

Inclusive-Uni:
*Promoting Inclusive
Campuses for Equity
and Diversity*

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Module 2 – Unit 5 Responding to Diverse Needs

UNIT 5

Responding to Diverse Needs

Balancing flexibility, consistency, communication and support.



UNIT 5

Definition first: fairness is not always sameness

EQUITY

Equity means preserving clear standards while removing unnecessary barriers that prevent people from participating or demonstrating what they know or can do.

(OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2017)

Consistency protects the essential outcome. Flexibility adjusts the route when the route is not essential.

Equality ≠ sameness

Flexibility ≠ lowering standards

Evidence says: Equity asks whether people have fair opportunity to participate, not whether everyone receives identical treatment. [Source: OECD 2023 71](#)

UNIT 5

A practical response pathway

1

Listen

Understand the barrier without assumptions or diagnostic questions.

2

Clarify

What is the essential requirement or outcome?

3

Explore

What flexible or reasonable adjustment is possible?

4

Collaborate

Problem-solve with the person and relevant colleagues.

5

Refer

Use institutional support services when specialist input is needed.

Evidence says: A good response begins with the barrier and the essential outcome—not assumptions about the person. [Source: Australian Government / NCSEHE & ORIMA 2024 ↗](#)

UNIT 5

Communication that supports rather than exposes

Do not start with:

- “What is your diagnosis?”
- “Why can’t you do it like everyone else?”
- “Can you prove you need this?”

Start with:

- “What barrier are you experiencing?”
- “What would support participation?”
- “What outcome do we need to preserve?”

Inclusive communication protects dignity, privacy and trust.

SHORT DEMONSTRATION VIDEO 2 · Inclusive communication:
2–3 min example: responding to a request without exposing or diagnosing the person.

UNIT 5

Decision exercise: equivalent route

A mandatory activity requires spontaneous oral participation in a crowded room. A student explains that this creates a significant barrier.

Decision rule

Design for the essential learning outcome — not automatically for the original format.

Keep criteria clear

Offer equivalent routes where appropriate

Refer when specialist support is needed

HSP 4 · Branching Scenario

Participation Without Unnecessary Barriers

Moment: after the equivalent-route decision exercise · 8–10 min

Evidence says: Equivalent routes can maintain the same learning outcome while removing unnecessary format barriers. [Source: CAST UDL Guidelines; INCLUSIVE-UNI HSP scenario 7](#)

Review & evidence — Responding to diverse needs

EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

Equitable response requires both proactive design and the capacity to make reasonable, context-sensitive adjustments when barriers remain; listening to under-represented groups is part of identifying those barriers.

What the evidence adds

- The 2024 Australian Accord report centres groups who are less likely to participate in conventional consultation or who require adjustments to engage.
- European higher-education data show persistent differences in belonging and risk of drop-out across student backgrounds.
- A useful response pathway therefore begins with the experienced barrier and essential outcome—not assumptions about the person.

FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

Australian Government / NCSEHE & ORIMA (2024): use the report to discuss why consultation methods themselves can exclude.

[Open source / report ↗](#)

FOR SERVICES / HR

EUROSTUDENT 8 (2024): use comparative European evidence on belonging, study conditions, disability, discrimination and counselling services.

[Open source / report ↗](#)