

9. Baking a cake: Engaging staff in inclusive learning design

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Introduction

I find that discussions about accessibility and inclusive learning design are often best illustrated through the analogy of baking a cake. Frequently, especially regarding digital accessibility, learning experiences are designed only for accessibility to be considered as an afterthought. Incorporating accessibility at a later stage can be either impractical or excessively costly. To put it into perspective, with digital products (such as software and websites) as an example, rectifying an accessibility issue in the final product might incur a cost of up to 30 times the investment required for integrating accessibility from the outset (Gualtieri, 2011). This issue persists in the domain of learning design as well. When accessibility isn't a foundational consideration, rectifying problems at a later stage inevitably becomes more costly than if an inclusive design approach had been embraced from the start (Burgstahler & Doe, 2015).

Vignette 1: A costly oversight

Once I was tasked with rendering a large council paper accessible. Unfortunately, accessibility was not prioritised from the document's inception; it was only addressed at the end. What should have taken minutes at the document's outset – e.g., adjusting styles, headings and creating an accessibility plan – resulted in three more days of work. When seen in context, this scenario not only caused delays in other tasks but also inflated the final document's cost far beyond what would have been required had accessibility been incorporated during the planning stage.

Here's where the cake analogy proves invaluable.

Imagine building or creating your accessible learning experience (e.g., an online learning module, a multimedia resource, an alternative assessment) much like baking a cake. Often, accessibility is treated as an optional embellishment during the design phase. Essentially, the learning experience is built, and afterwards, considerations are made for incorporating certain accessible elements (such as checking colour contrast and looking at alternative text) (Burgstahler & Cory, 2010; Burgstahler & Doe, 2015). Using the cake analogy, accessibility in this example would resemble the decorative sprinkles on the top of the cake – something that's added for decoration right at the end. However, for any learning experience to genuinely achieve accessibility, it must be a fundamental ingredient, just like adding baking powder to the

cake batter. Without baking powder, the cake may rise and taste okay, but the reality remains that only a limited audience would truly enjoy it. This is how I perceive accessibility – as one of the main ingredients, and not an optional extra.

Similarly, even when the intent to integrate accessibility is present from the beginning, its actual inclusion might get delayed (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013). These setbacks often stem from the complexities of incorporating Universal Design for Learning (UDL), for example, and digital accessibility principles into practice, which demand thoughtful considerations and can momentarily stall projects (Burgstahler & Cory, 2010). The challenge intensifies if designers still haven't fully integrated inclusion and accessibility into their personal approach to learning design.

Vignette 2: The rushed decision

In my role as an educational designer, I once collaborated with an academic seeking to revamp the presentation of biological/biochemical cycles for their students. This request came just a week before their content deadline. While accessibility always formed the bedrock of my design principles, in the urgency of the moment, I overlooked discussing it before delving into the design with the academic. We both found the idea of a drag and drop activity appealing, as it promised immediate feedback and an engaging way for students to test their understanding.

However, upon reflection during the design process, I realised that drag and drop activities inherently pose accessibility challenges. Such tasks can be exclusionary for visually impaired students or those reliant on keyboard-only navigation. Despite the hours we'd already invested in conceptualising this activity, I decided to supplement the drag and drop with a detailed textual description of the cycle. Both the academic and I recognised the limitations of the activity and committed to revisiting and refining this approach for the course's next iteration.

In hindsight, I could have:

- Enlightened the academic about the accessibility challenges associated with drag and drop activities.
- Considered alternative engagement tools from the outset.

Thus, when collaborating with academics and other subject matter experts (SMEs) on content and activity design, always ponder:

How can I ensure accessibility and inclusivity are central to this discussion?

Am I unintentionally setting up barriers that might hinder student participation or engagement with this choice of activity?

Baking the cake is only one part of the challenge. Serving the cake is as vital as baking it. Have you ever designed an inclusive learning object that was pedagogically robust and fit for purpose and yet struggled to gain support from fellow learning

designers, academics and SMEs to implement it? Unfortunately, this is a more prevalent challenge than one might assume. Often, we focus heavily on the product's design, neglecting the strategy for implementation and adoption. That is, we plan to bake the cake but don't necessarily think about how, when and to whom we might serve it.

