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Support Report**

**STUDENT NAME: Ashley Laurent
Pullen**

STUDENT NUMBER:1503819

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Part 1 – Learning Support Report

1. Introduction

Inclusivity is a fundamental practice within post-compulsory education which requires educators to create equal learning opportunities that accommodate a diverse range of learner needs. Within higher education and further education, inclusivity is a legal and regulatory obligation.

Evidence shows that inequalities in the post compulsory education sector, particularly for disabled learners, who are typically less likely to access higher education often report inconsistent support experiences (UCAS, 2022). These inconsistencies show the importance of embedding inclusive practice across teaching, institutional policies and when developing course content and curricula.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN) within post compulsory education refers to learners with one or more of a wide range of difficulties and barriers that may affect a learner's ability to access education. Learners in post 16 environments can present with a wide range of learning difficulties such as physical and cognitive difficulty. This means that there is a need for teachers in a post 16 setting to be responsive and adapt teaching approaches where possible to accommodate these learning difficulties.

In Wales inclusive practice is covered by legislated frameworks such as the “Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act 2018” and the “Equality Act 2010”. Inclusive practices within teaching and learning environments are essential to ensure all learners are provided with equal opportunities to participate and succeed. This report covers how legal frameworks, institutional policies create an inclusive post 16 education system.

This summary report looks briefly into the legal and regulatory frameworks governing inclusivity and policy of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) and evaluates inclusive teaching strategies informed by theory and professional standards.

2. Regulatory and Legal Requirements

Inclusive practice within the post compulsory sector is underpinned by the Equality Act 2010. This primary legislation governing equality in education. It prohibits discrimination based on protected characteristics and requires institutions to implement reasonable adjustments to remove barriers to learning. This can range from physical alterations such as access to wheelchair users, altering teaching methods to be more inclusive, providing assistive technologies and ensuring fair assessments.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), embedded within the Equality Act, requires institutions to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between groups

These duties are particularly significant in higher education, where institutions must demonstrate proactive engagement with inclusivity.

In Wales institutions also must consider a wider range of policies such as the “Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015” by creating a more equal and resilient Wales.

Professional expectations are also defined for lecturers and institutions through the UK Professional Standards Framework, which includes inclusivity as a core value. It requires educators develop and implement inclusive strategies, policies, procedures to enhance the outcomes of learners (Welsh Government, 2023).

Taking the above Regulatory requirements into account demonstrates that inclusivity is not an option but a statutory and professional requirement with the post compulsory education sector.

3. Institutional Policy

Institutions such as the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) go through a process of taking legal obligations and developing them into strategies that can be applied institution wide. UWTSD demonstrates this through its UWTSD strategic equality plan 2024-2028 which provides a clear example of how inclusive practices are embedded within institutional practice (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2024)

The equality plan makes direct reference how it has been developed so that the institution can demonstrate and meet its legal commitments to not only the Equality Act 2010, but also that public bodies such as UWTSD have an additional responsibility to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Within this document UWTSD also refer to the aforementioned PSED bullet points of eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between persons. It also includes the creation of a learning environment where all students feel safe, valued and supported to achieve their full potential, demonstrating institutional inclusivity.

The plan is structured in a way such that it focusses on the domains:

- Understanding – to be a university that understands our staff and students and reflects this in our values, culture, and activities.
- Belonging – to be a university with an inclusive learning and working environment where everyone feels safe, valued and supported to achieve their full potential.
- Outcomes – to be an inclusive university which promotes equality of opportunity to achieve better equality outcomes.

Additionally, UWTSD aligns its strategy with Welsh legislation such as the Wellbeing of future generations act, demonstrating a holistic approach to inclusivity that integrates legal, social and cultural considerations (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2024).

4. Inclusive Teaching Strategies

Inclusive teaching is fundamental to effective teaching for meeting both legal and institutional expectations. These strategies should align with professional standards and theoretical frameworks as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is important in this context. It emphasises that learners must feel safe and included before engagement in higher level learning can take place. This highlights the importance of creating a supportive classroom environment that help students feel confident and a sense of belonging. This will in turn generate more positive results and strengthen a learner's ability to learn.

