



Embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum: Developing a train the trainers model

Edinburgh Napier University case study

Embedding equality and diversity in the
curriculum strategic enhancement programme

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1. Introduction

Over the past 20 years, both massification and internationalisation have significantly changed the higher education (HE) landscape. Universities are in a constant state of adaptation as they aim to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Students are protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010; thus, higher education providers (HEPs) are committed to adapting their practice to ensure that teaching spaces are inclusive. Edinburgh Napier University believes that equality of opportunity is essential to everything the student experiences. The university aims to create and maintain an environment where students and staff are selected solely on merit, and to encourage the development of a diverse community in which everyone can flourish and realise their full potential. One area where this can be achieved is curriculum design and delivery.

The university has an inclusivity committee, which oversees all areas of equality and diversity policy and education. The university leadership team has recognised the need for education and training in equality and diversity issues across the entire staff. Pivotal to this is avoiding tokenism and ensuring that all staff are not just provided with knowledge but can apply this knowledge to teaching, research, supporting learning and in turn the student experience. The university is currently considering mandatory staff development in relation to equality and diversity education. However, it also recognises the need for a student-centred and co-collaborative approach to ensure that its curriculum is cognisant of equality and diversity issues, not just in module and programme content but also in practice. The university is keen to empower its academic staff and student community to ensure that a co-collaborative model is adopted in creating modules and programmes which embrace the principles of equality and diversity. To this end, the university committed to the Higher Education Academy Scotland's embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum strategic enhancement programme (EEDC SEP).

2. Project aims

In order to support fully an increasingly diverse student population, HEPs are encouraged to consider the policies and practices that they adopt to address issues of equality and diversity, in compliance with current legislation. The research team took the view that a "bottom-up" approach, empowering staff to take ownership of their practice and lead others in doing so, would be more successful in embedding the principles of equality and diversity than a "top-down" approach. Drawing on the Higher Education Academy's EEDC framework (May and Thomas, 2010) and model (Hanesworth, 2015), Edinburgh Napier University focused specifically on the areas of curriculum design and delivery, aiming to implement activities that would lead to institutional change.

Hence, our EEDC SEP project's overarching aims were to:

- > identify and disseminate areas of good practice;
- > increase awareness of equality and diversity issues and foster further collaborative learning between the academic and student community;
- > act as a springboard for further inclusive practices within the student experience;
- > provide skills and tools that can be used in the development, approval and re-approval of curricula;
- > create an inclusive teaching and learning space which enables students to achieve their full potential.

3. Approaches and activities developed

To establish the current state of play, a baseline analysis was conducted to measure the extent to which staff at Edinburgh Napier were embedding equality and diversity practices in curriculum design and delivery. The baseline analysis consisted of four stages to ensure that a holistic approach was applied to the study. First, current literature was reviewed to establish areas of good practice in EEDC and to ensure the project was in line with current research and evidence in the field. Second, a desk-based review allowed for documents relating to curriculum design and delivery to be examined to map the visibility of equality and diversity themes. Data sources included programme specifications and handbooks, module descriptors and teaching materials. Programme leaders from across the university volunteered for the study, and six were selected. To be representative of the university, the selection was based on the following criteria:

- > programmes levels: undergraduate as well as postgraduate;
- > teaching delivery: online as well as face-to-face;
- > subject variation: the selected programmes represented five different schools.

Documentation was analysed using the HEA's framework and model for EEDC (May and Thomas, 2010; Hanesworth, 2015). Materials were evaluated based on the presence of equality and diversity rhetoric (see appendix one). The third stage entailed one-to-one interviews with programme leaders to reflect on the extent to which equality and diversity were being embedded within their own practice and experience. At the fourth stage, a selection of students from the participating programmes were interviewed to gain a stronger insight into their perceptions and experiences of EEDC during their time at university. Interview questions (see appendix two) were based on the HEA self-evaluation framework (May and Thomas, 2010).

