11.23]

University of Northampton (UON) (2023) Strategy 2023-2027 [Online] [Strategy 2023 – 27. \(northampton.ac.uk\)](https://www.northampton.ac.uk) [Accessed:21.12.23]

Additional reading

Tiplady, H. & Whewell, E. (2023) [What neurodiverse learners told us they needed in order to thrive | Wonkhe](#)

Quirke, M., Mc Guckin, C., & McCarthy, P. (2023) Adopting a UDL Attitude within Academia Understanding and Practicing Inclusion Across Higher Education. London. Routledge

Key Terms and Definitions

Access and Participation: Understanding and promoting both access and participation are essential for fostering inclusivity and ensuring that diverse individuals and groups have equal opportunities to engage in education.

Cultural Capital: Cultural capital plays a role in social stratification and the reproduction of social inequality. Those with more cultural capital are often better positioned to navigate social systems, access educational and professional opportunities, and establish social connections.

Digital Agency: Empowering and enabling individuals to develop digital capital and make decisions about how and when to apply digital tools creatively in real world contexts.

Ethnography: Ethnography is a qualitative research method that involves the systematic study and documentation of people, cultures, and communities.

Inclusive practices: Inclusive practice aims to create environments and structures that embrace and accommodate diversity. The goal of inclusive practice is to ensure that everyone, regardless of their differences, feels valued, respected, and has equal access to opportunities and resources. In the context of further and higher education, inclusive practices involve adapting teaching methods, curriculum, and learning environments to meet the needs of all students, including those with diverse learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds.

Interpretivism: Interpretivism is a philosophical and methodological approach to social science research that emphasises the importance of understanding and interpreting the subjective meanings that individuals and groups ascribe to their experiences, actions, and social phenomena.

Neurodiversity: Neurodiversity is a concept that recognises and celebrates the natural diversity of neurological differences in individuals. It suggests that neurological variations, are part of the normal range of human diversity rather than deficits or disorders. The neurodiversity perspective emphasizes the idea that each person's unique neurological makeup contributes to their individual strengths, abilities, and perspectives.

Pracademic: A pracademic is an academic and a practitioner. They position themselves to bridge the gap between research and practice.