

## **The DIY Toolkit for Alternative and Inclusive Assessment Practices**

Would you like to try your hand at inclusive, alternative assessment procedures, but are not sure where to begin? Then this session may give you a head start!

There has been much rhetoric within higher education about the need to push forward with inclusive teaching and assessment practices. Commentators within this debate have highlighted some of the perceived difficulties with developing an inclusive curriculum within degree courses. Much of this commentary surrounds issues with the fuzzy concepts of 'graduateness'; namely the maintenance of parity within assessment methods and the safeguarding of standards and academic rigour.

Alongside the current academic debate surrounding the issue of inclusive, yet 'fair' and robust assessment methods, each institution now has a legal obligation under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, through their Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan. They must ensure that all students, regardless of impairment have the same opportunity as non-disabled students to demonstrate their knowledge of their subject area on an equitable level.

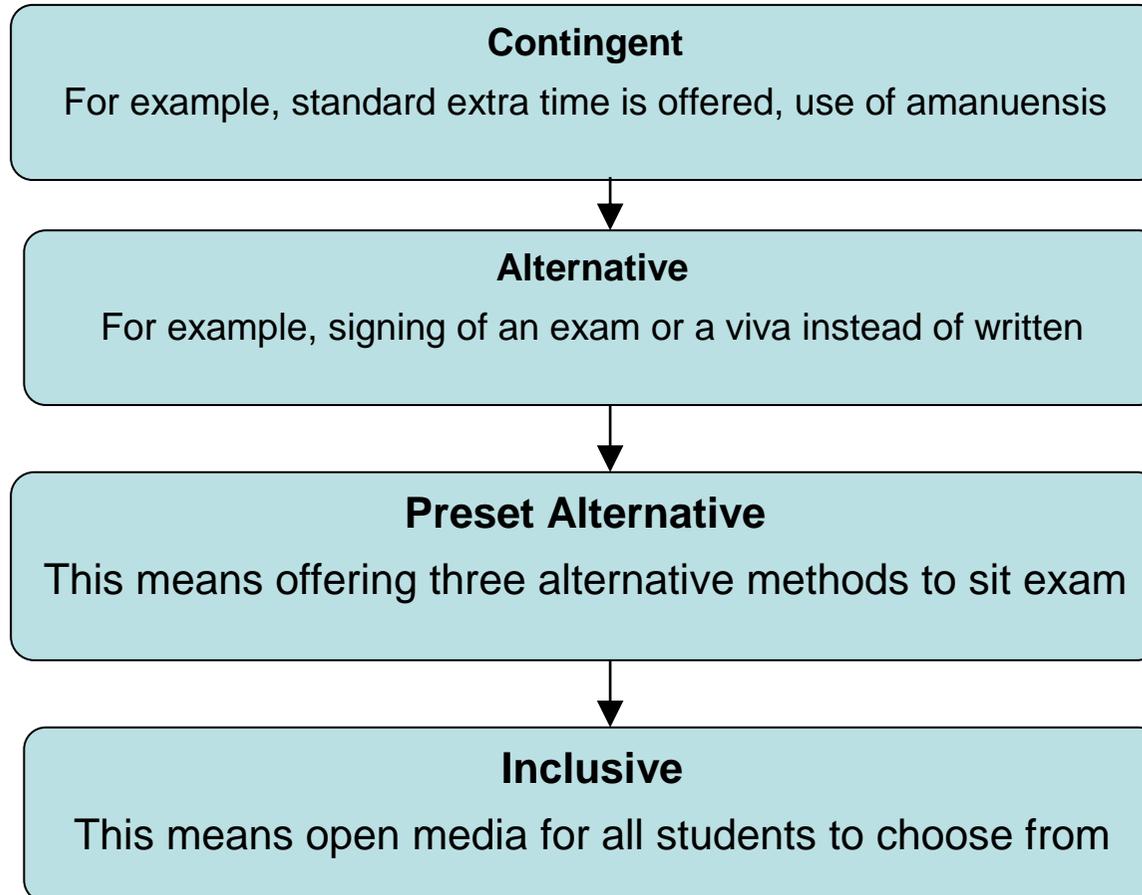
This paper presents the philosophy and thinking behind the development of a toolkit which aims to facilitate academics in universities to devise alternative and inclusive assessment strategies. The foundations for this work originated through a HEFCE Strand II project entitled 'Achieving Accessible Assessment' which involved re-examining the purposes of assessment and what actually needs to be assessed from programme and learning outcomes. This investigation reinforced the position that teaching, learning and assessment were interdependent and suggested that an inclusive pedagogy is a process whereby no one model will fit all. This project identified a need for an overall inclusive pedagogical approach to the curriculum; one that connects the individual learner to their own way of learning, to the programme curriculum and ultimately to the modes and methods of assessment.

Within the DES action plan 2006-2009, at the same institution the challenge has been set to consolidate and further the work of this project to 're-examine assessment processes to improve accessibility and inclusivity for disabled learners'. Real outcomes which will practically and actually make a difference in reducing the gap between disabled and non-disabled learners within assessment processes are expected and this is to be achieved in three ways. The work undertaken on assessment through the disability equality scheme so far has identified a need to minimise the use of 'contingent' assessment processes to accommodate disabled students, for example, 25% extra time, use of an amanuensis. Instead, more utilisation of alternative assessment approaches, i.e. offering three pre-set modes of demonstrating the learning outcomes, for example, written, oral presentation or practical demonstration (subject dependent) should be developed. The longer term aim would be for a percentage of methods of assessments on all courses to be fully inclusive; this means allowing all students the choice of an open medium in which they are able, equally, to demonstrate that they have met all of the intended programme and module learning outcomes.

