



# Inclusive Teaching at Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR)

A Practical Guide for (New) Teachers

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Whether you're a new teacher or an experienced one looking to deepen your existing practice, this guide is meant to be a starting point for reflection, connection, and growth. We invite you to explore this guide and strategies and see your role not just as a teacher of content, but as a co-creator of a more inclusive academic community in the EUR.

**This manual is organized into four sections:**

<b>SECTION 1</b> What to Know Background Knowledge for Inclusive Teaching	<b>SECTION 2</b> What to Do Practical Teaching Tools	<b>SECTION 3</b> Where to Go Resources, Networks & Support	<b>SECTION 4</b> Further Reading Annotated Reading List
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You don't need to read it cover to cover. Feel free to use it as a reference guide. Dip into the sections most relevant to your current teaching context or revisit parts as new questions arise in your journey as an educator.

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# What to Know

*Background Knowledge for Inclusive Teaching at EUR*

## 1.1 The Context of EUR

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In Erasmus University with its diverse body of students and staff, the emphasis on inclusion, diversity, equity and access (IDEA) within [Erasmian values](#) can be seen as a direct response to the challenges and opportunities of our globalized world. By advocating for an open-minded approach that values and integrates diverse perspectives, EUR seeks to prepare its community members to be world citizens who are socially engaged and capable of connecting across differences. The [Education Vision 2023](#) of EUR also upholds the significance of diversity and inclusion as integral to its mission of addressing complex societal challenges through an interdisciplinary, inclusive educational model. The university aims to prepare students as global citizens, equipped with a broad perspective on societal urgencies and the ability to engage with diverse perspectives.

## 1.2 Key Concepts in Education

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### 1.2.1 Diversity and Inclusion

**1. Diversity** – Diversity refers to various visible and invisible identities and differences such as skin color ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, functional limitation/disability, religion and beliefs, socio-economic status, education, and nationality.

**2. Inclusion** – The degree to which an individual perceives that the group provides them with a sense of belonging and authenticity. This is influenced by what an organization does at a systemic level: the structures, policies, and practices that intentionally foster an individual sense of belonging.

#### Q. Why is having a diverse classroom not enough on its own?

**A.** Diversity alone refers only to the presence of different identities. It does not guarantee that all students feel welcome, valued, or are able to fully participate. Without intentional inclusion, diverse voices may be excluded from meaningful engagement, which can reinforce inequity rather than reduce it.

### 1.2.2 Equality and Equity

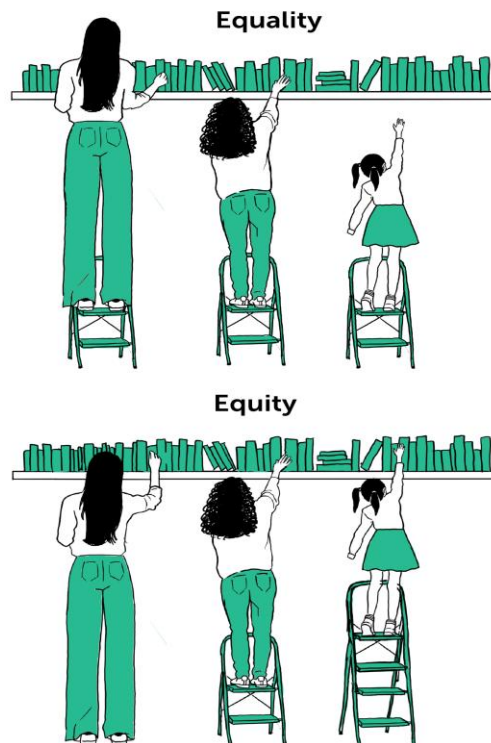
**1. Equality** – Equality means treating all individuals equally, without any form of differentiation. The aim of equality is to ensure that everyone has the same access to opportunities, resources, and rights.

**2. Equity** – Equity focuses on achieving fairness and justice in results, taking into account the unique needs and challenges faced by different individuals or groups. It involves acknowledging these differences and providing the specific tools and opportunities needed to achieve fair outcomes.

## Q. Why might treating everyone the same lead to unequal results?

A. People start from different positions due to systemic and structural inequalities. Treating everyone the same (equality) assumes a level playing field, but in reality, some students may need additional support or flexibility to access the same opportunities and this is what equity provides.