Although students are not required to disclose disabilities it is considered a benefit to them if this information is shared with the educator. If an educator is aware of a student ALN, then reasonable adjustments can be made in the day-to-day teaching that will benefit the student. Although adjustments should be made where possible it is sometimes not possible to cater for all learners' needs at the same time, therefore a range of approaches should be taken throughout a lecture to include as many learners as possible.

Additional measures may also be considered such as the use of Assistive Technology and Digital tools to help mitigate learning difficulties such as Dyslexia. These digital tools can help learners with spell checking, grammar and even reading difficulties through narration (Fletcher, 2024). Also understanding common neurodiversity occurrences such as ADHD where learners may find it difficult to concentrate on tasks for a longer period when compared to other students. This means neurodiverse students would require structured support and adaptable teaching methods to keep them engaged (ADHD UK, 2022).

5. Conclusion

Inclusivity in post compulsory education as discussed is governed by a comprehensive framework of legislation, policy and professional standards such as The Equality Act 2010 and The Well being of Future Generations Act establish clear guidance and legal obligations of academic institutions. Institutions like UWTSD will then generate and implement internal policies and plans to demonstrate their commitment and compliance with these policies and regulations for the good of learners.

These policies ensure that learners feel safe and included removing barriers to learning where possible.

Part 2 – Case Studies

This section of the report consists of three case studies all considered in a post 16 setting based at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. I am a lecturer on an Engineering degree which requires students to engage in content and activities through the means of group projects, presentations, practical assessments and coursework. Some of these activities such as presentations and coursework can present the students with difficulties. Taking the above into consideration I will now choose 3 scenarios and demonstrate the appropriate approach I would take to deal with the issues that the students are facing.

Scenario 1: Rhys/Angharad

Typically, within an engineering degree there many group activities and presentation in front of other students and peers to undertake throughout the programme. Angharad's indicated that she would like to transition from Rhys to Angharad. This is of immediate concern to Angharad as her peers would be familiar and know her as Rhys as they would have spent the first year of programme.

Angharad's situation and the concerns she has raised around feeling different and an outsider raises concerns of emotional vulnerability and safeguarding. The disclosure of dropping grades and the social aspects of post 16 education being difficult suggest that immediate intervention is needed.

My initial approach would be to create a safe, confidential and supportive space for Angharad, listening and validating her feelings in a non-judgemental manner. I would immediately respect and use Angharad's chosen name and pronouns as they see fit. Whether they feel safe in using this in public/the classroom or not. This would help reinforce and support Angharad identity and how she chooses to present. This aligns with my professional responsibilities to promote inclusion, dignity and respect within the learning environment.

I would direct Angharad to student support and wellbeing services, and with their consent I would look to submit a cause for concern referral, ensuring that the situation is reviewed and monitored by specialist members of staff.

In the field of engineering, it is common for the classroom to lack diversity which could exaggerate Angharad's feelings of being different. I would reinforce expectations around behaviour and actively challenge any negative or discriminatory language or behaviour. This aligns to the universities commitment to creating an inclusive environment where all students feel safe and valued.

Ongoing support from myself would involve regular, discrete and confidential check-ins to monitor Angharad's wellbeing and academic engagement. I would also lease with

student services where appropriate to ensure I do what I can to support Angharad's decisions and identity.

To summarise my approach would be to take immediate institutional action and safeguarding by altering teaching practices where appropriate to accommodate Angharad. By combining these methods I would hope that Angharad would feel supported and able to make the decision to identify as they feel.

Scenario 2: Iwan

Iwan's financial difficulties present significant barriers to engagement within an engineering degree which can be academically and time demanding of participants. Iwan's need to balance part time working hours with the demands of the course and is falling behind. Taking on additional working hours to support himself through his studies would mean that Iwan's study would be further affected causing him additional worry and stress that could lead to him terminating his studies under the financial pressure.