The desk-based analysis revealed that EEDC is not reflected in module descriptors, learning outcomes or programme specifications, and that there is a real need for staff development and self-reflection, as well as resources to address this gap. These initial

findings were further supported by the staff / student interviews. We conducted staff interviews to explore staff perceptions of their own practice in embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum, and to examine how this was achieved at both tacit and explicit levels. We discovered that there were many examples of good practice identified by participants, which were not necessarily reflected in the formal programme and module documentation (see appendix three). We requested samples of teaching materials so that we could explore these findings further, but none were forthcoming.

Informed by the baseline analysis, a “train the trainers” pilot was developed to further enhance staff awareness of EEDC in curriculum design and delivery. Developing such a model fits well with the theory behind EEDC, as the planned activities focused on key elements of raising staff awareness around belonging, engagement, potential, understanding, awareness, interaction and self-reflection (Hanesworth, 2015). The pilot took the form of a series of six reflective conversations (the first three of which are evaluated in this case study), aimed at raising self-awareness and understanding of potential equality issues that students may face. Participants included programme leaders, professional services staff and one alumna who has developed her own diversity workshops within the university. The president of Napier’s students’ association (NSA) was also part of the participating group. Each session lasted for two hours, and was facilitated by Dr Joan McLatchie and evaluated by Laurie Anne Campbell. Evaluation took the form of pre- and post-session questionnaires to identify the extent to which knowledge had been enhanced as well as participant observation which allowed for the research team to appraise and self-reflect on the design and style of the sessions.

The reflective conversations were adapted from the US-based SEED project (SEED, n.d.). In the UK, SEED has previously been employed as a tool for EEDC at Sheffield University (van Duyvenbode, 2016); to date, no Scottish university has taken this approach. The key objectives of SEED are to “drive personal, organizational, and societal change toward greater equity and diversity” through training individuals to facilitate ongoing seminars that bring equality and diversity issues to the forefront of discussion.

The team took a conscious decision not to refer to the sessions as workshops or seminars, but rather as reflective conversations, to better illustrate their purpose. The programme comprised six sessions which were structured to give participants the chance to reflect on their own practice and that of the wider university. Each session used a range of materials to engage participants including videos, participant activities and facilitator-led discussion. The following topics were covered:

1. Unpacking the terminology: The language of inclusivity and diversity.
2. Check your privilege: Exploring unconscious bias.
3. Circles of the self: Exploring dimensions of identity.
4. Institutional prejudice: Stereotypical injustices, do they exist?
5. Equality vs sameness: Eradicating inequality, how far have we come?

6. Knowledge production: Sharing ownership of learning.

The topics were informed by Sheffield University's SEED initiative and deliberately chosen to allow participants to challenge their own perceptions around EEDC issues. The final stage of the project will be to develop an online repository of useful resources that complements the reflective conversations, providing participants with materials that will allow them to enhance their knowledge and facilitate further EEDC activities within the university.

4. Resources

The following resources will be provided, which may be of use to other organisations.

- > reflective conversations: PowerPoint slides, handouts and facilitator notes;
- > URLs for useful information;
- > extracts of examples of good practice of EEDC;
- > links to dissemination activities related to the research, i.e. conference proceedings and journal publications.

The team intend to create an open access resource which will contain the materials listed in this section, to support other parties interested in EEDC.

5. Impact

Impact was measured using data collected from participants during each session. Participants were asked to complete a short open-ended questionnaire at the start of each session to identify their understanding of the topics that would be discussed. The pre-session questionnaire addressed 1) their current knowledge of terminology (asked to define in one sentence), and 2) their expectations of the sessions.

In the post-session questionnaire, participants were asked to 1) indicate the extent to which they agreed their knowledge had increased, and 2) reflect on how they felt the session would influence their practice. This format was adopted for each of the sessions and is discussed further under "reflective conversations" below. Two further impacts were uncovered: establishing connections and engaging key influencers. These will be discussed also.