One of the most famous illustrations of the difference between equality and equity is now used in schools, companies, and even UN training materials:



Picture 1: Mo Hofstede – IDEA Center. (2023). *Van woorden naar daden: Een praktische gids voor het realiseren van inclusie, diversiteit, gelijkheid en toegankelijkheid in onderwijs en organisatie*. Erasmus University Rotterdam.

### 1.2.3 Colorblind and Colorbrave

**a. Colorblind** – Colorblindness is the belief or practice of overlooking identity-based differences in an effort to treat everyone 'equally'. Colorblindness aims to promote equality but fails to regard gender, skin color, ethnic, and other similar distinctions. It overlooks the systematic inequities and historical injustices that have contributed to differences among various groups.

**b. Colorbrave** – Colorbravery, on the other hand, promotes an open conversation of skin color and ethnicity. It acknowledges the profound impact of social identities on individuals' experiences and emphasizes the need to confront the inequities and biases that shape those experiences.

The term 'colorbrave' was popularized by [Melody Hobson in a TED Talk](#). She flipped the script on the old idea of being 'colorblind' by encouraging people to talk about skin color and not ignore it. Why? Because being brave enough to see color helps us build fairer and more inclusive spaces.

### Q. Why is it problematic to say "I don't see color"?

**A. Ignoring** identity (colorblindness) dismisses the lived realities, systemic disadvantages, and cultural strengths tied to those identities. Being colorblind means acknowledging and addressing these dynamics rather than pretending they don't exist.

## 1.2.4 Positionality and Intersectionality

**a. Positionality** – Positionality refers to the social and political context that shapes your identity, such as skin color, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and nationality, and how those identities influence your perspective, biases, and interactions with the world.

**b. Intersectionality** – Intersectionality is a framework developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw that examines how various aspects of a person's identity, such as skin color, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and more, interact and overlap, creating unique experiences of privilege or oppression. You can learn more about IDEA Center's vision on different diversity (equality) dimensions [here](#).

### Q. Why should educators reflect on their positionality?

**A.** An educator's own background, identity, their world view and perceptions greatly influence their teaching practice – how they design content, interact with students, and interpret behaviour. Self-awareness reduces bias and builds a more inclusive, responsive teaching practice, especially when considering the intersectional identities of students.

#### ➔ To Do

- Find [Personal Identity and Social Identity wheels](#) and other self-reflection tools on the IDEA Center's [Knowledge Platform for Inclusive Education](#). You can use them as a teacher yourself and can also facilitate an exercise in your classroom with your students based on these tools.

## 1.2.5 Safe, Brave and Accountable Spaces

1. Safe Space	2. Brave Space	3. Accountable Space
<p>A safe space means an environment that's free of prejudice, disapproval, intimidation, or any other type of psychological or physical threat. We believe in the importance of physical and psychological safety and consider this as a precondition to brave and accountable spaces. Especially in difficult conversations, the creation of a safe space is an important first step.</p>	<p>Safe spaces lead to brave spaces. Brave spaces recognize that conversations around diversity and inclusion can bring discomfort, and that personal development often necessitates confronting this discomfort. Brave spaces require active listening and engaging respectfully with diverse perspectives.</p>	<p>Accountable spaces are ones where individuals are not only motivated to express their thoughts freely but also uphold the behavioral norms and to introspect the stereotypes they might hold, acknowledge biases, and work towards personal development.</p>

Elise K Ahen in her [article](#) calls for the creation of accountable spaces. She argues that safe and brave spaces often become empty buzzwords unless tied to relational accountability, critical self-awareness, and continuous cross-cultural learning.