Vignette 3: The power of relationships

In one instance, I was tasked with developing and implementing a template for a learning management system (LMS) course site. This template encompassed all the essential elements for an effective and inclusive LMS course site: consistency and clarity in content organisation, accessibility-conscious and user-friendly interactive elements, engaging activities, etc. While academics recognised the template's benefits, its spontaneous adoption was minimal. Those who did embrace it were primarily academics with whom we had established a rapport. Before rolling out the template, we engaged these academics, guiding them through the process and illustrating how its usage would benefit them and their students. The successful adoption of the templates by these academics was only possible because we identified their needs and were able to 'serve them the cake' in a way that seemed meaningful and relevant to them. Drawing from this experience and numerous others, I've become very mindful of how I promote

the resources I create. These considerations now influence the planning phase of any project I undertake, acknowledging that, much like the cake, how I serve it holds equal importance.

So, when working on inclusive learning design projects, always ask yourself:

- Do I know the needs of the academics and learning designers I am engaging with?
- How can I align their needs to what this learning experience has to offer?
- How can I make this learning experience relevant to academics and fellow learning designers involved in the project to increase buy-in?
- How can I be explicit in demonstrating the value proposition of this new learning object?

This chapter adopts the above-mentioned cake analogy to delve into the planning, creation and implementation stages of an inclusive learning design project. Just as we meticulously plan, bake and serve a cake, we should similarly address each phase of our inclusive learning design projects.

A recipe for success: Planning for inclusive learning design

Baking a cake requires careful planning and consideration of key ingredients. The same is true for the process of designing an inclusive learning experience. In this section, we'll follow

the cake recipe analogy – exploring the essential questions of what, who, how and why – to guide us through the crucial planning stages of inclusive learning design. We'll then delve into the ingredients necessary for creating a rich and authentic learning experience that resonates with all learners.

We will use the example of creating an inclusive and accessible online learning module in this chapter to illustrate the cake analogy. Consider the following scenario:

Scenario

You are a member of the learning design team at a prestigious higher education institution. Your task is to collaborate with one or more subject matter experts (SMEs) to develop an online learning module. This module is designed to seamlessly replace a series of traditional lectures, presenting students with a rich and engaging exploration into dermatology and skin conditions. Below, we will dive into the essential steps you, as a learning designer, need to navigate to effectively plan and design this online module. Alongside each section (what, who, how and why), you'll encounter a checklist, detailed much like a well-curated recipe, acting as a concise guide to assist you in creating an online learning experience that is both impactful and inclusive.

What: Defining the online learning module

In the world of inclusive learning design, the ‘what’ refers to the learning module itself. What are the learning objectives? What content needs to be covered? What are the desired outcomes for learners? Just as a cake has a unique flavour and design, your learning module should have a distinct educational flavour that aligns with your objectives. Outline the key concepts and topics you intend to cover. This stage sets the foundation for everything that follows. Here, you also begin forging meaningful connections with your fellow learning designers, academics and additional SMEs – after all, ‘serving the cake’ truly commences during its preparation.

In this context, as a learning designer your first step is to hold collaborative meetings with your SMEs to delve into the core of your learning module. Your primary goal in this stage is to identify what students should be able to achieve after completing the module. For instance, should they be able to identify the different layers and structures of the skin? Evaluate skin conditions and recognise potential signs of infections and infestations? Integrate these concepts with others learned in other courses during their degree? Be able to apply diagnostic principles and describe the best course of action? Or all of the above? All these learning outcomes need to be documented.

Once the learning outcomes are fleshed out, it is important to understand what content and scaffolding students would need to achieve these goals. During these preliminary discussions with the SMEs, the objective is to grasp the learning goals and content scope, which shapes the trajectory of the module’s development. Additionally, building rapport with your collaborators is vital from the outset. Understanding their perspectives and needs ensures a cohesive approach. Such relationships enhance collaboration throughout the

project, allowing you to tailor the module in a manner that resonates with their expectations and expertise.

