Anti-Ableist practice in inclusive education

Reflective Log



The Toy Box Diversity Lab

Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

This reflective log is designed to support your learning throughout the course. Reflection can help you identify changes in your understanding, confidence, and practice relating to disability and inclusive education. You are also encouraged to think about how you might embed your learning in future practice.

How to use this log

You may complete this log in written form, through mind maps, audio notes, or any reflective format that best supports your learning. This reflective log is yours and will not be shared with anyone else. Feel free to adapt to your own learning needs.

There are four parts to this log:

1.0 Pre-course reflection
Explore your starting point, confidence, assumptions and goals.

2.0 Critical reflections on modules
Prompts to encourage reflection on course content and learning.

3.0 Key checkpoint reflections
Pause and reflect during the course (after modules 2 and 4, or more regularly if you wish).

4.0 Post-course reflection
Consolidate your learning and set commitments for your practice.





A note on key terminology

During this course we will be using some terminology that you may or may not be familiar with. Here you will find some brief descriptions of this terminology to prepare for the course.

Disability

Disability is defined by the UK Equality Act (2010) as: ‘a physical or mental health condition or illness that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more’, and ‘whether the condition and/or illness reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities’.

In 2021/22 it was estimated that **16 million people** in the UK were disabled, including **11%** of UK children **(Department for Work and Pensions; DfWP, 2023**).

This definition is based on the historically dominant **Medical Model**.

This states that difficulties come from individual physical, sensory or intellectual impairments. Here the focus is on “what’s wrong” with an individual and how they could be fixed. As such, the individual is *disabled* by their body, by their *impairment*.

Social and Affirmative Models

The **Social Model** of disability arose in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s by disabled activists. This model holds that disability is not caused by an individual’s impairment but by societal barriers such as inaccessible buildings, discriminatory attitudes and systems.

For example, A wheelchair user is not disabled by their impairment, but by the lack of ramps, lifts, or inclusive design that prevents access.

The model shifts the focus from “fixing” the individual to changing society to remove barriers.

Alongside this, **Affirmative Models**, take a human rights approach to disability. These models actively challenge the deficit or tragedy assumptions often held by non-disabled people. They aspire to a society which values disabled people as valued citizens and celebrates difference.

Affirmative models campaign for positive collective identity alongside societal and environmental changes.

Positive Representation of Disability

Positive representation of disability means portraying disabled people accurately, respectfully, and as a valued part of human diversity, avoiding stereotypes of pity or “inspiration.” It ensures disabled people are visible and included as full members of workplaces and communities.

This can be reflected in training, policies, and communications by including disabled professionals and service users in authentic, meaningful ways rather than via tokenistic efforts. Representation should highlight real contributions, not just symbolic presence.

Workplaces should also examine their narratives: are disabled people only linked to barriers or “overcoming” challenges, or shown as leaders, experts, and colleagues? Embedding disability across all roles and departments helps normalise inclusion.

Ultimately, positive representation supports a genuinely inclusive culture, not just a standalone diversity effort.

Anti-Ableism

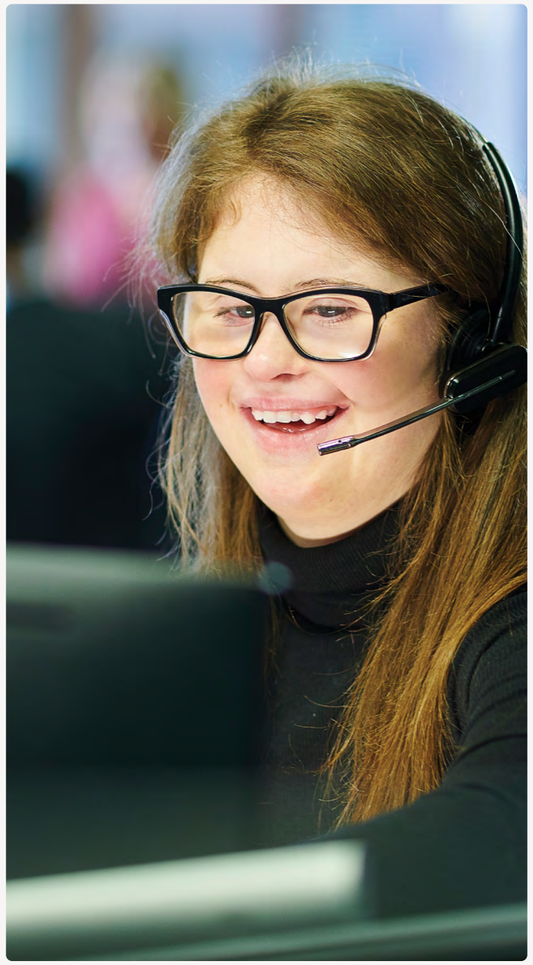
Ableism is when society judges people’s value based on narrow ideas of what is “normal,” “healthy,” or “productive.” These ideas come from histories of racism, sexism, colonialism, and other systems of oppression.

Ableism is evident when people are treated as less worthy because of the way in which their bodies and abilities are judged. Often this is as much through omission as much as active discrimination.

When we commit to being **anti-ableist**, we are committing to actively seeking out, challenging and replacing these values and actions. It is not only about removing barriers but also about affirming disability as a valued and important part of human diversity.