# Taxonomy of Inclusive Assessment (TIA Model)

By Claire Ward

Currently there are four types of assessment identified which potentially accommodate disabled students/students with specific learning difficulties.

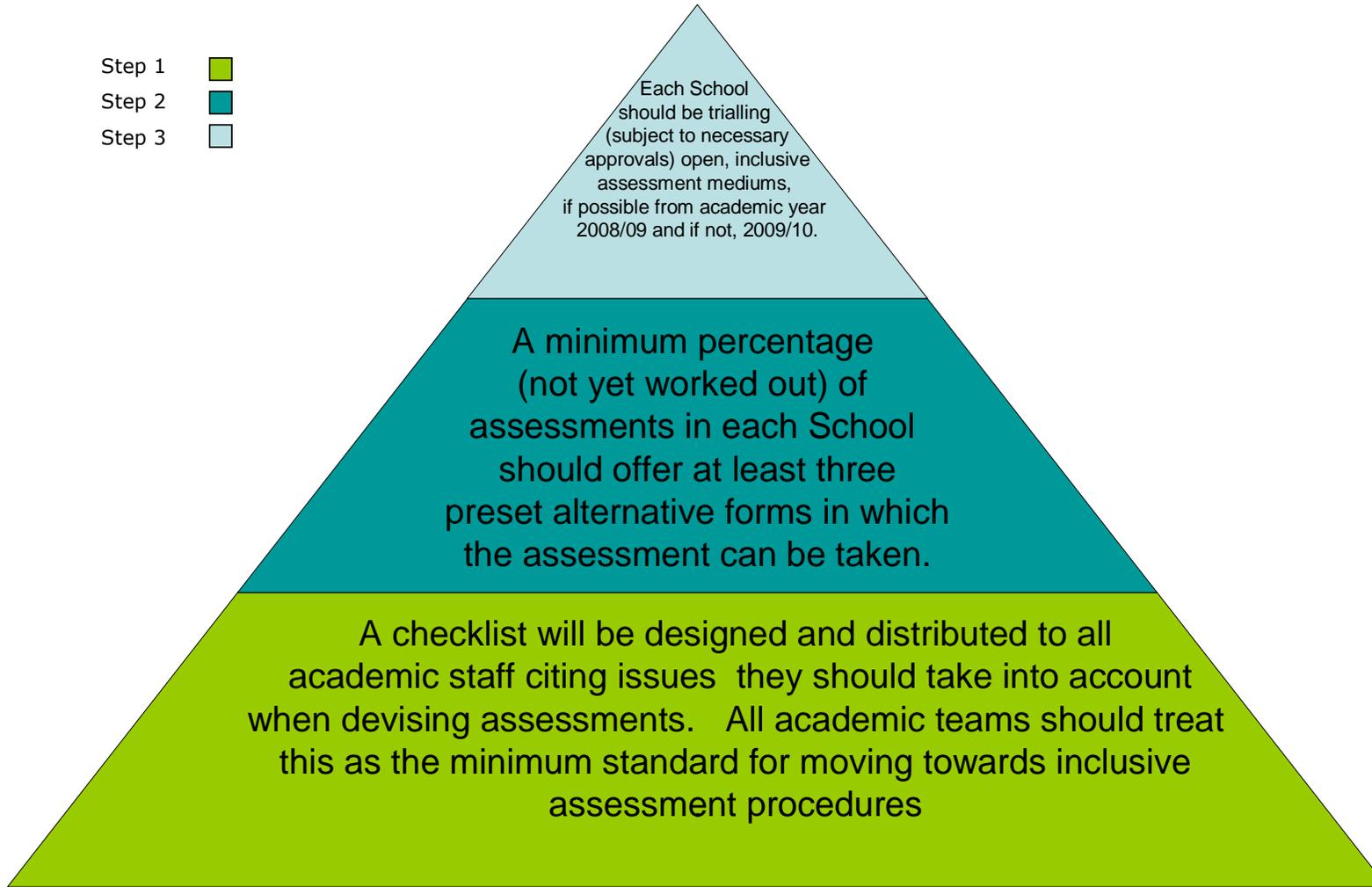


- Step 1 
- Step 2 
- Step 3 

Each School should be trialling (subject to necessary approvals) open, inclusive assessment mediums, if possible from academic year 2008/09 and if not, 2009/10.

A minimum percentage (not yet worked out) of assessments in each School should offer at least three preset alternative forms in which the assessment can be taken.

A checklist will be designed and distributed to all academic staff citing issues they should take into account when devising assessments. All academic teams should treat this as the minimum standard for moving towards inclusive assessment procedures



The basic ideas and resources that will underpin the ongoing work in this area will be contained in a toolkit which is being developed. When complete, it will be available to academics to be used as a basic guide to making assessments more inclusive.

The approach being taken is from a social not a medical model perspective; this means concentrating on removing the barriers within assessment methods which prevent disabled students from being able to appropriately demonstrate their understanding rather than problem solving by asking disabled students to 'fit in', with ad-hoc adjustments, to current assessment procedures.

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