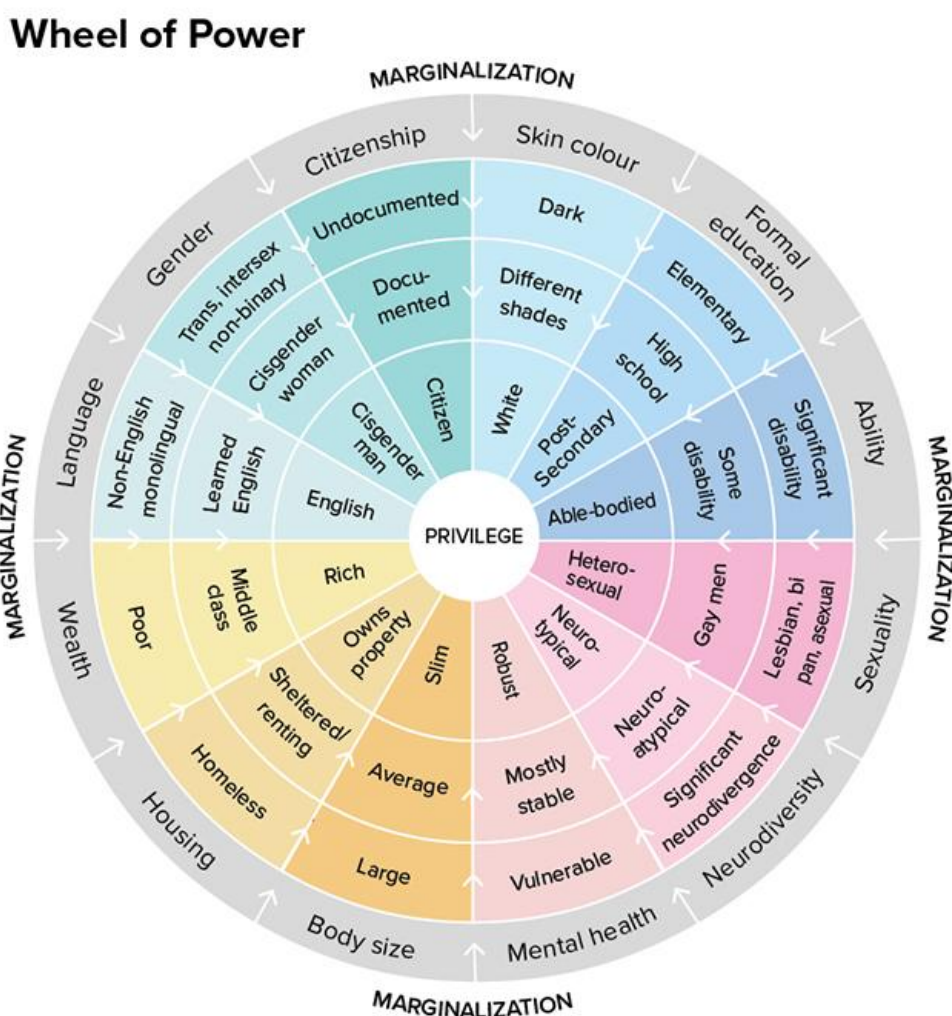
# What to Do

## Practical Teaching Tools

### 2.1 Self-Awareness and Positionality

Understanding your positionality, i.e. your unique social identity and lived experiences, is a critical first step towards inclusive teaching. Every educator brings assumptions, values, and worldviews into the classroom, many of which are shaped by gender, language, ability, skin color, nationality, and other identity markers. These influence how we design courses, relate to students, interpret behaviors, and assess learning.

This wheel of power/privilege helps in understanding positionality and intersectionality. Position yourself in each segment to see if you're closer to the center (power) or away from it (marginalized). It is also good to reflect how this power is contextual as you may be close to the centre in one area and away from it in another highlighting the unique intersection of your identities.



Picture 2 – The Dimensions of Power and Privilege, Alberta Teachers Association. See resource – [The dimensions of power and privilege | Alberta Teachers' Association](#)

### ➔ To Do

- Use the Personal and Social Identity Wheels in combination with The Wheel of Power and Privilege.

## 2.2 Fostering a Sense of Belonging

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### 2.2.1 Onboarding and Community Building

Being a fundamental human need, a sense of belonging is a strong predictor of various social and behavioural outcomes. Every faculty offers students on-boarding programme activities. IDEA Center works with faculties to ensure these activities are inclusive through [Soft Landing initiatives](#). Besides this there are Mentorship Programs offered in [ESHCC](#), [ESE](#), [Students Associations and Organizations](#) and Student Support Services provided by the EUR's Education and Student Affairs department that include [student counsellors](#), [study advisors](#), a dedicated unit that helps [students with a disability](#), and [student psychologists](#). Apart from this, the university's [student well-being platform](#) actively provides workshops, events, courses, and personalized help to the students.

### ➔ To Do

- Share information about the support systems available to the students in the canvas environment of your course.

### 2.2.2 Respectful and Constructive Communication

Educators play a crucial role in modelling how to communicate respectfully and constructively in a diverse setting. By demonstrating inclusive communication practices, educators can prepare students to interact positively with people from various backgrounds and perspectives, both within and beyond the classroom.