Reflective conversations

The most striking evidence of impact is at the individual level for those who participated in the reflective conversations, based on the data gathered during the sessions. Figures

2, 4 and 5 demonstrate that the aims of each session aligned with what participants hoped to gain, as well as their post-session reflections. It is clear from the post-session reflections that those who attended gained an increase in knowledge around the topics covered and felt that EEDC would be something to which they would give more consideration when reflecting on their practice and the tools they used for learning and teaching.

The overarching purpose of the sessions was to create a safe space for discussion, and to encourage a meaningful conversation to support the practitioner in embedding inclusive practice. Each session ended with an opportunity for reflection on how the conversation could inform the participants' practice.

Session one: Unpacking the terminology

The key aim of this session was to explore the language of inclusivity and diversity, by considering the meaning of the terms used in the project title. As this was the first session, it began with an introduction and icebreaker exercise, which was followed by an unpacking of the terms equality, diversity and inclusivity.

It was the latter that was the main focus, and this was achieved through discussions further supported by activities aimed at developing reflective thinking. For this session, a naming exercise was used and was seen to be successful in helping participants explore their own and others' identities.

Out of 11 participants, nine completed the pre- and post-evaluations, which explored their current knowledge of terminology and the extent to which it was enhanced. The responses per terminology discussed are illustrated in Figure 1.

As this figure shows, most participants agreed that their knowledge around initial EEDC terminology and how it related to their practice had increased after attending the session, particularly with the terms equality and inclusivity. Fewer participants expressed agreement regarding the term diversity; this might illustrate that they were already more familiar with this term. The discussions during the session around the complexity of EEDC in practice were generally felt to be enlightening, particularly when identifying situations within the learning space where the students may face issues of discrimination. Figure 2 explores the commentary of participants, identifying the key impacts on them based on their current knowledge in the area and what they expected to gain.

