

Your Student Inclusion Consultants

A guide for staff



Introduction

Student Inclusion Consultants are employed University of Reading students who advise us on making our courses and services more accessible and inclusive to our diverse student community.

The aim is to platform students who identify as being members of underrepresented groups (such as minority ethnic students or students with disabilities) and empowering them to shape learning environments, in collaboration with university staff.

Inclusion Consultants are paid and managed by Student Success and Engagement but made available to all colleagues.

This resource details your options for engaging with the scheme and harnessing underrepresented student voice to enhance your practice.

Contents

1	Who are the ICs?	3
2	What do the ICs do?	3
3	Why work with the ICs?	4
4	Ways to engage	5
5	Three ways to become more inclusive today	6
6	FAQs	7
7	Get in touch	8



Who are the ICs?

Every September, 15-20 current students with lived experience of systemic barriers to success are recruited by Student Success and Engagement. We are proud to recruit a diverse cohort from all levels of study which typically includes experience of being a racial minority, commuting student, mature student, having a disability and being the first in their family to go into higher education.

Research has shown that traditional or voluntary student voice schemes do not always capture the views of marginalised groups due to a lack of belonging and capacity. It is important that the unique insights of underrepresented groups are acknowledged to our mutual benefit.

You can watch videos from our current Inclusion Consultants by visiting the [online Awarding Gap Toolkit](#).

What do the ICs do?

Inclusion Consultants:

- Support staff to collaborate with underrepresented students on embedding inclusion and diversity into courses and services.
- Review institutional policies, systems and practices through the lens of inclusivity and lived experience.

The aim of the scheme is to work flexibly to meet the needs of staff and students. Most IC work consists of group consultations which are co-facilitated by colleagues from Student Success and the external colleague(s) who requested them. These range from workshop activities to informal discussion and can be delivered in-person or online. ICs can also be attached to fixed term partnership projects or work remotely to review resources and materials.

Consultation topics have been wide-ranging but always related in some way to accessibility and inclusivity. Previous consultation topics have included *"How can I start a BAME student network in my school?"* and *"How could our field trips be made more accessible?"*

Several ICs have been active members of committees and working groups across the university. Their contributions have been instrumental in shaping the university's policies and strategies.

Why work with the ICs?

1 Guaranteed engagement with a diverse range of students.

Securing diverse student engagement in a school and department context can be challenging particularly with regards to funding and capacity. Inclusion Consultants are paid and managed centrally so that academic and professional service colleagues can secure useful feedback with minimal time and labour required.

2 Cross-disciplinary problem solving leads to innovative solutions.

As the students are recruited from across the university they are able to facilitate the sharing of good practice across a breadth of subject areas.

3 Participating students are trained and supported.

Inclusion Consultants are extensively trained and supported with a large emphasis placed on empowerment and wellbeing. It is a paid, flexible position which allows students to engage around their studies and personal commitments. The presence of Student Success and Engagement facilitators helps to secure a safe and productive environment.

4 The scheme is proven to be effective

92% of participating staff said their objectives for the consultation were 'very well met'. The full impact report is available on the [Access and Participation web pages](#).

“I learned a lot about the issues the students think are important and was impressed by their solutions ... some of the problems were things that I had not anticipated, so it was hugely valuable.” – Participating Staff Member

Ways to engage

Inclusivity reviews

Any colleague who would benefit from having materials or practices reviewed by Inclusion Consultants can request feedback. This may include reviewing course or service materials remotely or reflecting on current practice through discussion.



Problem solving dialogues

Where a topic lends itself well to group discussion, colleagues can set the topic for a focus group moderated by Student Success and Engagement facilitators. These require the participating colleague to set the questions and be present. Minutes are taken and shared privately in a feedback report.



Ad-hoc partnership projects

If a project would benefit from the involvement of an Inclusion Consultant, a fixed number of hours of ad-hoc work can be agreed for one or more consultants to collaborate on the project.

Contact Student Success and Engagement to express interest in a consultation: m.i.b.haine@reading.ac.uk



Three ways to become more inclusive today

These are the priorities identified by our Inclusion Consultant cohort in 2023/24.

1 Diversified assessments

Consultants have told us that the opportunity to express their knowledge in different ways allows them to leverage their strengths.

2 Recorded Classes

International students and students with demands on time (such as commuting and mature students) have heavily praised classroom capture. Consider, for example, an international student with the opportunity to pause and translate portions of their lecture.

3 The power of language

A consistently recurring theme is around 'asking for help' and the difficulty of doing so for first-generation entrants to higher education. Renaming 'office hours' to 'student hours' is an example of a subtle alteration to language that could provide a more encouraging environment. Students tell us that a visible effort to commit the correct pronunciation of names to memory is a powerful marker of respect.

To discuss ways to make your teaching and learning practice more inclusive, please contact Academic Development and Enhancement in CQSD by emailing CQSDTandL@reading.ac.uk



FAQs

Who pays the Inclusion Consultants?

The Inclusion Consultant scheme is an Access funded scheme.

How are the students trained for this work?

The students take part in a six hour training course which covers equality of opportunity in higher education, inclusive practice and public speaking skills.

There aren't any students from my department. Will a consultation still be useful?

We can't guarantee students from every school and department but insights from other areas of the university can help to offer a fresh perspective.

I'm not a student-facing member of staff, can I still meet with the ICs?

We encourage members from all departments to work with the ICs.





Get in touch

If you would like to work with the ICs please contact Mathew Haine m.i.b.haine@reading.ac.uk

Have you worked with the ICs before?

Keep us updated on your project, we love to hear how everything is going and the ICs appreciate it too.

This role helps students to improve their employability skills and we want them to be able to showcase their work once they finish their studies.



THE QUEEN'S
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION
2021