Use IDEA Center's [Inclusive Language guide](#) to help foster an inclusive learning environment. We have also prepared guidelines for teachers on [how to talk about political conflicts with students](#). The [Knowledge Platform](#) has tools on different kinds of [connective communication](#) that help either with cultural competence or communicating across difference.

### 2.2.3 Inclusive Curriculum Design

An inclusive curriculum is designed to reflect and value the diversity of students' backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. An inclusive curriculum actively embraces the plurality of knowledge and perspectives within a given discipline, acknowledging that knowledge is shaped by diverse cultural, historical, and social contexts. It encourages critical reflection on systems of power and historical injustices that have shaped the field, and seeks to decenter dominant epistemologies, by positioning them alongside, rather than above, marginalized knowledge systems. A curriculum typically comprises learning objectives, course content, assessment strategies, and learning and teaching methods. Let's explore each component using brief explanations and reflective questions that can help make them more inclusive:

### a. Inclusive Learning Objectives

Inclusive learning objectives are designed to ensure that all students, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or learning styles, have equitable opportunities to succeed in a course. This entails designing clear learning objectives that are measurable and achievable by all students and are relevant to students from diverse backgrounds. Some questions for reflection while designing the learning objectives:

- Does it assume a particular cultural background?
- Does it limit how students can demonstrate learning?
- Does it expect prior knowledge or skills everyone might not have?

**Let's understand this with an example –**

<p><b>✘ Non-Inclusive Learning Objective</b></p> <p>Students will write a critical essay evaluating the influence of Western media on public opinion.</p> <p><b>Issue:</b></p> <p>Centers 'western media' without context or alternatives and may alienate students unfamiliar with western norms.</p>	<p><b>✔ Inclusive Learning Objective</b></p> <p>Students will critically evaluate how media influence public opinion. Students use an example of their own choice to present their analysis.</p>
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### b. Inclusive Content

Research indicates that inclusive content or literature helps students perform better academically. One aspect that helps is representation: when they see their own experiences and backgrounds reflected in the learning materials (e.g., case studies or varied examples of applications). Another aspect that helps is the accessibility of the content. Accessible content refers to materials made available in formats that can be easily used and understood by individuals with cognitive or physical disabilities. Some questions of reflection while deciding on the content of your course:

- Whose perspectives are included and whose are missing?
- Does the course include diverse content that is culturally and socially relevant for all students?
- Is the content accessible in both format and language?

### c. Inclusive Learning and Teaching (L&T) Methods

Inclusive Learning and Teaching (L&T) is the way an educator interacts and engages with the students in the classroom. Inclusive L&T is characterized by its focus on recognizing and valuing diversity within the classroom, including but not limited to cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, physical, and cognitive differences. In summary, inclusive L&T is the tool by which all other components of an inclusive curriculum are practiced in the classroom. Some questions of reflection to help make the L&T methods more inclusive:

- Do my teaching methods accommodate different learning styles and needs?
- Are students actively engaged and encouraged to participate in diverse ways?

#### d. Inclusive Assessment Practices

- Inclusive assessment practices are designed to fairly evaluate the knowledge, skills, and abilities of all students, considering the diversity of learners. Assessment methods are inclusive when they are flexible (provide multiple means to reach learning goals), culturally inclusive (should not advantage students with prior familiarity of the academic norms), mindful of personal circumstances, and consider the needs of students with functional impairment.
- Does the assessment allow students to demonstrate learning in different ways (for example, if feasible, as a presentation or an infographic)?
- Is the assessment criteria transparent and fair for students with varied backgrounds and abilities (for example providing rubrics with clear descriptors, sharing examples of strong work).

#### ➔ To Do

- **The following resources are useful tools that can help make your curriculum more inclusive:**

- If you want to scan your curriculum to learn which areas need more attention, use the [Culturally Sensitive Curricula Educator Self-Reflection Tool](#) to reflect on your curriculum in depth.
- Use the [Literature Reflection Tool and Critical Reading Tool](#) on [IDEA Center's Knowledge Platform](#) to reflect on the diversity of your literature.
- Use EUR's [Digital Accessibility Guide](#) from the library to learn more about digital accessibility in course design.
- We highly recommend you learn more about the [Universal Design Learning \(UDL\)](#) and make use of the [UDL guidelines](#) that help in implementing the UDL principles in your course design.
- Use the [Culturally Responsive Teaching \(CRT\) framework](#) developed by Wlodkowski and Ginsberg to enhance learner motivation.
- Use RSM's [Inclusive Blended Learning Guide](#) meant for educators teaching courses in hybrid settings.