Checklist

Schedule initial collaborative meetings with SMEs.

Clearly define and document the module's learning outcomes.

Understand the core content to be covered in the module.

Understand the needs and scaffolding required for learners to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Foster initial relationships with collaborators for a cohesive design approach.

Who: Identifying stakeholders

Like determining who will enjoy your cake, in the context of learning design, identifying the 'who' is about recognising the stakeholders you will have to engage with to promote your online learning module. Who are the academics and professional staff who need to buy into this module? Consider their diverse needs, preferences and potential challenges. Just as you would customise a cake to suit the tastes of your guests,

tailor your learning module to cater to the needs and expectations of your fellow learning designers and collaborators.

In this phase, your foremost responsibility is to delineate a thorough list of stakeholders invested in the online module's success. Consider the following:

1. **Academics and SMEs:** Their insights are crucial, given their subject expertise and understanding of student learning in this area. For instance, when developing this module, collaboration with a lead academic and several other dermatologists – each with distinct specialisations and teaching roles – might be essential.
2. **Students:** As the main consumers of the content, securing their initial feedback and understanding their learning processes is indispensable. Engaging them as co-designers and/or student casuals in the module creation can be advantageous.
3. **Technical support teams:** These individuals ensure back-end functionality and module accessibility. Recognising their strengths and limitations is key. Collaborations could involve graphic designers, learning technologists and specialists in LMS and accessibility. Engaging them from the onset is crucial to facilitate the module's seamless creation and deployment.
4. **Administration (Leadership, Councils, Committees, Working Groups, etc.):** Their broader institutional objectives can offer alignment insights. Is there a committee overseeing curriculum alterations, like the introduction of new learning modules? Understanding your engagement responsibilities and potential endorsement requirements for the module with such committees is crucial.
5. **External partners:** When the module is crafted in partnership or under the sponsorship of industry figures,

understanding their expectations becomes imperative. For instance, if dermatologists seem eager to leverage the module's content in student placements, they might be another stakeholder group you'd have to engage with.

This comprehensive list becomes invaluable during the module's implementation, providing clarity on stakeholder preferences, aversions and motivations, thus assisting with strategy not only for baking the cake but also serving it later. This knowledge equips you to tailor the module effectively. Just as you'd avoid making a peanut cake for an allergic friend or would cater for different dietary requirements when baking a cake for a birthday party, you can now adapt the module to address each stakeholder's unique requirements.

With your list in hand, initiate stakeholder engagement activities, ranging from focus groups and individual meetings to surveys. As the module evolves, keep stakeholders updated, integrating their feedback. This cyclical feedback mechanism not only refines the module but also nurtures a shared sense of ownership among all participants.

Checklist

- () Recognise and list all potential stakeholders.
- () Engage with academics and other SMEs for content expertise.
- () Gather preliminary feedback from students or work with them as partners.

- () Understand technical requirements and constraints with support teams.
- () Align with administrative and institutional goals.
- () Factor in expectations of external partners, if any.
- () Keep stakeholders updated and involved throughout the process.

How: Designing with universality in mind

The ‘how’ of the cake analogy translates to the design process in inclusive learning. How will you make your cake? In our context, how will you design your online learning module? This is where the principles of UDL come into play. UDL focuses on creating materials and experiences that are accessible and effective for a wide range of learners by providing multiple means of representation, engagement, and action and expression (CAST, 2018). Just as you carefully select ingredients for your cake, choose the suitable methods, media and interactive elements that accommodate diverse learning preferences and abilities (CAST, 2018).

With this in mind, here are some key considerations:

1. **Research and empathy:** Begin by comprehending the diverse needs of your learners. This could entail surveys tailored for the targeted student cohort, direct interactions with students, or examining recent educational resources developed for this group to identify challenges they might

encounter. For content of a sensitive or explicit nature, especially medical visuals, it's prudent to provide content warnings, ensuring students are forewarned and can plan and prepare before engaging with the topic.

