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Introduction

In 2016, colleagues working on the EU funded Erasmus+ INCLUSION project undertook an extensive literature review to review good practice in the area of the ***Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area*** (EHEA, 2009), which aims to work towards:

- equality of opportunities in higher education, in terms of access, participation and successful completion of studies
- suitable studying and living conditions
- guidance and counselling
- effective and timely financial support / advice
- increasing student participation in higher education governance
- providing equal opportunities in mobility (through the provision of financial support, removing barriers, and providing incentives)

Alongside the literature review, we also undertook research with more than 200 students and 100 faculty, from universities in Armenia, Bosnia, the UK, Belgium and Austria, in order to design a suitable way of identifying what we perceived to be good, professional practice around the different aspects of the Social Dimension, as detailed above.

We reflected on the core criteria that universities need to consider when undertaking a review of their own practices and systems. We designed this **INCLUSION Benchmarking Tool** for use in universities who wish to enhance the way in which they organise provision for under-represented groups of students. Such students might include those:

- Who have a learning disability or learning difference
- Who come from an ethnic minority
- Whose first language is not the national language of your country / international students
- Those with young families / caring responsibilities
- Students from socially or economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- Those from the LGBT community (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students)
- Students with chronic medical conditions / mental health issues

This tool will help you to review the way that your university welcomes and provides effective support for the above groups of students, so that you can ensure a high quality learning experience for all those who attend programmes at your own university. Specifically, it will help you to:

- Review your current policies and strategies
- Enable you to identify key staff and reflect on their current roles and responsibilities
- Enhance the way that your curriculum is planned and delivered
- Review the way that you assure quality on your taught programmes / your institutional support mechanisms
- Consider any changes that you might make in the next few months/ the next academic year

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18.9.2017

The 6 Benchmarks

After extensive face to face discussions with our INCLUSION colleagues and institutional contacts, we concluded that the following 6 benchmarks provide a comprehensive way for universities / institutions of higher education to undertake a review of their current practice:

Benchmark 1	Our institutional context
Benchmark 2	Institutional regulations and guidelines
Benchmark 3	Quality assurance and quality enhancement
Benchmark 4	Facilities, buildings and accommodation
Benchmark 5	Learning and teaching
Benchmark 6	Additional support and advice

We suggest that you use this **INCLUSION Benchmarking Tool** as a way of starting conversations with faculty (i.e. academic staff), administrators and/or students at your own institutions, so that you can focus on any changes that you need to introduce in the next few months or the next academic year. You can see a suggested list of stakeholders on p. 11 of the Appendix. We recognise that each institution will have different staffing profiles, so please make your own decisions about who to include in your benchmarking activities as well as which particular benchmarks you would like to focus on. Try to include a representative range of staff and students, from a range of backgrounds and skills sets.

Some changes may be relatively simple to effect; other changes will take much longer and may involve additional funding or staffing.

You may like to repeat the exercise again in 12 months, to review your progress and to identify areas that still need more work.

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Each benchmark statement has a score of 1, 2, 3 or 4, so that you can identify which statements / benchmarks you need to focus on. You can add up your total score at the bottom of each page.

When you have reviewed your initial data, you can start planning for any changes that you need to make over the next few months, or in the next academic year. The proforma in the Appendix (p.12) may be used for this purpose.

Good luck!

Benchmark 1 – Our Institutional Context

Please tick the benchmark statements that most closely describe your current position ✓