## SECTION 3

# Where to Go

## *Resources, Networks, and Support*

As a new teacher, you are not alone in your efforts to create inclusive learning environments. Erasmus University has resources and professionals dedicated to helping you integrate IDEA into your teaching practice. Whether you're seeking guidance, facing a classroom challenge, or simply looking for resources to deepen your understanding, the following contacts are here to support you.

### 3.1 Faculty Diversity Officers

Every faculty has a FDO that helps in localizing and implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives and also serves as a key liaison between the central IDEA Center and the faculty.

### 3.2 IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access) Center

The IDEA Center is EUR's knowledge and expertise center for inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. It provides advice, resources, and support, and connects people and departments across the university. Its mission is to help create a university where everyone feels at home and has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential. Go through the [overview of IDEA Center's Tools & Resources](#) to get more information on the policies and programmes that aim to support every individual in our community and within the broader of EUR. Besides this, IDEA Center's [Knowledge Platform for Inclusive Education](#) is especially designed to help educators build inclusive learning environments and get help on specific aspects of inclusive education.

### 3.3 Community for Learning and Innovation (CLI)

The CLI supports teachers in developing innovative, effective, and inclusive education. It serves as a central hub for educational development, working closely with faculties to enhance teaching practices. For example, CLI offers [Micro-Labs](#) that are short, practical learning modules designed to help EUR staff build specific teaching skills also under the theme of Diversity and Inclusion. Explore the TeachEUR page of CLI designed specifically to help educators with [Neurodivergence in the classroom](#).

### 3.4 Faculty Learning and Innovation Teams

Every faculty has a learning and innovation team which helps educators not just with educational innovation but also supports making education more inclusive.

### 3.5 FAME (Females in Academia Moving towards Equity)

FAME aims to further the participation, empowerment and achievement of women faculty and women professional services employees of all ranks. FAME also organizes activities such as mentoring programs, panel discussions, and workshops that help early-career academics navigate promotion, research funding, work-life balance, and leadership pathways.

### 3.6 Young@EUR

Young@EUR is a staff network at EUR that brings together young employees (typically under the age of 36) to foster community, connection, and professional growth. It offers opportunities for social networking, knowledge exchange, and collaboration across departments.

### 3.7 QuEUR (LGBTQIA+ Staff Network)

QuEUR is the network for LGBTQIA+ employees and allies. QuEUR regularly organizes networking events, lectures, visibility campaigns (e.g., for Purple Friday, Coming Out Day), and informal meet-ups. New teachers can benefit from being part of a network that advocates for inclusive policies, respectful dialogue, and cultural competence within EUR.

### 3.8 Safe@EUR

EUR is committed to ensuring that all staff, students, visitors, and collaborators feel safe on our campus. No form of undesirable behavior is tolerated at EUR. If you witness such behavior in your classes/courses, the trained case managers at the Safe@EUR central contact point are available to support you and guide you towards the appropriate next steps.

## SECTION 4

# Further Relevant Readings

### *Annotated Reading List*

The following is a curated reading list for deeper exploration of inclusive education concepts.

Arao, B., & Clemens, K. (2013). From safe spaces to brave spaces. In L. M. Landreman (Ed.), *The art of effective facilitation: Reflections from social justice educators* (pp. 135–150). Stylus Publishing.

Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. Jossey-Bass.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), Article 8.

Denktas, S., De Bruin, G., & Van den Ring Bax, J. (2023). *Van woorden naar daden: Een praktische gids voor het realiseren van inclusie, diversiteit, gelijkheid en toegankelijkheid in onderwijs en organisatie*. Erasmus University Rotterdam, IDEA Center.

Ferdman, B. M., & Deane, B. R. (Eds.). (2014). *Diversity at work: The practice of inclusion*. Jossey-Bass.

Page, S. E. (2007). *The difference: How the power of diversity creates better groups, firms, schools, and societies*. Princeton University Press.

Roberson, Q. M. (2006). Disentangling the meanings of diversity and inclusion in organizations. *Group & Organization Management*, 31(2), 212–236.

Sen, A. (1992). *Inequality reexamined*. Harvard University Press.

Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2007). A question of belonging: Race, social fit, and achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(1), 82–96.