2. **Diverse representation:** It is essential to diversify content delivery. Introduce a blend of text, video, audio and interactive simulations, catering to varied learner preferences or needs (CAST, 2018; Mayer, 2002). Ground your strategies in multimedia and cognitive load theories. While it's advantageous to offer diverse content forms, it's not necessary to replicate the same information across all mediums (Mayer, 2002). For example, when illustrating skin infections, a captioned video case study might suffice, allowing students multiple engagement points: viewing, reading captions, listening or perusing the transcript. However, avoid redundant content like duplicating the case study in text, video and infographic forms. Aim for diverse representation without overwhelming students with repetitive content (CAST, 2018; Mayer, 2002).
3. **Engagement and expression strategies:** Incorporate a diverse array of relevant activities and assessments (CAST, 2018). Though tools like discussion boards, quizzes, peer reviews and project assignments are available, utilise only those that align pedagogically with your learning outcomes and facilitate varied student expressions (CAST, 2018).
4. **Accessibility as a priority:** Commit to making all materials universally accessible (CAST, 2018; W3C, 2022). This commitment could entail, but is not limited to, captioned videos, textual alternatives for images, and ensuring interactive elements are accessible via keyboard commands or screen readers and other assistive technology (W3C, 2022).
5. **Feedback mechanisms:** Champion a culture of ongoing feedback from students, discerning the effective

components and areas of improvement. Such insights are invaluable for module enhancement.

By meticulously embracing these strategies, you guarantee your online learning module is as universally appealing as a masterfully crafted cake, satisfying the diverse tastes and needs of every learner.

Checklist

- () Anchor the design in UDL principles.
- () Conduct initial research to understand diverse learner needs.
- () Ensure diverse content representation (text, video, audio, etc.).
- () Avoid redundant content across different mediums.
- () Incorporate varied, pedagogically relevant activities and assessments.
- () Prioritise accessibility in all materials.
- () Foster a continuous feedback culture.

Why: Clarifying the purpose and benefits

In the cake analogy, the 'why' signifies the occasion – a

birthday party, for instance. Similarly, the ‘why’ in learning design encompasses the purpose and desired outcomes. Why are you creating this module? What benefits will it bring to both the students and the institution? Clearly articulate the reasons behind your module’s existence. This will not only guide your design decisions, it will also help communicate the value of your module (‘serve the cake’) to academics and fellow professional staff.

In this context, as a learning designer focusing on establishing the purpose and benefits of your module:

1. **Identify the gap:** Examine the current curriculum and ascertain any deficiencies or omissions. By recognising these gaps, you underscore the significance of the new module.
2. **Articulate the value:** Pinpoint what distinguishes this module from a traditional series of lectures. Whether it’s presenting novel insights, offering adaptability and accessibility, or making more space for other equally important content to be covered, emphasise its distinctiveness.
3. **Implement iterative feedback:** Institute a system for ongoing feedback, enabling an understanding of the module’s strengths and areas for improvement, which aids in continuous refinement.
4. **Engage in ongoing evaluation:** Post-launch, periodically assess the module’s relevance and efficacy. Make requisite modifications to align with evolving goals or learner needs.

By diligently shaping and revisiting the module’s underlying ‘why’, you solidify its value-driven foundation, benefitting both learners and the institution. This deliberate crafting, akin to baking a cake for a special occasion, ensures the module’s enduring resonance and appreciation.

Checklist

- () Engage stakeholders to understand the module's significance.
- () Identify and document gaps in the current curriculum.
- () Articulate the unique value proposition of the module.
- () Implement iterative feedback mechanisms.
- () Ensure alignment with broader institutional objectives.
- () Regularly communicate the module's purpose to stakeholders.
- () Periodically review and refine the module's purpose post-launch.

Selecting the ingredients: Accessibility, pedagogy and technology

Just as a cake requires the right ingredients to taste delightful, an inclusive learning module needs specific components to be effective. Accessibility must be woven into your design's fabric, ensuring all learners can access and engage with the content

(Burgstahler & Cory, 2010; Burgstahler & Doe, 2015; Rose & Meyer, 2002; W3C, 2022). A solid pedagogical framework provides the structure for meaningful learning experiences. Technology serves as the mixing bowl, enabling you to blend various elements seamlessly.