- 1.1 Our institution's vision and/or mission statement supports and promotes the Social Dimension (SD), and is actively shared with faculty / staff and students
- 1) No current vision/mission statement
 - 2) We have a vision/mission statement but no recognition of the SD
 - 3) Our vision/mission statement has some recognition of the SD
 - 4) Our vision/mission statement has a clear recognition of the SD, and it is publically available
- 1.2 We have prepared and publicised our strategic goals / strategic plans for next 3-5 years
- 1) No current strategic plans
 - 2) Strategic plans but no recognition of SD
 - 3) Strategic plans have some recognition of SD
 - 4) Strategic plans have a clear recognition of SD, and they are publically available
- 1.3 We collect necessary student data regarding inclusion / diversity issues
- 1) No data collection at all
 - 2) No data collection regarding inclusion / diversity issues
 - 3) Some data collection regarding inclusion / diversity issues
 - 4) We have a comprehensive data collection system regarding inclusion / diversity issues
- 1.4 We have identified leadership and committee responsibilities for social dimension issues
- 1) No leadership responsibilities for inclusion and diversity / SD issues
 - 2) Not well established leadership responsibilities
 - 3) Well defined leadership responsibilities but maturing
 - 4) Well defined leadership responsibilities; each department has a named member of staff for SD issues
- 1.5. Senior staff (or faculty) have clear responsibilities for diversity and inclusion. For example, the university has a *Head of Student Services* or a *Disability Coordinator*.
- 1) No faculty hold responsibility for inclusion and diversity / SD strategies
 - 2) We have not yet fully established faculty responsibilities in this area
 - 3) Some responsibilities have been identified ; some staff posts exist
 - 4) Well defined faculty responsibilities, with regular representation at key committees
- 1.6 We organise regular staff induction / training opportunities regarding SD issues
- 1) Not available
 - 2) Limited
 - 3) Moderate
 - 4) There are substantial opportunities; we provide full support and training on SD issues for all staff
- 1.7 We have good links with local organizations representing groups such as disabled / minority groups
- 1) Not at the moment
 - 2) Limited links
 - 3) Moderate links
 - 4) Substantial links

Benchmark 1: Score = /28

Benchmark 2 - Institutional regulations and guidelines

Please tick the statements that most closely describe your current position ✓

- 2.1. Our admission and transition policies acknowledge the needs of under-represented groups
- 1) No attention for students from under-represented groups
 - 2) Little attention for students from under-represented groups
 - 3) Moderate attention for students from under-represented groups
 - 4) Substantial attention is given to students from under-represented groups
- 2.2 We have a range of pre-admission initiatives / programmes for different groups of students
- 1) Not in place
 - 2) In place, but no attention for students from under-represented groups
 - 3) In place and little attention for students from under-represented groups
 - 4) In place and substantial attention for students from under-represented groups
- 2.3 We have established clear systems for transition planning (school to university or university to employment) such as welcome days, site visits etc
- 1) Not in place
 - 2) In place, but there are no specific systems for students from under-represented groups
 - 3) In place, we have some systems for students from under-represented groups
 - 4) In place, we have well established transition planning available for students from under-represented groups
- 2.4 We have a regular programme of outreach / publicity to inform students what is available at our university (such as online or printed resources; talks to potential students and their families)
- 1) There is no outreach in place
 - 2) There is limited outreach in place
 - 3) There is some outreach with some schools / colleges, but the information is limited
 - 4) There is extensive outreach / publicity with many schools and all necessary information is provided to potential students
- 2.5 Our university's policies, procedures and guidelines provide a framework for how the social dimension (SD) should be implemented by faculty / staff; both at course and programme level.
- 1) We do not yet have any policies /guidelines relating to the implementation of the SD
 - 2) We have a small number of policies /guidelines relating to the implementation of the SD
 - 3) We have some policies that relate to implementation of the SD
 - 4) We have extensive policies that relate to implementation of the SD
- 2.6 Staff are all aware of our institutional policies/ guidelines relating to the implementation of the SD
- 1) Very few staff are aware of our policies / guidelines relating to the implementation of the SD
 - 2) Some staff are aware
 - 3) Most staff are aware
 - 4) All our staff are aware of these policies / guidelines; and understand how to implement them