This is not just about increasing accessibility and reducing prejudice. It involves developing a culture of collaboration and co-leadership with disability communities and with disabled colleagues.

This relies on addressing structural inequalities and setting disability next to other equalities issues within the workplace.



Positive representation of disability involves showing disabled people in ways that are accurate, respectful, and empowering.

1. Pre-course reflection: Understanding your starting point

1. What is your current understanding of disability?

Consider any assumptions, experiences, or beliefs you have about working with disabled students.

2. How confident do you feel in supporting disabled students?

Rate yourself on a scale of 1–10 and explain why.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. What areas of disability inclusion are you looking forward to learning more about?

e.g., accessibility, resources, or models of disability?

4. What are your goals for this course?

Think about knowledge, skills, perspectives or approaches you would like to develop.



2. Critical reflection activities

Module 1

Take a moment to look at the Wheel of Privilege and consider where you may position yourself within it. Reflect on how different aspects of your identity may shape your experiences, opportunities, and interactions within social and educational settings.

How do identities, such as race, gender, and socio-economic status, intersect with disability to shape educational experiences and outcomes?

Module 2

How do societal perceptions and attitudes towards disability influence the experiences of disabled individuals within educational settings?

Module 3: “Laundry”

After reading Child Voice and the UNCRC/UNCRPD consider how you might use or adapt the resource for your learners.

Some language relating to disability may feel unfamiliar, unclear, or uncomfortable at first. Use this activity to “air out” and explore new terminology. Write down any words, phrases, or concepts related to disability that you are unsure about. Then research:

- What they mean
- Where they come from
- How they are used
- Whether they are considered inclusive or problematic

Reflect on anything that surprised or challenged you.

Module 4: Disability Representation

Read Jones (2024) and consider the “Call to Action” presented to enhance disability-related social justice in education. Reflect on your understanding of the concepts of mirrors, windows, and sliding doors in relation to disability representation and inclusion.

- How are disabled people represented within your educational setting, curriculum or practice?
- What perspectives and experiences are shared via “mirrors, windows and sliding doors”?

Module 5: Design a class lesson

Visit **qmutoyboxdiversitylab.com** and explore the resources

(Please note you will have to register/login to access the resource pages **qmutoyboxdiversitylab.com/registration-page**)

Take one of the Class Challenge or Get Creative activities from the Scottish Chatty Pack and work through it.

How would you deliver this in your setting? What would work best? How might you adapt it?

Consider different age ranges within your setting and how you might adapt these activities or use them to inspire your own.

3. Key check point reflections

Please answer the following questions after modules 2 and 4. You are also welcome to use these prompts for weekly reflections throughout the course if you wish.

1. **Which ideas or concepts introduced so far have you found the most useful or thought-provoking?**

Module 2:

Module 4:

2. **Have any of your assumptions about disability or inclusion been challenged?** ***Describe any shifts in your attitudes or beliefs.***

Module 2:

Week 4:

3. **Are there any areas where you still feel uncertain or less confident?** ***Consider how you might expand your learning.***

Module 2:

Module 4:

4. **How might you apply what you have learned to your current or future practice?** ***Consider real-life scenarios where you could implement these skills.***

Module 2:

Module 4:

4. Post-course reflection

1. **What is your overall reflection on the course?**
   Summarise how the course has impacted your understanding of disability and inclusion.

2. **How has your confidence in working with disabled learners changed since the start of the course?** Rate your confidence now on a scale of 1–10 and explain any changes.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. **What specific approaches will you implement in your practice to foster a more inclusive education setting?** Consider both short-term and long-term changes you would like to make.

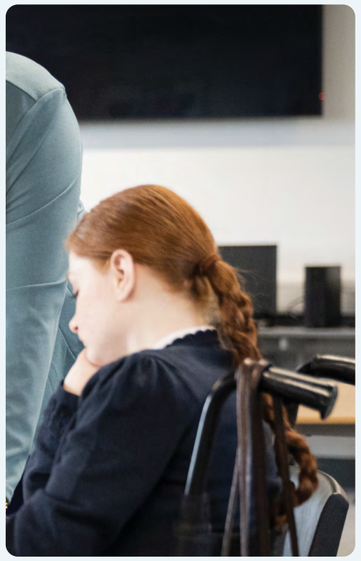
4. **What has changed for you as you have gone through the course? This could be in terms of your thinking, feeling, doing…**

5. **What has been the most significant insight or "lightbulb" moment during this course?**

6. **How will you continue to build your anti-ableist practice as an educator?** Identify any resources, communities, training or reflective practices that may support your ongoing development.

7. **What is one commitment you will make to improve accessibility and inclusion in your practice?**





Thank you

As we share in this course, we want to affirm that your experiences, your perspectives, and your voices are vital in helping us understand what inclusion truly means.

This material is built on the belief that meaningful change happens when educators and students work together, side by side.

We are committed to creating a learning space where:

- Everyone feels safe, respected, and heard
- Your lived experiences inform and shape the work we do

Together, we want to continually explore how to make education and organisations more accessible, equitable, and human, as a journey rather than a destination. Please do enter the dialogue with us, and inform our practice.

Contact
Siân E Jones: SJones@qmu.ac.uk
Clare Uytman: CUytman@qmu.ac.uk



The Toy Box
Diversity Lab



Queen Margaret
University
EDINBURGH