Consider your pedagogical approach – how will you engage learners? What interactive elements will enhance the learning experience? Integrate technology that supports your objectives, ensuring it is user-friendly and aligns with accessibility standards (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013; Rose & Meyer, 2002; W3C, 2022). Just as you fine-tune the balance of flavours in a cake by adjusting the ingredients, designers should find the equilibrium between these elements to create a harmonious learning environment.

Revisiting and drawing upon pedagogical frameworks can inform your practice and help you use technology in a meaningful, critical and accessible way within your learning module (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013). Some examples of these frameworks include TPACK, which helps you integrate technology, pedagogy and content knowledge (Koehler & Mishra, 2008). The SAMR model categorises technology use into stages, from substitution to redefinition, allowing you to understand the role technology will play in your module (Puentedura, 2010). PICRAT is a model that draws attention to the socio-cultural dimensions of technology in education (Kimmons, et al., 2020) and Mayer’s multimedia theory delves into cognitive principles in multimedia design (Mayer, 2002). It is important to note that these are just a few examples of the many frameworks available to assist you depending on your pedagogical goals.

For instance, you can leverage Mayer’s principles of multimedia learning when considering the integration of various elements into your learning module (Mayer, 2002). Just as adding too

much flour can make your cake dense and dry, overwhelming your module with excessive text, videos or activities can lead to cognitive overload for learners (Mayer, 2002). By carefully selecting and balancing your ingredients, much like ensuring the right proportions of flour, milk and baking powder in a cake, you can create a learning experience that is engaging, effective and conducive to meaningful learning (Mayer, 2002).

As you progress through these planning stages, remember that just as a cake's success relies on thoughtful preparation, an inclusive learning module's success hinges on careful planning and consideration. In the following sections, we'll transition from planning to the creation stage, where we'll put these concepts into action, much like mixing the batter and putting the cake into the oven. By the end of this chapter, you'll have a well-structured roadmap for engaging staff in designing inclusive learning experiences that cater to the needs of all learners.

Baking the inclusive learning module: From recipe to prototype

With our planning complete, it's time to transition from the theoretical to the practical – from the recipe in hand to the actual act of baking. Inclusive learning design, like baking, is a dynamic process that involves creativity, precision and attention to detail. In this section, we'll delve into the 'baking' stage of our cake analogy, where we'll transform the ingredients of planning into a tangible prototype of your online learning module, all while utilising UDL as our guiding principle.

Blending the ingredients: UDL as your base

Universal Design for Learning serves as the foundational recipe for your inclusive learning module. Just as a cake requires a well-balanced blend of ingredients, your learning module demands a thoughtful combination of various UDL principles – multiple means of representation, engagement, and action and expression (CAST, 2018). Craft your content in ways that cater to different learning preferences and abilities. Incorporate various formats of content presentation – text, images, audio and video – ensuring that learners have multiple avenues to access and comprehend the material (CAST, 2018; Dalton & Smith, 2019).

When incorporating UDL principles into your learning module, it's important to avoid the pitfall of imbalance. Just like adding too much sugar can make a cake overly sweet or too many eggs can make it dense, neglecting or overloading your module with certain elements can hinder the learning experience. UDL encourages a balanced approach, similar to achieving the right blend of ingredients in a cake recipe. Provide multiple options for engagement, representation, and action and expression, but do so thoughtfully. Ensure that each element serves a purpose, aligns with your learning objectives and doesn't overshadow the others (CAST, 2018; Dalton & Smith, 2019; Rose & Meyer, 2002). In doing so, you'll create a learning experience that respects the diverse needs and preferences of your learners while maintaining a balanced and effective module design, much like achieving the perfect cake texture through a harmonious blend of ingredients.

Checklist

- () Use Universal Design for Learning as your foundational design principle.
- () Integrate UDL guidelines to cater to different learning preferences.
- () Employ diverse content formats like text, images, audio and video.
- () Aim for a balanced approach, ensuring each element serves a purpose and aligns with your pedagogical goals.

