



# InclusivePedagogies



## Testimonials on inclusion Reflecting on the classroom experiences

Students from marginalized or minority groups often have a different experience in the classroom, whether virtual or face-to-face. Below are a few excerpts from interviews conducted by the TLSS Inclusive Pedagogies project. We hope these testimonials will provide you with food for thoughts about inclusion, in this second tab about reflecting on one's teaching practice.

### 1. Roles of the teaching team

"I taught my first course ever last year and I was part of the ESG certificate program at UOttawa. So, what I've come to realize is an educator's role or professor's role isn't solely in teaching. I feel like with a lot of professors, that's the way they see it. So, they kind of enter the classroom, teach and leave. And I feel like maybe that's the reason because, you know, they see us as adults capable to self-manage and do as they have to do. But I feel like **an educator's role is beyond the classroom a little bit or not just solely at the podium.**"

- Zaineb Al-Faesly

**Reflective questions:** How do you perceive your role as an educator within the teaching team? How do you interact with students? How do you make them feel welcomed and part of the group?

### 2. Stigmatization and accommodations

"Throughout my school career, I have never felt stigmatized. Teachers and professors never had negative attitudes towards me because of my disability or my Francophone minority status. On the contrary, I was considered a full-fledged student. I was doing exactly the same work as my sighted peers; **I was assessed using the same criteria as them. I was not given any privileges.**" (Our translation.)

- Maryse Glaude-Beaulieu



**Reflective questions:** Can all students say the same thing? It seems not. What can we do individually and collectively to make our educational interventions as equitable as possible and provide an experience equivalent to Maryse's?

**Besides, Maryse Glaude-Beaulieu adds:** "However, I have had negative experiences of inclusion in training. The trainers had not taken my disability into account and had planned activities in which I could not participate because of their visual aspect, among others. It would therefore be important for instructors **to think about how to make their courses accessible to all when preparing their courses.**" (Our translation.)

**And, Willow Robinson mentions:** "Accessibility doesn't hurt Able-bodied people\*. So, if something is accessible to me, it doesn't mean that it's hurting someone who doesn't need it. It's I like to say that if you have one accessibility accommodations, you're helping not just the people who are in direct, obvious need of that accessibility accommodation. Your helping (others) a lot more than you think."

\*Note from the project team: As inclusion doesn't hurt people from the majority groups. Inclusive pedagogies are beneficial to all.

### 3. The need to plan for diversity, inclusion and equity

"As a starting point, teachers should acknowledge that diversity is the norm, not the exception, and prepare for that accordingly. **This means not making assumptions about students' abilities and instead practicing openness and kindness from the outset** (i.e., be an ally!).

Could the assessment be changed to accommodate a greater variety of learners? One strategy is to incorporate opportunities for students to make a choice about the type of assessment they do. For example, the final summative assessment could be either a written report, oral presentation with detailed transcript, or exam.

This has the added benefit of increasing motivation since students feel more in control of their own learning. In other words, students can play to their strengths and therefore have more confidence in their ability to increase their final grade."

#### - Stephanie Rivest

**Reflective questions:** How do you do course design? Which strategies are you currently using? What do you think you could adapt or do differently to diversify your teaching methods (learning activities, assessments, and group facilitation)? Where can you find resources to explore or support to plan that change?

### 4. The need to encourage students to engage

"As a TA, I always encourage the student, for example, (by saying): "Wow, your question is really good, don't be afraid to ask questions, and if you think your question is silly don't think like that, because you are all undergrad student and the DGD classes are for you." ( I also say): "Even you if you think you have simple question, you should ask it here. You cannot ask it in a class of 200 students and the Professor



might not have enough time to answer but aim and the purpose of this DGD and TA classes, is to help you, each individual, to be answered any question (you) have.”

- **Masoomeh Akbari**

**Reflective questions:** Which strategies do you use to make students feel welcomed, a part of the group, and that their questions and learning matter? How do you manage interacting with students within the time and structure in place? What is the one or two things you could try and change to encourage all students to engage with the course and their learning?

## 5. The need for collaboration

“I think that brainstorming with your professor is the most important step because some solutions won't work for certain professors for certain classes. Adaptability isn't just on the professors, it's on us as well. (...) Let's figure out a way to do that...together. I have a list of things that I come into meetings with professors, going this is what we can do. (...) It's a partnership.”

- **Willow Robinson**

**Reflective questions:** What is your take on meeting with students to discuss their goals, their need for support and how they learn best? What could be manageable? In what other ways could you reach out to student and collaborate in setting goals and learning plans?

## 6. The need for support

**“From my point of view, the math department is beyond a department. For International students, it's like their home and the staff and professors there are the family members.**

**As an international student, you're far away from your family.** You need some support from people who are near you, like professors and your friends who are in the department. So, since we have a lot of international students, the environment and atmosphere of the department is like that to help the student, not only in their academic problem, but also in their individual life. So, we are in the graduate office with many other international students, we are in the same situation, we can understand each other well whenever we face any problem, there was a friend there to help us.”

- **Masoomeh Akbari**

**Reflective questions:** In your department or faculty, what type of support is provided to international students and to other students from marginalized or minority groups ? What could be done individually and collectively to create such a support system for students?



## 7. Reflecting on one's teaching practice

"In reflection on my strengths and weaknesses, I know that I care about how my students feel and strive to always be encouraging, positive, and understanding. But, without any training on how to make my teaching practices more diverse, inclusive, and equitable, my own ignorance could create some unexpected situations. These workshops represent a step towards being better prepared for such situations. Although I still have a lot to learn, I am more aware of the problems that currently exist at the University of Ottawa, and likely at other institutions."

- **Stephanie Rivest**

**Reflective questions:** When reflecting on your teaching practice, what do you think you are doing right with regards to inclusion and equity, and what do you think you need to change in the way you interact with students, support their learning, and teach?

