



Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme Case study

As a way of capturing the detail and impact of your Learning & Teaching Enhancement Project, please complete the questions below, which align with the QAA Scotland reporting template. *Please answer all questions in 200 words or fewer.* Case studies may be published on the University's website and elements may be used in reports for QAA Scotland. Project teams may be asked to contribute a Blog or Podcast to help to share project activities and outcomes. Any questions, please contact cad@abdn.ac.uk.

Enhancing the Accessibility of Teaching Materials for Education Students

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Context

This section should provide brief details about the context of the project/activity, highlighting any specific challenges and/or strategies it is intended to address.

Text in this section should not exceed **200 words**.

Discourse around 'accessibility' in relation to Higher Education contexts often centres around digital (Bong and Chen, 2021) and/or physical (Fossey et. al., 2017) accessibility. Whilst these are undoubtedly important, our research aimed to problematise and theorise the concept of accessibility further by engaging with students' perceptions of what accessible teaching materials look like, as student views on accessible teaching materials are under-represented in the literature.

As such, we aimed to evaluate the perceptions of student teachers studying on Initial Teacher Education programmes within the School of Education at the University of Aberdeen, and to co-construct with them and with our student interns some exemplars and guidance to exemplify accessible teaching materials to colleagues within the School, across the wider university and beyond.

This focus on enhancing the accessibility of teaching materials is underpinned by the important drivers of equality, diversity and inclusion, aiming to maximise engagement and participation of all students, including those with specific learning differences or who identify as neurodivergent. This is crucial for student wellbeing, attainment and inclusion. Our focus on co-constructing exemplar materials emphasised the importance of student voice and genuine staff-student collaboration (Cheek, 2011).

Description of activity

In this section, you should provide brief and descriptive details of the project/activity. Please include information on student engagement in the project here.

Text in this section should not exceed **200 words**.

This participatory action research project aimed to gather data from education students related to accessibility of teaching materials currently used within the School, and any enhancements which could be made to these to make them more accessible. A qualitative survey was used to gather data regarding student perceptions of current teaching materials, and responding participants were invited to take part in a follow-up focus group workshop to look and discuss existing materials (e.g. PowerPoint slides, handouts, etc.) and to create new exemplar materials.

The research team, including two student interns, coded and analysed the transcripts from the focus groups, and the artefacts, which included annotated materials and co-constructed templates and exemplars. Using the survey data, focus group data and artefacts, the student interns created a range of outputs including exemplar PowerPoint slide templates, exemplar handouts, and infographics with clear 'top tips' for university tutors about accessible teaching materials. These were shared again with participants for further comment, editing and co-construction.

Evaluation and impact

This section should provide an analysis of evaluation and impact of the project.

To support evaluative activity, institutions are encouraged to use the [resources](#) developed by Professor Stella Jones-Devitt and Dr Liz Austen, particularly the Enhancement Themes Theory of Change model and the Universal Evaluation Framework (UEF).

Text in this section should not exceed **200 words**

The project enabled evaluation of current teaching materials in the School of Education and their accessibility. Key findings intimated that accessibility, to students, is a multifaceted concept encapsulating not only the content of materials (in terms of clarity and relevance) and their layout (in terms of colour, font, headings, and balance of text and images) but also where materials are located, when they are made available, how they are used, and the awareness of student diversity that accompanies them.

Using these key findings, exemplification and guidance for tutors was co-constructed, and further feedback on these was sought from the participants to further evaluate and co-construct the outputs. Participants provided positive feedback on the materials and on the guidance as well as some additional comments which were used to facilitate further adaptations.

The findings, exemplars and guidance have been shared more broadly across the institution via a presentation at the Annual Academic Symposium, and feedback from this has been useful in informing next steps. Ultimately, the project has been highly useful in both conceptualising accessibility in a student-centred manner, and co-constructing guidance and materials which can be disseminated more broadly.

Lessons learned and next steps

In this section, you should reflect on the key learning points drawn from this activity for the institution. You might also consider what learning other universities or the tertiary education sector could take from this activity. If there is any planned follow-on activity, please provide brief details here.

Text in this section should not exceed **200 words**

Key learning points useful for the institution include the more nuanced conceptualisation of accessible teaching materials emerging from the study. While much institutional discourse (rightly) centres around digital accessibility, the participants here focused as much and more on the content of materials, their spatial and temporal availability, and the andragogical uses to which they are put.

A useful next step might be to make the co-constructed PowerPoint templates available on the institutional website as exemplars, and to make the guidance for tutors available more broadly.

Further dissemination is planned in the form of a presentation at the SERA (Scottish Educational Research Association) Conference in November, and in the form of a research paper (in construction). Moreover, follow-up activity is planned which aims to gather tutors' perspectives of the newly co-constructed exemplars and guidance, and which aims to seek insight into possible barriers to implementation.

As there are gaps in current literature in relation to student perspectives on accessible teaching materials, this project could serve as a useful starting point in opening up further discourse around the topic, relevant to the tertiary education sector more broadly.

References

Please provide links to any relevant websites or further information about the activity in this section.

Bong, W. K., & Chen, W. (2021). Increasing faculty's competence in digital accessibility for inclusive education: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(2), 197–213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1937344>

Cheek, J. 2011. 'Strategies of Inquiry' in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th edition). Los Angeles: Sage. 251-268.

Fossey, E., Chaffey, L., Venville, A., Ennals, P., Douglas, J., & Bigby, C. (2017). Navigating the complexity of disability support in tertiary education: perspectives of students and disability service staff. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 21(8), 822–832. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1278798>