Taste as you cook: The importance of prototyping

Imagine you're using a cake recipe for the first time. Before you present the final product, you likely create a prototype to ensure that the flavours and textures are just right. Similarly, in learning design, prototyping is a crucial step. As you create your online learning module, build a prototype to test its functionality and effectiveness (Brown & Green, 2016). This prototype acts as a working draft that allows you to identify potential challenges and areas for improvement (Brown & Green, 2016).

Just as you could bake a small version of your final birthday cake, or test the batter mixture quickly by baking a mug cake

in your microwave or using an air fryer, you can design the outline and skeleton of your learning module with your main ideas and activities (Brown & Green, 2016). By doing so, you can get some early feedback from students and stakeholders before investing in the creation of the entire module (Brown & Green, 2016). This prototype serves as a valuable testing ground, allowing you to make necessary adjustments, refine your approach, and ensure that the final product meets the desired learning objectives (Brown & Green, 2016). Much like tasting a small sample of your cake batter to make adjustments before baking the full cake, prototyping in learning design allows you to fine-tune your module for a more successful and engaging learning experience.

Checklist

- () Think about simpler ways of representing your ideas for the module (e.g., storyboarding, designing one section of the module, outlining a skeleton for the module).
- () Discuss these ideas with your stakeholders.
- () Engage in this process as many times as needed before progressing to building the entire module.

Adjust to taste: Engaging with feedback

Just as you might gather feedback on your cake prototype from taste testers, your learning module prototype needs input

from learners, academics and professional staff. Seek feedback on the design and overall user experience. This iterative process ensures that your learning module becomes a finely tuned creation that resonates with its audience and your learners and reflects the needs of your stakeholders. Incorporate suggestions and address concerns to refine your prototype further (Fisher & Wright, 2010).

Much like refining a cake recipe based on feedback from a panel of tasters, incorporating suggestions and addressing concerns raised by students and stakeholders enables you to refine your prototype further. By actively involving a range of individuals in the testing and feedback process, you increase the likelihood of creating a highly effective and user-friendly online learning experience that meets the needs and expectations of all stakeholders (Fisher & Wright, 2010).

Checklist

- () Gather feedback on the design and user experience of the learning module prototype from students, academics and staff.
- () Be prepared to engage in consultation more broadly if needed.
- () Use an iterative feedback process to refine the prototype based on suggestions and concerns.
- () Make adjustments that align with the needs and expectations of students and stakeholders to create a better online learning experience.

Baking for all tastes: Fine-tuning for accessibility

You adjust to achieve the desired taste and texture as you bake your cake. Similarly, when creating your learning module prototype, pay special attention to accessibility. Ensure that all learners can interact with the content seamlessly, regardless of their abilities (Dalton & Smith, 2019). Incorporate features such as alternative text for images, closed captions for videos, and keyboard-friendly navigational elements. Just as a well-baked cake delights all taste buds, an accessible learning module accommodates all learning needs (Burgstahler & Doe, 2015; CAST, 2018).

Incorporating well-established guidelines, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 and the Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines (ATAG), can significantly improve the accessibility of your module (W3C, 2022). By revisiting the key accessibility principles and considering these guidelines during the development phase, you can ensure that your module is inclusive and user-friendly for a wider audience (W3C, 2022). It's also essential to be prepared to differentiate and adjust aspects of your module as specific accessibility needs and issues arise during user testing (Burgstahler & Doe, 2015). Like adjusting a recipe to accommodate different dietary preferences and requirements, such as using lactose-free or soy milk when baking a cake for a lactose-intolerant friend, addressing unique accessibility challenges ensures that your online learning experience considers the diverse requirements of your learners (Burgstahler & Doe, 2015). By actively engaging with accessibility principles and guidelines and being adaptable in your approach, you can create a learning module that is accessible and user-friendly for all (W3C, 2022).

Checklist

- () Embed accessible practices throughout your module (e.g., alternative text, closed captions, transcripts, etc.)
- () Review well-established guidelines and digital accessibility principles to ensure optimal accessibility.
- () Be ready to adjust the module according to new or specific needs and access requirements.

