

Focus-group interview and analysis



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UNITED - Inclusion and Diversity of Learners with Diverse Backgrounds (2022-2-DE02-KA210-VET-000092335).

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Conducted by: XU Exponential University of Applied Sciences



Authors: UNITED Consortium

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**This documents is part of Project Action 1:
Develop Diversity-Centered Learning Objectives**

Interviewer:

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The **main purpose** of the interviews will be to become aware of the following aspects:

- Draw an appropriate learning experience;
- Create the learning objectives and the topics
- Balance learning objectives with engaging ways to deliver this training;
- Specify how the learning objectives would be assessed.

The **target groups** for this activity are the following:

Focus group (Questionnaire):

1. Employees at XU Exponential University of Applied Sciences

For the purpose of the focus group interview 10 participants were interviewed - faculties and administrative staff.

Focus Group Interviews Analysis

This document presents the focus group interview analysis. The focus group interview was conducted among faculties and administrative staff from the XU Exponential University of Applied Sciences, Germany. This session was organized as a structured discussion with a group of individuals who had been invited based on specific criteria related to our project: faculties and administrative staff who are willing to improve the inclusiveness of our workplace.

However, 10 employees joined the focus group interview which was hosted at the university campus. All respondents provided their consent for participating in this session and 75% of them agreed for being photographed. The participants were from different social and demographic backgrounds.

For example, 45% of them have a foreign nationality (EU), 5% have non-EU origin.

Moreover, 78% of them have been living in Berlin for more than 2 years.

55% of them are employed as professors and 45% belong to the administrative staff.

Key Findings

1. Understanding of 'Inclusion & Diversity Inclusion'

Inclusion and diversity mean for the respondents that all employees are granted equal opportunities and a high level of unity among different departments is achieved. It refers to the intentional efforts and practices within our university to create an environment that values and embraces individuals from diverse backgrounds and ensures equal opportunities for all students and faculty members. It involves promoting a culture of inclusivity, equity, and respect where everyone feels valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.

2. Avoid the exclusion among employees by further improving the inclusiveness of the workplace.

The interviewees agreed that the university workplace could be further improved by considering the following key aspects:

- **Racial and ethnic diversity:** Recognizing, valuing, and celebrating the diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds represented within the academic and administrative community. This includes promoting equal representation, addressing systemic inequalities, and fostering understanding and appreciation of different cultures. In addition, religious holidays celebrated by employees who affiliate themselves to different religions should be respected.
- **Gender diversity:** Promoting gender equity and creating an inclusive environment that recognizes and supports individuals of all genders. This includes addressing gender biases, ensuring equal opportunities for all genders, and fostering an environment that respects and values diverse gender identities. The work performance of the genders should be equally evaluated.
- **Diverse recruitment and hiring as well as bridging the gender gap among the faculties:** Implement strategies to attract and hire a diverse pool of candidates. This can include revising job descriptions to eliminate biased language, expanding recruitment channels, engaging with diverse professional networks and organizations, and utilizing blind resume screening techniques to minimize unconscious biases.
- **Implicit bias training:** Provide training programs to increase awareness of implicit biases and their impact on decision-making. Offer workshops or online modules to help employees recognize and address their biases, fostering a more inclusive and fair workplace. The 'Inclusion & equality' officer or other staff from the Student Services should be trained how to deal with student complaints regarding exclusion or discrimination.
- **The 'Inclusion & equality' officer should organize regular meetings with staff focused on inclusion and diversity.** A tailored-designed workshop focused on understanding and respective various cultural behaviors should be delivered to all staff members who are communicating with international students.

- Establishment and development of a Digital tool (it might be a part of the upcoming LMS) should be developed which enables staff to share issues regarding their experience related to inclusion and diversity as well as hosting training resources.
- Embracing diverse perspectives, ideas, and intellectual approaches within academic spaces. This involves promoting intellectual freedom, encouraging critical thinking, and creating an environment where individuals with different backgrounds and viewpoints can engage in constructive dialogue and scholarly exchange.
- Community projects - think global, act local.
- Encouraging students to establish clubs based on their interests.

3. Recognizing and celebrating diversity

However, the respondents suggested the following key improvements:

- Consider cultural and linguistic diversity: administrative staff and faculties should be mindful of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students. They must avoid assuming specific cultural knowledge or relying heavily on language proficiency in questions. When using culturally specific examples, explanations or context should be provided.

4. Campus Life

In order to improve the inclusiveness of the campus, the following suggestions were provided by the respondents:

- Organizing sport events. XU Exponential University must regularly organize sport events where inclusiveness and equality will be promoted. During the sport event, the formation of mixed-gender or diverse teams should be

encouraged. By intentionally mixing staff from different backgrounds and abilities, XU Exponential University of Applied Sciences could promote collaboration, teamwork, and respect for diversity.

