

# Inclusive Classrooms

## Cultivating Peer-to-peer and Instructor-Student Relationships for an Inclusive Classroom in Higher Education

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### Why Inclusion Matters ?

Inclusion ensures that every student's contributions are valued and that learning differences are supported. In higher education classrooms where diversity extends beyond culture, inclusion creates equitable opportunities for participation and success.



### Is inclusion different from diversity ?

Diversity recognizes differences among learners. Inclusion ensures meaningful participation by enabling all students to engage actively in the learning process.



### Why Relationships Matter?

Felten and Lambert (2020) argue that student success in higher education is closely linked to meaningful human connections. A relational approach to teaching supports independence, accountability, and inclusive learning environments.



### What have we done?

We currently offer an e-guide with practical strategies designed for educators, in particular those in institutes of higher learning. It features (a) contextual scenarios (b) recommended pedagogical strategies (c) pointers from experts, and (d) relevant resources.



### Who are we ?

We are a multidisciplinary team from the National University of Singapore community from different departments who support students with diverse learning and access needs, and one graduate student with teaching experience in higher education.



### What is our intent ?

Our work is motivated by the increasing diversity in university classrooms. Through insights from research, professional practice, and teaching experience, we aim to support educators in creating more inclusive and supportive learning environments.

## Models & Frameworks

### Universal Design For Learning (UDL)

UDL is based on scientific insights into how humans learn, and is supported by evidence to benefit learners of all ages and across learning contexts.



Engagement ("Why")

Offer students a choice of applications contexts for the same assignment to spur engagement



Representation ("What")

Provide content in multiple formats (slides, videos, written summaries) for students to access



Action & Expression ("How")

Multiple channels (discussions, chats, shared documents, forums) for participation

### Situation-Behaviour-Impact (SBI)

SBI is a structured feedback approach that focuses on describing observable behaviour in a specific situation and its impact on others or the task (Centre for Creative Leadership, 2025).



Situation

Context and circumstances of the behaviour. "During our Week 4 tutorial, while I was introducing a new concept to the class..."



Behaviour

Observable and measurable feedback. "...you asked several questions before I had finished explaining, and some were not directly to the topic..."



Impact

Consequences or effects of the behaviour. "...this made it harder to maintain lesson flow and limited opportunities for other students to participate."

### Motivational Interviewing (MI)

Motivational Interviewing is a collaborative, person-centred conversational approach that supports behaviour change by exploring ambivalence and strengthening intrinsic motivation (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).



Engage

Empathy & Active Listening  
"It sounds like this course feels frustrating and disconnected from what you care about."



Focus

Focus on an agenda with goals  
"Given that this is a core course, what feels most difficult for you right now?"



Evoke

Draw out motivation for change readiness  
"On the other hand, what might be the downside if you completely disengage?"



Plan

Guide and support  
"What's one small adjustment you'd be willing to try?"

## Contextual Scenarios

as discussed in the e-guide



### Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity highlights the diversity of learning and communication styles. Embracing these differences helps create inclusive classrooms, where structure, empathy, and flexibility empower students to thrive without fear of stigma.

### Anxiety & Stress Management



Managing anxiety and stress at university involves balancing academic demands with wellbeing. Supportive strategies, clear expectations and accessible resources help students build resilience and maintain healthy engagement.



### Group Dynamics

Group dynamics shape collaboration and peer learning. Inclusive practices, clear communication norms, and respect for diverse perspectives create safer environments where students contribute meaningfully and develop teamwork skills.



### Workplace Readiness

Workplace readiness prepares students for professional environments. Developing self-regulation, communication, and adaptability helps students transition confidently and apply academic strengths to real-world challenges.



Scan the QR for a copy of the e-guide  
Email: Kooyi Cheng at [elcleekc@nus.edu.sg](mailto:elcleekc@nus.edu.sg) or Pei Shi at [phaops@nus.edu.sg](mailto:phaops@nus.edu.sg) to join our SIG by 17 April 2026

#### REFERENCES

- Felten P., & Lambert, L. (2020). Relationship-rich education: How human connections drive success in college. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
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