

Guideline universal design

Sheet 1: Curriculum and lesson objectives

What?

Inclusive curricula take diversity as a starting point and respond in a correct manner to the involvement and commitment of students with various backgrounds. Among other things, they focus on variation and flexibility so that every student can succeed under the right circumstances. ^{1, 2, 7}

Why and for whom? ^{2, 7, 4}

Inclusive curricula eliminate exclusion mechanisms. This enables the full participation of a diverse student population. Research shows that inclusive curricula promote the study success and the flow of all students and especially of students from disadvantaged groups. ⁴ Flexible options such as modules and individualized programs also fit in with an evolving labor market in which continuing education, retraining, lifelong learning and professionalization are consistently gaining importance.

Tips & Tricks ^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7}

Vision, coherence and transparency

- Dialogue** | Establish a clear institutional vision and policy through dialogue, paying attention to the creation of all-round support concerning the importance of universal curricula design.
- Trajectory** | Focus on a coherent and continuous trajectory, from the start to the end of a course. Work towards an ever-increasing degree of self-management by the student.
- Coordination** | Ensure coordination between intended learning outcomes, learning and teaching activities and evaluation activities. This is also known as constructive alignment.

- **Process** | See curriculum development as an intensive and cyclical process in which the curriculum is constantly being developed, implemented, evaluated and adjusted.
- **Transparency** | Focus on transparency: ensure a clear formulation of curriculum and lesson objectives expressed in concrete and testable expectations, included within the ECTS sheets. Visualize the relationship between curriculum and learning outcomes via a matrix that links the learning outcomes (e.g. per theme) to the curriculum (course units, modules, etc.).
- **Feedback** | Give students the opportunity to provide feedback on the curriculum.

Achievability, flexibility and differentiation

- **Achievability** | Design an achievable curriculum: pay attention to a balanced distribution of course units, deadlines and exams. A coordinating deadline calendar can support this.
- **Alternatives** | Offer alternatives for students who cannot be present during college hours, for example students with jobs.
- **Variation** | Flexibility, choice and variation respond to differences and diversity within the student population and have a positive effect on study results. Think of modules, distance learning, elective courses and variation in work and evaluation forms.
- **Flexibility** | Focus on a curriculum that is flexible but balanced and that receives input from various perspectives / levels. The "curricular spider web" (Van den Akker) offers inspiration (see 'Know more').
- **Differentiation** | If necessary, offer specific support and reasonable adjustments and focus on differentiation.

Co-creation and professionalization

- **Co-creation** | Curriculum (re)design comes about through collaboration and co-creation. In learning communities and (teacher) design teams, staff, experts, teachers, students, programs, institutions and the professional field can work together towards an inclusive curriculum.

- **Professionalization** | Teachers put the curriculum into practice. Just like students, they must therefore be able to count on good support and professionalization: focus on training, supervision by experienced colleagues and collaboration with peers.

Know more?

- Discover a [case study about curriculum co-creation at the University of Edinburgh](#).
- Work on an inclusive and strong curriculum within [Teacher Design Teams](#) (Dutch).
- Read more about [the components of the curricular spider web of Van den Akker](#) here (Dutch).

In practice

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“Within our school, students helped brainstorm about how they wanted to do their bachelor thesis. This mainly concerned the variation in elaboration forms, such as a vlog.”

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“We provide a course on personal development, in which students are given the opportunity to reflect on skills. For example, there is the "Integrated Safety" course and within this course they are given the space to brush up on important skills for them. They can feel for themselves what is needed for their personal growth.”

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“We provide many options within courses. Our BanaBa course is very self-directed. Often there is the opinion: "Choosing is losing." We started with this. When making a choice, they receive a flow chart. This way you can choose very specifically, so that it really fits your profile. That helps to dare to make a choice.”

References

¹ Valcke, M. (2013). *Krachtige leeromgevingen*. Leuven: Acco.

² Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (2018). Advies studentgecentreerde curricula. Geraadpleegd op 7 december 2018 via <https://www.vlor.be/adviezen/studentgecentreerde-curricula>

³ Rowe, Anna & Wood, Leigh & Muchatuta, Michelle. (2010). Inclusive practice in higher education: Feedback that breaks pedagogical barriers.

⁴ Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (2018). Het curriculum in het hoger onderwijs uitgedaagd: slottekst Erasmus+-project curriculumdesign. Geraadpleegd op 7 december 2018 via <https://assets.vlor.be/www.vlor.be/attachment/Het%20curriculum%20in%20het%20hoger%20onderwijs%20uitgedaagd.pdf>

⁵ Universiteit Antwerpen. Weyns, S. (2015-2016). Over het muurtje kijken: leerlijnoverleg in de Faculteit TEW. Geraadpleegd via <https://www.uantwerpen.be/nl/faculteiten/antwerp-school-of-education/deelentiteiten/expertisecentrum-hoger-onderwijs/opleidingen/archief/archief-lunchsessies/lunchsessies-2015-2016/leerlijnoverleg/>

⁶ Hogeschool van Amsterdam (z.d.). *Toetsen en beoordelen. Toetscyclus: ontwerpen*. Geraadpleegd via <https://score.hva.nl/docent/toetscyclus/Paginas/Ontwerpen.aspx>

⁷ Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen, (2003). *Aanbevelingen over de flexibilisering van het hoger onderwijs*. Geraadpleegd op 21 april 2018 via <https://www.serv.be/sites/default/files/documenten/pdfpublicaties/59.pdf>.