Benchmark 2: Score = /24

Benchmark 3 – Quality assurance and quality enhancement

Please tick the statements that most closely describe your current position ✓

- 3.1 We have quality indicators / metrics in place for the design and delivery of taught programmes, which take the views / feedback of under-represented groups into account (e.g. through student course evaluations / peer review of faculty / curriculum design recommendations etc)
- 1) We don't take the views of students from under-represented groups into account
 - 2) We take their views into account, but only to a limited extent
 - 3) We take their views into account, but not in all subject areas / all taught programmes
 - 4) We always take their views into account, and use this data to enhance future practice
- 3.2 We have a comprehensive evaluation system in place to support decisions relating to the quality of our social dimension provision (e.g. through our senior committees / departmental committees / students attending senate meetings)
- 1) We do not yet have a robust evaluation system in place
 - 2) We are just starting to set up such a system
 - 3) We have an evaluation system in place, but it is not fully used by all staff / faculty
 - 4) We regularly evaluate our SD provision to assure quality in all areas of the university
- 3.3 We have a set of quality indicators for learning and teaching activities, which take the needs of under-represented groups of students into account
- 1) We don't take students from under-represented groups into account
 - 2) We take students from under-represented groups into account, but only a little bit
 - 3) We take students from under-represented groups into account, but not fully
 - 4) We always take the needs of students from under-represented groups into account, and all faculty / staff are aware of these quality indicators
- 3.4 Quality issues or concerns regarding under-represented groups are reported to all levels of the institution
- 1) There are very few (or no) formal reporting systems at the moment
 - 2) We are just starting to set up reporting systems for quality issues regarding under-represented groups
 - 3) We have some systems in place, but we still need to develop this area
 - 4) We regularly review and report quality issues; and all staff are aware of our policy in this area
- 3.5 Faculty (and all new faculty) receive regular training in quality issues relating to the needs of under-represented groups of students
- 1) We do not have any regular training available
 - 2) We are just starting to set up quality training
 - 3) There is some limited training
 - 4) All faculty / academic staff have regular training; and quality issues are highlighted at departmental / faculty meetings, so that our practice can be enhanced

Benchmark 3: Score = /20

Benchmark 4 – Facilities, buildings and accommodation

Please tick the statements that most closely describe your current position ✓

- 4.1 Most of our classroom and lecture room accommodation is fully accessible to all students, including those with a physical or sensory disability. Staff are made aware in advance of students' specific needs.
- 1) We do not have any fully accessible classrooms
 - 2) A few of our classrooms have been made accessible
 - 3) Some are easily accessible, but we still have some work to do
 - 4) All or most of our classrooms and lecture rooms are fully accessible to all students
- 4.2 There is good accessibility to upper floors / laboratories / outside areas
- 1) Not accessible
 - 2) Some are accessible, but with difficulty
 - 3) Some are easily accessible
 - 4) All areas of our campus / university are easily accessible for all students, staff and visitors
- 4.3 We make good use of technology and suitable software to support learning at our university, especially for under-represented groups such as mature students; international students; students with dyslexia
- 1) We do not actively support the use of technology / suitable software at the moment
 - 2) There are some departments / faculty who are aware of the possibilities of technology enhanced learning
 - 3) Most of our departments / faculty have started to regularly use technology to support teaching
 - 4) All departments / faculty are aware of a range of accessible learning technologies that may be used to enhance the student experience
- 4.4 There is a range of meal options for minority groups / students on special diets
- 1) No catering available
 - 2) No special food options
 - 3) We have a small range of special food options
 - 4) We have a broad range of food options to suit a range of dietary needs (e.g. vegetarian / diabetic / halal / kosher)
- 4.3. We have disabled toilets at various locations around the campus
- 1) Not available
 - 2) Available, but very few toilets
 - 3) Available in some areas
 - 4) We have several fully accessible toilets, plus washing areas for students who need them
- 4.6 We have a medical centre / medical support available for students who require additional help (e.g. students with epilepsy / students with a chronic medical condition)
- 1) No medical support is available
 - 2) Available, but very limited hours
 - 3) We are developing our facilities at the moment
 - 4) We have a medical centre / nurse, and the students make good use of this facility

