Inclusive Education Project: Theory of Change Framework

1 Situation

Strategy 2030 and Transformative Education Strategy commits us to enabling an inclusive university culture where all can fulfil their potential. The University of Exeter has increasing numbers of disabled students, not all of which disclose their disabilities (particularly International Fee Status students, and non-White students). Neurodivergent students are a rapidly increasing cohort within the University, and staff are keen to explore ways to work with these students more effectively. The University aims to address the causes of any observable gaps in success and progression plus attainment and achievement for all minoritised students, with a particular focus in this APP cycle on the gaps experienced by mature students, disabled students, and those with mental health conditions. The University also has signed up to the Disabled Student Commitment and Mental Health Charter and has established working groups to develop targets and action plans to improve the holistic experience of disabled students and students with mental health conditions, including a focus on in-course experience.

2 Aims

Short term aims:

- To embed minimum standards of accessible teaching and learning in all University of Exeter taught modules
- To provide training on curriculum design using Universal Design for Learning principles to staff in each department at University of Exeter
- To create and make CPD and resources on inclusive education praxis available to all staff in a variety of different formats

Longer term aims:

- APP Objective 3 – Toimprove continuation rates for students experiencing gaps in outcomes, particularly mature students, disabled students, and those with mental health conditions)
- APP Objective 4 - To narrow degree awarding gaps for students experiencing gaps in outcomes, particularly mature students)
- To meet institutional targets agreed by Disabled Student Commitment Working Group and Mental Health Charter Working Groups (to be agreed)

Process

3 Inputs

- Annual budget
- Dedicated team (1 FTE)
- Partnership working with Student's Guild and Student's Union to support collaboration and co-creation with students.
- Educator Development and Learning Design support to develop resources, training and guidance for staff.
- Communications support to communicate with staff and students
- Strategic alignment with C4C across all three faculties and all three campuses.

4 Activities

- Analysis of ILP data on SITS
- ILP Deep Dives
- UDL workshops to staff
- Development of process chart for ILP implementation
- Roll out of new ILP Sharepoint on the University's Equality Act 2010 duty, the benefits of inclusive education, management of Individual Learning Plans ("ILPs") and giving practical examples of good practice from a variety of different disciplines.
- Co-ordinating Neurodiversity Celebration Week activities
- Review & update to TQA manual
- Creating Accessible Teaching & Learning Policy
- Creating and delivering a training workshop for educators on the principles and practices of Universal Design for Learning ("UDL") (in both a synchronous and asynchronous VLE format).
- Creating new curriculum design principles based on UDL principles for incorporation into module review and new module design processes.
- Introducing podcasts, blogs and articles for University newsletters about best practice for inclusive education
- Engage HoDs, DESE and EDI leads in faculties to promote UDL and support available

5 Outputs

- All modules are audited for accessibility with clearly defined steps to improvement
- New minimum standards for accessibility in teaching and learning at the University
- Co-created statement on module accessibility available to all students prior to module choice
- Embedded support for module accessibility enhancement through Educator Development
- Staff development opportunities through UDL Workshop (synchronous and asynchronous)
- Staff development and knowledge sharing activities through GW4 UDL Conference
- Knowledge creation on effective ILP implementation and the Equality Act duty
- Knowledge creation on how to support disabled students in general, and neurodivergent students in particular
- Case studies for TEF
- Recommendations for TEAPs
- Regular data report on ILPs
- New data category for neurodivergent students
- Publishable work on intersectional challenges for disabled students from minority ethnicities

Impact

6 Outcomes

For students:

- Study modules with designed-in inclusive education principles • Increased sense of belonging
- Increased confidence in ability to be successful on course

Academic self-efficacy For the university:

- Improves staff workloads in reduced reliance on ILPs to support disabled students
- Compliance with Equality Act
- Responding to Disabled Student Commitment and Mental Health Charter
- Closing gaps between disabled students, mature students and peers
- Reputation for excellent support for disabled students
- Better cross-service communication
- Better knowledge sharing on best practice for inclusive education

7 Impact

- The University benefits from enhanced reputation and greater attractiveness to widening participation students.
- Greater understanding of link between Universal Design for Learning and student outcomes
- Students report a greater sense of belonging and community at Exeter (student experience).
- APP-targeted students' experience and graduate outcomes are improved, and continuation, completion and awarding gaps closed (student experience and graduate outcomes).
- The University maintains its 'triple Gold' rating in TEF 2027 (reputation).
- The University delivers on Disabled Student Commitment and Mental Health Charter strategic aims
- The University benefits from increased neurodiversity-affirming culture and enhanced reputation for support for neurodivergent staff and students

8 Rationale & Assumptions

- Disabled student numbers will continue to increase
- Some barriers to disclosing disabilities can be overcome
- Staff at University of Exeter are willing to provide support for disabled students
- An inclusive culture is correlated with positive student outcomes
- Inclusive education is correlated with good disabled student degree outcomes