Initially I would facilitate a conversation with Iwan in private where I could begin to build the wider picture and fully understand Iwan's situation. I would offer general advice around seeking support with student finances such as the student loans company that may be able to support Iwan through his studies. I would also recommend that Iwan contacts student services and explain his hardships and explore the help available through the university. Universities have a responsibility to reduce barriers of participation, particularly for those students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The student wellbeing and support function of student services could help Iwan with his financial difficulties as they offer support such as Bursaries, Cost of Living Support and Budgeting tools to help Iwan manage his finances better. UWTSD also has a UWTSD Student Financial Support Fund, this fund is eligible for students who have already taken out a student loan and is suffering unexpected financial difficulty while studying.

Secondly, I would support and suggest that Iwan apply for extenuating circumstances for any passed or upcoming deadlines that he has or is likely to miss as a result of his difficulties. This could help Iwan by reducing the stress of deadlines and giving him time to focus on his immediate financial situation for a period that he sees fit.

Upon the conversation with Iwan if I believed his situation was significantly impacting his wellbeing or academic engagement which he stated it has been, I would submit a cause for concern referral for Iwan. This would ensure that Iwan's situation is reviewed and suitable mitigation would be provided through the university. It is likely that the effect of the situation could cause stress for Iwan and could potentially benefit from mental health support or counselling if the problem is to continue or worsen. In order to help alleviate some of the stress I would do my best to support Iwan by making

recordings of lectures available where possible and help Iwan focus on immediate tasks of which should be prioritised.

I would arrange regular check-ins with Iwan even if it was just asking the question of “are you okay/how are you managing” to ensure Iwan feels supported in line with professional practices.

From a safeguarding perspective, financial hardship can increase vulnerability. Therefore, I would remain attentive towards Iwan and monitoring signs of increasing stress or becoming disengaged and take mitigation measures where necessary.

Overall, my approach would focus on early intervention, institutional support and flexible teaching strategies to ensure Iwan and continue his studies. In line with professional standards, I have a responsibility to support learners wellbeing and progression while adapting my approach to meet individual needs (Welsh Government, 2023)

Scenario 3: Efa

Efa’s experience of racial discrimination and exclusion is concerning within the classroom, especially in an environment where group work is undertaken and is regularly needed for group projects and assignments. These comments of being unable to understand her and being dismissive is likely to cause Efa to become withdrawn in the learning environment affecter her confidence and engagement in class which is likely to have an impact on her academic grades.

The situation in which Efa presents is a cause for concern from both an equality and a safeguarding perspective. Experiencing continued discrimination is likely to cause Efa to distress and potentially have the impact of withdrawing and disengaging with learning. My immediate response would be to provide Efa with confidential space where she can share her experiences. This is where I would validate her concerns and let her know that this type of behaviour is unacceptable within this institution.

In line with professional responsibilities, I would actively challenge discrimination and promote an inclusive learning environment (Welsh Government, 2023) if I was to witness this further in or outside of the classroom. With this being said, this situation would extend passed the classroom management and would require institutional intervention.

I would direct Efa towards student services and follow guidance on Reporting to the University by making a Disclosure. This will then be shared with the wellbeing team via the cause for concern process. I would also submit a cause for concern referral myself to ensure that the matter is taken seriously so that I am doing my part

and due diligence to support Efa. If this situation was affecting Efa mental wellbeing I would encourage her to seek the appropriate emotional support through the university triage system where further advice and support could be offered.

I would take immediate action to improve my teaching practice to ensure a safe and inclusive environment within the classroom. This would include setting clear expectations around respectful behaviour and inclusivity, addressing inappropriate comments immediately by challenging them and ensuring that group work where needed is structured to be inclusive and ensure Efa is comfortable to work with certain individuals. I would assign specific roles and responsibilities for tasks to help reduce the risk of Efa being excluded in the classroom.

I would also review my teaching materials to ensure that they reflect diversity and inclusion where appropriate, as unfortunately often is the case Engineering disciplines historically lack diversity within the curriculum, and it is important to address this within the curriculum.

Regular check ins with Efa would be essential to monitor her wellbeing and ensure that interventions and progress is being made to take remedial action on the situation. My aim would be to build Efa's confidence and sense of belonging within the programme.

To summarise my actions would be a combination of immediate action, institutional support and process, inclusive teaching practices going forward.

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