Benchmark 1: Score = /24

Benchmark 5 - Learning and teaching

Please tick the statements that most closely describe your current position ✓

- 5.1. Our curriculum design and delivery guidelines consider the learning needs of under-represented groups. Each department has a designated faculty member who holds a responsibility in this area.
- 1) Not at the moment / we do not have any specific guidelines for curriculum design
 - 2) Some groups' needs are taken into account (e.g. international or disabled students)
 - 3) The needs of most students are understood by the majority of our faculty
 - 4) The learning needs of all our students are fully understood, and all faculty are aware of the need to make each lesson or teaching resource as inclusive and accessible as possible
- 5.2. Faculty are aware of a range of inclusive pedagogic approaches, and use these effectively when planning their taught sessions / workshops / tutorials (e.g. good use of PowerPoint; provision of clear handouts; ensuring all students have advance notice of reading lists; use of different discussion techniques etc)
- 1) Not aware
 - 2) Limited awareness of different approaches from some faculty
 - 3) Moderate awareness
 - 4) All faculty use a range of different pedagogic approaches to ensure maximum student engagement
- 5.3. Students are regularly consulted about curriculum and assessment issues. (e.g. we have a range of alternative examinations or assessments for students who request them)
- 1) Students are rarely consulted about these issues
 - 2) It depends on individual departments / faculty awareness
 - 3) In place for some under-represented groups
 - 4) In place for all under-represented groups. Students regularly have the opportunity to contribute to curriculum and assessment discussions with faculty
- 5.4. Our faculty have high expectations towards students from under-represented groups
- 1) This has not been discussed yet
 - 2) Faculty have quite low expectations of some groups
 - 3) Faculty have the same expectations for all students
 - 4) Faculty have high expectations for all students, and enable each student to achieve their best
- 5.5. We arrange additional language classes / academic writing advice and support for non-native speakers or those who need additional support (e.g. students with low high school grades; students with dyslexia)
- 1) There is no additional language / writing support
 - 2) There is only very limited provision
 - 3) There is some provision
 - 4) All students have full access to language / academic writing support if required / as requested
- 5.6. Educational trips and visits organised by faculty are affordable / accessible for all students
- 1) We do not usually organise trips / visits
 - 2) Available, but not affordable to most students
 - 3) Available , but still quite expensive for most students
 - 4) Trips / visits are affordable and accessible for all students. Funding or additional support (e.g. for transport) is available if requested

Benchmark 1: Score = /24

Benchmark 6A and 6B - Additional support and advice

Please tick the statements that most closely describe your current position ✓

Benchmark 6A: Types of additional support and advice available to students from under- represented groups?	None (1)	Very little (2)	Moderate / adequate provision (3)	Fully available to all (4)
6.1 General finance advice for students				
6.2 Finance advice available for purchasing specialist equipment or software (e.g. for disability)				
6.3 Technology / software training or workshops for students				
6.4 Advice on bursaries / grants available to under-represented groups (e.g. visually impaired support)				
6.5 Residential / accommodation advice				
6.6 Guidance & counselling / mental health support available				
6.7 Mentoring available if requested, e.g. to support with time planning / assignments; peer to peer support				
6.8 Careers and employability advice; work placement advice				
6.9 Advice and support is available from the Student Union / Guild of Students				
6.10 Support / advice for students is publicised from external organisations or government departments				
Benchmark 6A: Score = /40				