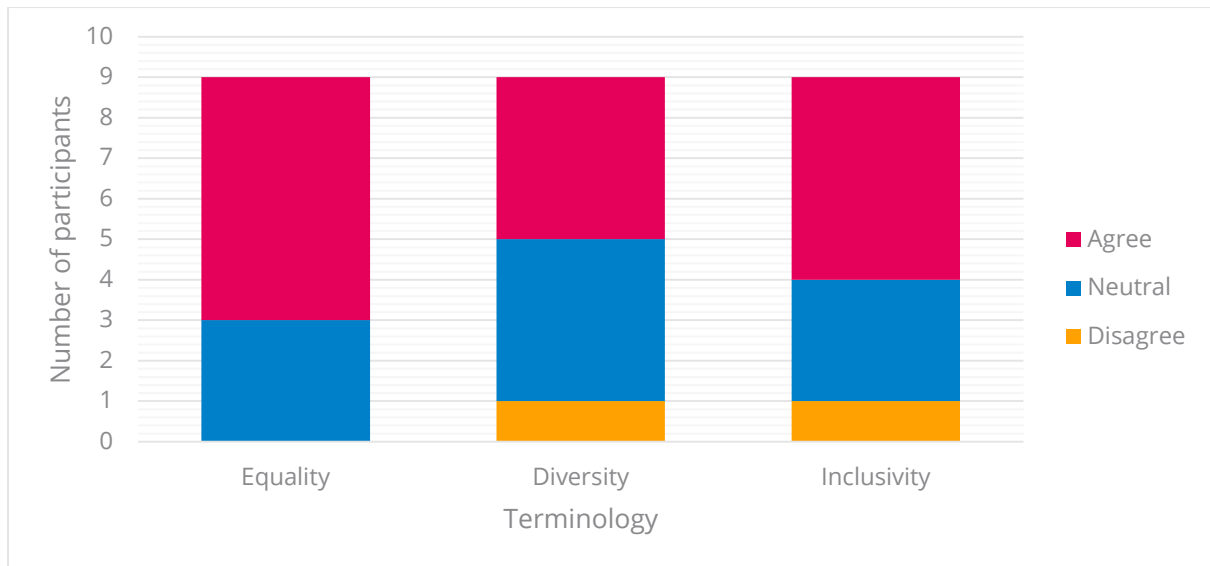


FIGURE 1: PRE- VS POST-EVALUATION: INCREASE IN KNOWLEDGE AROUND EEDC TERMINOLOGY

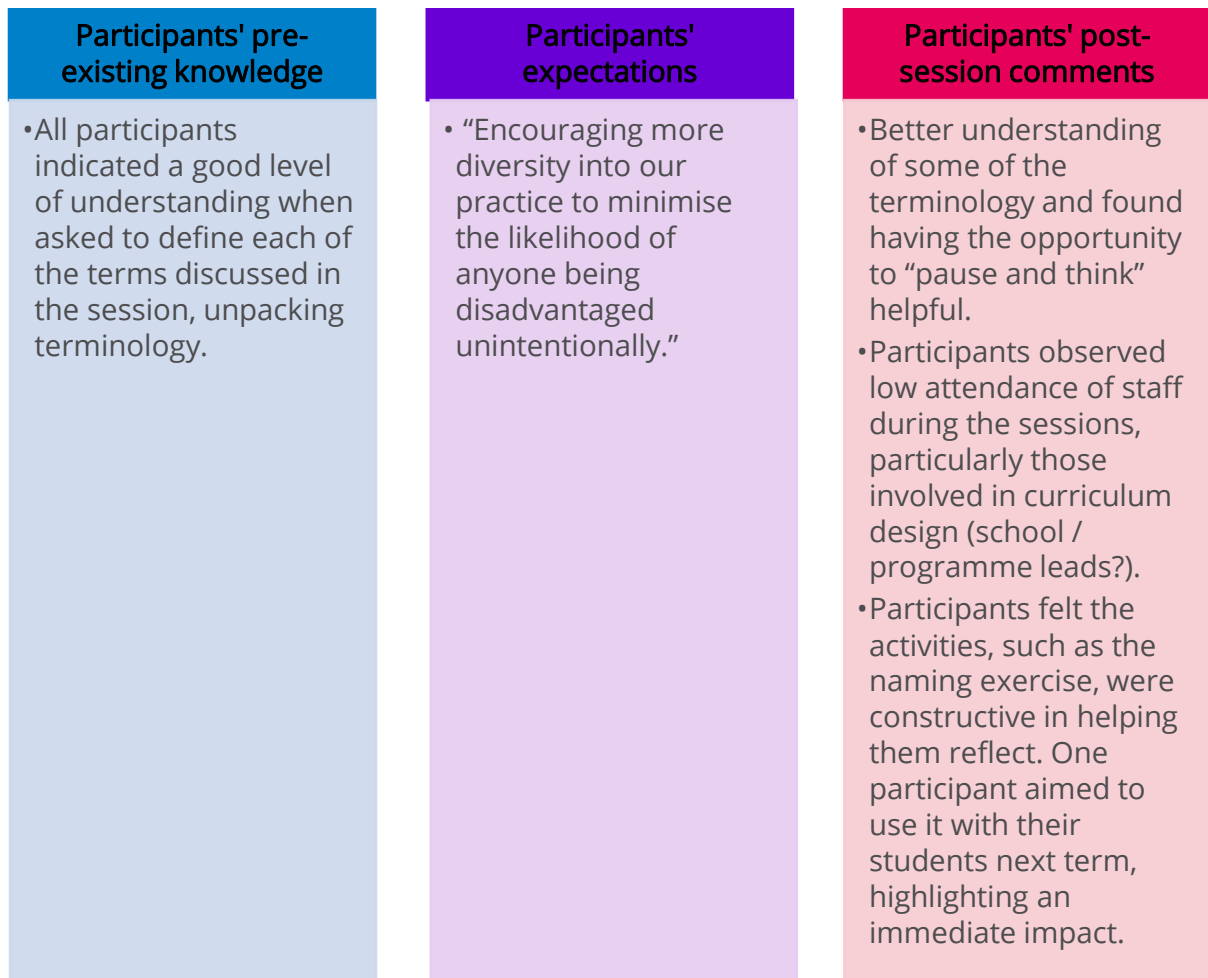


FIGURE 2: IMPACT OF SESSION: UNPACKING TERMINOLOGY

Session two: Check your privilege

The key aim of the session was to explore issues of unconscious bias. The session was structured around the two topics of 1) identity and privilege, and 2) unconscious bias.