- Organizing cultural festivals: Organize cultural festivals that highlight the traditions, music, dance, cuisine, and art of various cultures represented within our university community. These events can provide opportunities for students to learn about and appreciate different cultural backgrounds.
- Launching awareness campaigns on campus that focus on raising awareness about different forms of diversity, such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and socio-economic background. These campaigns can include posters, social media campaigns, workshops, or film screenings to educate and engage students.
- Creating an inclusive classroom for students with disabilities. It involves providing a supportive and accessible learning environment that addresses their unique needs. The following strategies to create an inclusive classroom were explained:
 - Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Implement UDL principles to accommodate a wide range of learning styles and abilities. Provide multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression to ensure that students with disabilities can access and participate in the curriculum.
 - Physical accessibility: Ensure that the classroom is physically accessible to students and staff with disabilities. This may involve providing ramps, elevators, wheelchair-accessible desks, adjustable furniture, and other accommodations as needed.
 - Faculties and administrative staff (e.g. when presenting our university) must create inclusive presentation slides: Ensure that presentation slides have clear, legible text with sufficient color contrast.
 - Caption videos and provide transcripts: If professors are frequently using videos as part of their lectures, closed captions or subtitles should be provided.

- Ensure audio clarity: Use a microphone or audio amplification system to ensure that professor voice is clear and audible throughout the lecture especially for those students who are joining online or in a hybrid mode.
- Using an inclusive language - The language used in the workplace should be inclusive. Inclusive language refers to the use of language that is sensitive and respectful to all individuals, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic. It aims to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion by avoiding language that may exclude, marginalize, or offend certain groups of people. According to the interviewees, using inclusive language involves being mindful of the words and phrases that were chosen by peers and the management, as well as the assumptions and stereotypes that can be embedded through the communication.
- Community projects - think global, act local. Community projects have the potential to promote inclusion and diversity by bringing together individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, and identities. The interviewees suggested some ways to ensure that community projects promote inclusion and diversity:
 - Engage diverse community members: Involve individuals from diverse backgrounds and identities in the planning, development, and execution of community projects. Seek input and perspectives from different community groups, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are considered.
 - Collaborate with community organizations: Partner with local community organizations that focus on promoting diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Collaborate with these organizations to ensure that the project aligns with their goals and reaches a wider range of community members.
- Encouraging students to establish clubs based on their interests. It can be a powerful way to promote inclusion and diversity on campus. By providing a platform for students to come together around shared passions, hobbies, or



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identities, these clubs can create spaces where students feel a sense of belonging and connection.



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Focus group (Questionnaire)

Demographics / education

1. Age
2. Formal education
3. Non-formal education
4. Nationality / Cultural Attitudes

Study / Work

5. What is your current occupation?
6. Are you currently collaborating with people with diverse backgrounds (age, nationality, and cultural background (adapting to the new environment), gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, maternity, etc)?
 - *What motivated you to become part of it?*
 - *What do you like about it?*
 - *What challenges do you face on a daily basis?*
 - Have you ever experienced/ witnessed discrimination or bias based on any of the above characteristics?

Needs

7. What does the term "inclusion and diversity" mean to you?
8. Have you experienced any situations where you felt excluded or discriminated against because of your race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or any other aspect of your identity?
9. Have you ever witnessed discrimination or exclusion towards some of your colleagues? If so, how did you respond?

10. In your opinion, what can be done to make staff feel more comfortable speaking up about issues related to inclusion and diversity?

11. How can faculty and staff contribute to creating a more inclusive and diverse culture within the institution?

12. How do you believe the institution can attract and retain a more diverse faculty and staff?

13. What resources or support systems do you think would be helpful for faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds?

14. Are there any diversity and inclusion initiatives that have been implemented in the past that you believe have been successful? If so, why do you think they were successful?

15. Do you feel that your work performance / work is equally appreciated as that of men/women?

16. Have you been on/ back from/ maternity leave and if yes, did you encounter any problems?
 - *What do you need in order to ease your transition to being back to work? What kind of support?*

17. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Photos taken during the interviews
Credit: XU Exponential University of Applied Sciences



Participation List

N	Name / Surname	I give permission to take photographs and / or video of me (tick)
1	Ceilidh Nevling	Yes
2	Anissa Scheduling	No
3	Josefine Kaul	Yes
4	Raad Bin Tareaf	Yes
5	Martin Hillebrand	Yes
6	Filipe De Castro Soeiro	Yes
7	Petyo Budakov	Yes