Benchmark 6B: Additional support and advice

- 6.11 We regularly evaluate and review our student support and advice systems
- 1) We do not yet have a robust evaluation system in place
 - 2) We are just starting to set up such a system
 - 3) We have an evaluation system in place, but not all our staff / faculty understand its importance
 - 4) We regularly evaluate our provision to assure quality for students from under-represented groups
- 6.12 There are procedures / guidelines in place that ensure that our evaluation data contributes to continuous improvement of student support and advice systems (e.g. with data from course evaluations; end of programme discussions; tutorials; retention and progression data for under-represented groups) . Data is actively shared with staff / committees.
- 1) We do not yet have procedures in place
 - 2) We are just starting to set up such procedures
 - 3) We have a system in place, but it is not fully used by all staff / faculty
 - 4) We regularly evaluate our provision to assure quality for students from under-represented groups; these evaluations are made available to faculty and key staff
- 6.13 Every student has a named personal tutor / academic advisor that they can contact with queries about their course / their academic progress / any other issues. The tutor signposts the student to additional support / advice if required.
- 1) We do not have a personal tutor system at the moment
 - 2) Some students have tutors, but the system needs developing further
 - 3) We have a personal tutor system, but the needs of students from under-represented groups are not fully addressed
 - 4) Our personal tutor system works well, and we believe that the needs of all groups of students are fully met
- 6.14 There are established procedures in place to ensure there is an alignment between student support needs and students' training requirements (e.g. we offer workshops on topics such as: making the most of assistive technology; finance planning; dissertation or thesis planning)
- 1) We do not yet have any procedures in place for identifying students' training requirements
 - 2) We are just starting to set up such procedures
 - 3) We have some procedures in place, but not all our staff / faculty or students are aware of them
 - 4) We have established procedures to ensure that student needs are identified; and training is provided as required. Students regularly attend workshops, which are evaluated for their effectiveness
- 6.15 Our student union has decision making capacity and consists of most / all the different groups of students (including under-represented groups). The union is represented in key university committees / panels; and receive training to help them fulfil this role
- 1) No decision making capacity / committee membership at the present time
 - 2) Existing, but with little decision making capacity or committee representation
 - 3) Decision making capacity, but no input from students from under-represented groups
 - 4) The union has a decision making capacity; they actively work with students from under-represented groups. Students are regular committee members, and receive training

Benchmark 6B: Score = /20

Appendix 1 – Who are your stakeholders?

Who are your Stakeholders? Who can help you with the benchmarking process?

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Senior committees / senate	Student union / student association	International visiting staff / scholars	Bursar / student funding office
University library	IT department / e-learning team	My own department	Admissions office
Marketing / publicity department	Heads of Department / Heads of Faculty	Students at my university	Exams office / registrar's office
Committees / groups in my department	Local schools and colleges in my city	Quality assurance / staff in the quality office	Curriculum review committee
Exam board / exams office	Estates & campus facilities team	Disability organisations	PhD students or masters students
National organisations / bodies	Chaplains / priests at my university	Student accommodation office	Head of counselling / student support
Catering department / student café	Specialist technology advisors	Foreign languages team	Lifelong learning course tutors
Student support advisors	Ex students / alumni	Student data office / planning department	Other universities in my city / country
Staff development team	Human resources team	My university's research contacts	Academic support advisors
Other universities	Parents/ families of students	Government / Ministry contacts	Doctors / medical / welfare staff
Refugee organisations	Local NGOs / charities	Employment experts	Other?

Appendix 2 – Reviewing your current position (PRINT for group discussions)

University / institution:		Main reviewers:
Date of benchmarking:		
Benchmark	Score?	Action needed? People to contact?
Benchmark 1: Our institutional context (28 maximum points)		
Benchmark 2: Institutional regulations and guidelines (24 maximum points)		
Benchmark 3: Quality assurance and quality enhancement (20 maximum points)		
Benchmark 4 : Facilities, buildings and accommodation (24 maximum points)		

<p>Benchmark 5:</p> <p>Learning and teaching</p> <p>(24 maximum points)</p>		
<p>Benchmark 6A:</p> <p>Additional support and advice</p> <p>(40 maximum points)</p>		
<p>Benchmark 6B:</p> <p>Additional support and advice</p> <p>(20 maximum points)</p>		
<p>Total score (S):</p>	<p>/ out of a possible maximum of 180</p>	
<p>Percentage score:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">%</p>	<p><i>Take your total score, S</i></p> <p><i>Multiply S by 100.</i></p> <p><i>Divide your answer by 180.</i></p> <p><i>This is your percentage score!</i></p>	