Between discussions, participants were asked to complete activities that allowed them to identify their own privilege, which then led to open reflective conversation.

Out of eight participants, five completed the pre- and post-evaluations which explored their current knowledge of terminology discussed in the session and the extent to which it was enhanced. The responses per terminology discussed are illustrated in Figure 3.

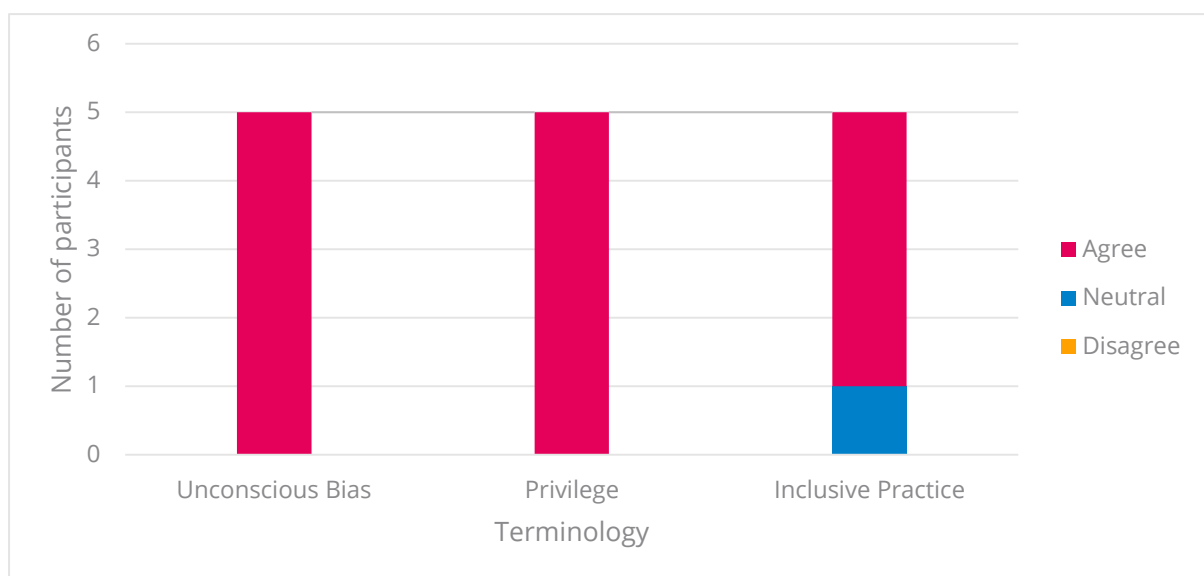


FIGURE 3: PRE- VS POST-EVALUATION: INCREASE IN KNOWLEDGE AROUND PRIVILEGE TERMINOLOGY

Overall, participants felt an increase in their knowledge around unconscious bias and privilege indicating an impact on the majority of participants who attended the session. This was supported by participants' commentary during and after the session. Figure 4 illustrates key impacts on participants based on their previous knowledge and expectations.

Participants' pre-existing knowledge	Participants' expectations	Participants' post-session comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Most participants indicated that they were familiar with the terminology around privilege, providing comprehensive statements of each term to show understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A better understanding of the issues surrounding privilege through collegiate discussion. •Greater understanding of how these issues impact on individual practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reflection on own experiences and how some people had adapted to “fit in”, changing their own identity. •Reported an increase in awareness of how unconscious actions may affect international students and students at socioeconomic disadvantage. •A better understanding of the issues surrounding privilege through collegiate discussion. •Greater understanding of how these issues impact on individual practice.

FIGURE 4: IMPACT OF SESSION: CHECK YOUR PRIVILEGE

Session three: Circles of the self

The main aim of this session was to explore issues of dealing with difference. It was split into two and structured to allow for participant conversation. Rather than being facilitator-led, issues were explored using short films and evidential sources to challenge the discomfort that people feel around issues of, for example, disability. Owing to the lack of continuity of participants between events, the session began with a review of the previous session and thus comprised 1) review: diversity and privilege, and 2) dealing with difference.

All seven participants completed the post- and pre-evaluations which explored the terminology around circles of self. In the pre-evaluation, participants reported they had little to no understanding of the terminology for this session. In terms of impact, the post-evaluation showed that all participants agreed that their level of knowledge had increased by partaking in the session. This is clear in Figure 5 in terms of pre-existing knowledge and what participants hoped to gain from the session.

Participants' pre-existing knowledge	Participants' expectations	Participants' post-session comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited understanding of the concept “circles of the self” reported in pre-session evaluation questionnaire by all participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be better informed about equality and diversity issues. • To challenge and enhance practice with knowledge gained. • Networking opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session was helpful for people new to equality and diversity, good to discuss such issues in a safe space. • Helpful in how to challenge prejudicial attitudes in colleagues. • Further observations made by participants about low numbers in attendance despite the sessions being widely advertised. • Observed that this area should be included in professional development for staff. • Videos used were thought-provoking and challenged participants’ perceptions around their assumptions about disability.

FIGURE 5: IMPACT OF SESSION: CIRCLES OF SELF

Overall, the session was viewed positively in terms of raising participants’ self-awareness around their practice regarding interactions with students. Participants felt that they had a better understanding around the equality and diversity language and that they had been given the opportunity to reflect on their practice in a safe place.

Establishment of university-wide connections between participants

A positive, although unintended, impact of the project has been the development of an informal network across academic departments and professional services. Our initial focus was on programme leaders, plus our diversity officer and the disability and inclusion team. The NSA president was also part of the original group. However, after talking to Sheffield University, we realised that we should expand the group to include all stakeholders involved in supporting student learning, and therefore invited the professional services departments to send a representative. In the sessions, representatives from each of the services / departments offered valuable insights into

the ways in which issues of equality and diversity were approached, and allowed the participants further opportunity to reflect based on differing perspectives.

Engagement of key influencers

The pilot coincided with the appointment of a new member of the HR team with responsibility for diversity, and she was very positive about the opportunity to join the reflective conversations. A further new appointment was made to lead the student experience team; he attended the third reflective session, and demonstrated an enthusiasm for the purposes of the programme. These two people are in a position to influence decision-makers within the university, which can only be beneficial for the prospects of the EEDC project once it has been completed.

6. Lessons learned

As is often the case, challenges arose which required us to adapt our plans and make changes as we moved through the project. The main challenges were:

1. The project was initially aimed at school academic leads (SALS) who could not participate due to time constraints. We therefore had to adapt our plans, and work with programme leaders instead.
2. The project was delayed due to institutional ethical approval processes, resulting in less time to collect data for the baseline analysis.
3. Teaching materials need to be more explicit in demonstrating EEDC.
4. On reflection, we felt that the sessions were received positively by those who attended; however, the participants had a genuine interest in equality and diversity issues and it was noted that attendance was low despite the sessions being widely advertised. It will be more challenging to engage those who are less enthusiastic, or who are unaware of their need to adapt their practice.
5. The sessions were designed to build on each other, but few people were able to attend them all, which meant time spent recapping and reviewing in order to make the required links between the topics.

The lack of student input is a limitation of the project, and when it is rolled out, we would recommend that every effort is made to include student representation among the participants.

There is also a concern that once the pilot is complete, it will require commitment from the university leadership team for it to proceed as planned. The project team will not be responsible for the rollout of the EEDC programme across the university. However, our concluding activity will be to produce a report for the university leadership team, which includes a plan for the implementation of the programme.

Discovering the national SEED project was a key enabler for the project. This gave us the focus for our workshops, and the guidance for the format and content. The leader of the project at Sheffield University was generous with both her time and her advice, which enabled us to build meaningful and relevant structures for our reflective sessions. This conversation was particularly significant for the project leader, whose role it was to facilitate the workshops. She had been unsure of setting herself up as an expert in equality and diversity issues: the conversation with Sheffield made her realise that her role was not be the “sage on the stage”, but to simply create the space and the prompts for the conversations to take place.

7. Next steps

The three sessions which formed the pilot for this case study focused on self-reflection – encouraging participants to reflect on their own attitudes and behaviours – while considering what this meant for their own individual practice. The feedback provided above demonstrates that the participants found the sessions challenging and informative on an individual level.

The next three sessions use these reflective activities to look outward, and to consider the practicalities of embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum. Once the programme of reflective conversations has been completed, we plan to start rolling them out to the wider university community, with the current participants becoming facilitators to cascade their learning (see Gose (2013) for the effectiveness of such a cascading approach in the development of institutional-wide inclusivity). This may require additional training for the pilot participants, which should be supported by senior leadership within the university. We intend to follow up with the participants after six months have elapsed to evaluate how their practice has changed.

The online open access resource bank needs to be created, populated and managed on an ongoing basis. We are currently investigating the best way to move forward with this. We have been gathering resources; the next step will be to audit what is already available both internally and externally, and to consider the best platform for making this readily accessible to staff.

The format of this “train the trainers” programme owes a significant debt to the SEED project. In order to embed the tenets of SEED within the university, we recommend that

an appropriate member of staff is identified to participate in the SEED training programme in the US.

The project team is to present its findings at three international conferences: the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Conference in June 2017; the Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults in July 2017; and the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference in October 2017.

8. Key messages

The key messages we would highlight from this project are:

- > participants recognised the importance of self-awareness in EEDC;
- > reflective conversations were viewed as a powerful vehicle for self-reflection with the aim of transforming practice;
- > importance of engaging key stakeholders and achieving their commitment;
- > for future activity, it would be suggested that the sessions are marketed as a professional development opportunity. To support this, the university could offer staff time for attendance. The opportunity to become a facilitator could be promoted as evidence for HEA senior fellow accreditation;
- > senior leadership support is essential for the next stage of the programme, which is to develop the participants into facilitators within their areas of practice.

9. References

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Appendix one: Desk-based review findings

Programme	No. of modules reviewed	No. of protected-characteristic related text mentioned in module descriptors	No. of equality and diversity statements in module descriptors	No. of equality and diversity related text in learning outcomes and assessments	No. of equality and diversity related text in handbooks	No. of equality and diversity related text in programme specifications
Programme A	31	0	1	0	1	0
Programme B	3	1	1	0	2	0
Programme C	18	1	0.5	3	0	0
Programme D	19	7	2.5	0	0	8
Programme E	6	0	0	0	0	0
Programme F	6	2	1	0	n/a	n/a

Appendix two: Interview questions

Curriculum design:

1. How do you consider the needs of students with protected characteristics in terms of learning outcomes and competence standards?
2. Can you give me some examples of how you consider the different social and cultural experiences of students during seminars and lectures?
3. How well do you think the programme accommodates the diversity of students using different learning and teaching approaches?
4. To what extent do you think the programme allows for student input in how and what content is taught?
5. What are the different style of assessment and feedback on the module?
 - a. How well do you think the forms of assessment / feedback consider diversity among students?
6. Can you provide examples of how the university allows for flexibility in the programme to accommodate diversity among students?
7. Are students consulted about how they feel about the curriculum?
 - a. Do you offer any opportunity for students to feed back what they think would support them in terms of curriculum design?
8. How often are modules reviewed to ensure students from diverse backgrounds are not excluded?
9. Can you tell me about the guidance and support you receive to help you design an inclusive curriculum?
10. Has new scholarship on disability, gender, race, sexuality, etc. in relation to the subject / discipline been incorporated into the curriculum?
11. How aware are staff of E&D? (Quantitative \ Qualitative – How many responses to questions \ content of responses)
12. Have you attended any university-led workshops relating to E&D? (Quantitative)

13. Have you attended any externally run workshops relating to embedding E&D in the curriculum? (Quantitative)
14. What, from both, do you feel was beneficial? (Qualitative)
15. What do you think had no impact? (Qualitative)

Curriculum delivery:

1. Can you provide examples of how you make learning interactive?
2. To what extent are the teaching materials used in the course inclusive?
3. Do you feel that the module provides opportunities for you to build good working relationships with students? If so, can you provide some examples?
4. In what ways do you feel you are able to empower students with protected characteristics to become independent learners?
5. When are students able to access learning materials for the module?
 - a. In what formats can they access materials?
6. How flexible are you in relation to curriculum delivery to ensure all students can engage during class?

Appendix three: Interview findings

Staff interviews: Recurrent themes

- 1. Limited access to development opportunities in relation to equality and diversity.** It was generally felt that CPD opportunities that may enhance awareness of equality and diversity were welcome; however, workshops were limited and often advertised at short notice.
- 2. Teaching is teaching: beware of tokenistic measures.** Most participants felt that embedding equality and diversity in teaching materials could be problematic in two ways. First, most of those interviewed believed that teaching materials should be the best available: credibility should lie in the validity of the work, rather than who wrote it. Second, it was felt that focusing on inclusivity in teaching materials may result in real issues faced by students in the classroom being overlooked.
- 3. Reflections on inclusivity.** It was evident that some staff demonstrated a higher level of awareness when considering the needs of students with protected characteristics. Discussions with interviewees often leaned towards learning dispositions and a focus on the traditional format of academic learning. For example, sources such as YouTube often offer original material that could be useful in supporting students but it is widely ignored as a learning tool.
- 4. Examples of good practice.** Several of those interviewed highlighted that they felt it was easier to build connections with students by sharing their own experiences, allowing students the opportunity to feel connected and included. This is an unconscious example of embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum.

Examples of recurrent themes

Limited access to development opportunities in relation to equality and diversity

"I think about eight years ago for recruitment and selection because it's a mandatory aspect for recruitment and selection and since then nothing. There's very little." (Staff)

"At my previous institution, we would plan ahead for a series of workshops and guest speakers and publicise them so you had the calendar for the year then two or three weeks before it would be advertised. Not here." (Staff)

Teaching is teaching: beware of tokenistic measures

"It takes more than putting a few names up and introducing the lesbian – the token lesbian couple – to do that. Again I think it's about doing that respectfully rather than introducing, you know, a person who has a non-Scottish sounding name. That sounds a bit of a daft statement but I think what that can do is isolate people and go against what you're trying to do; so yes, we have to because when our students go into practice, they will see same-sex couples, diversity, women who have hearing loss and are visually impaired – all sorts of different things. We have to be careful that it doesn't become tokenism in among everything that you are doing which I think sometimes it is, i.e. you look at some materials and think here is the token disability in the resource; I think that we need more information on how you approach the collation of learning materials without resorting to that kind of tokenism." (Staff)

Reflections on inclusivity

"I'm international. When I come to study here people teach in Scottish so they don't understand that I can't understand. So do we adapt to the background of where the student comes? Are programme leader, or module, are they adopting the teaching style according to the student, so there is a lack of communication? For example, a Chinese student if you take a business course there's a lot of diversity in one class, so I would say there is a lack of understanding between students and lecturer." (Student)

Examples of good practice

"Yeah I think first of getting them to feed each other back on their projects. No, first of all get them to debate with each other, share their opinions. Secondly, get them to feed each other back on projects. And thirdly get them to collaborate. So there are three levels that foster community and in my view actually foster all these levels of diversity you've got, be it your sexual orientation, your age. I mean I have students on my degree from 20-60: like literally a very big age span. That's really interesting to see how the students interact with each other ... as a tutor you are very much aware of the diversity requirements of the university so if you notice that students are not being nice to each other and disrespectful you'll address that." (Staff)

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