Vignette 4: The free fall

A few years ago, I was given the responsibility of finalising a project that aimed to replace traditional lectures with a set of online learning modules. The project was initially assigned to a fellow learning designer who was leaving our team. I received the handover notes and access to the learning modules and was asked to add the finishing touches and

elements to each of them. Due to the project's tight deadlines, I had to work quickly and relied heavily on the handover notes and existing resources to complete the modules. Once I finished, I reached out to our SME to gather some final feedback, and that's when I learned that the modules did not achieve the intended outcomes and lacked sufficient content. As a result, a complete redesign was necessary, which inevitably led to a delayed launch date.

This experience taught me the importance of feedback and consultation throughout the design process, from start to finish. Active engagement with stakeholders and careful consideration of their feedback is crucial for ensuring that the module not only meets its intended purpose but also satisfies the needs and expectations of SMEs.

So, when engaging in inclusive learning design process make sure you ask yourself:

- How can I create a prototype of my learning design object that showcases my ideas to all stakeholders?
- Have I considered the goals of the project and the expectations and needs of students and stakeholders?
- How do I best engage with students and stakeholders for feedback?
- Have I consulted with students and stakeholders alike during all steps of the project?

- Have I addressed their feedback, suggestions and concerns?

Serving the inclusive learning experiences: Strategies for engaging staff

After several rounds of prototyping, testing and refining, your cake is ready for its grand presentation. Similarly, your inclusive learning module, now well-constructed and refined, is ready to be shared with your target audience.

In this section, we'll explore the importance of effectively presenting your inclusive learning module to academic and professional staff. Just as a beautifully decorated cake is a visual delight, a well-designed learning module, when introduced strategically, can capture the attention and engagement of your stakeholders (Brown & Green, 2016).

With your prototype honed through the iterative process and your learning module ready for presentation, you're one step closer to successfully engaging staff in the realm of inclusive learning design. Through the lens of our cake analogy, you've successfully navigated the stages of planning and baking, each contributing to creating a rich and impactful learning experience.

Having successfully baked and refined your inclusive learning module, it's time to shift our attention to the crucial task of serving it. Just as a beautifully baked cake deserves to be presented and appreciated by many, your thoughtfully

designed learning module awaits its moment of impact. In this section, we'll explore the intricacies of serving your inclusive learning experience to professional and academic staff, ensuring your creation is acknowledged and embraced.

Tailoring to the audience: An analogy of cake presentation

When serving cake at a birthday party, considerations for guests' comfort and preferences are paramount. Children might require sturdier surfaces, paper plates and utensils that match their dexterity, while adults could probably manage with only a few serviettes. Translating this to your inclusive product, you must adapt your approach to resonate with your target groups. Your online learning module, video content, or alternative assessment may require different modes of presentation to secure the necessary buy-in and usage.

For simplicity, we'll focus on two key audiences: professional and academic staff, often at the forefront of a learning designer's engagement.

Engaging professional staff: Applying a framework

When embarking on the journey of engaging professional staff, a well-constructed framework acts as a steady guide, ensuring a strategic and holistic approach. This proposed framework resembles the carefully constructed recipe one follows to create a culinary masterpiece. Within this framework, every step is orchestrated to foster understanding, collaboration and commitment, ultimately leading to the effective adoption of

your inclusive learning module. Let's delve deeper into each facet of this framework:

- A. Scoping research
- B. Creating interest, accountability and momentum
- C. Offering training and support -- training the trainer
- D. Dividing and conquering

A. Scoping research: Understanding the terrain

Imagine embarking on a culinary adventure in an unfamiliar kitchen. Before selecting ingredients and techniques, you explore the kitchen's layout, your tools and the culinary preferences of your audience. Similarly, in the context of engaging professional staff, conducting comprehensive scoping research is the essential groundwork. Dive into their work and identify their specific needs, challenges and aspirations. This research is the foundation for your engagement strategy. Start early and integrate throughout the entire process.

B. Creating interest, accountability and momentum: Igniting the appetite

In the culinary realm, a skilled chef knows that presenting a visually enticing dish ignites diners' appetites. Similarly, in the

world of professional staff engagement, capturing attention and interest is paramount. Demonstrate the significance of your inclusive learning module by showcasing its direct relevance to their work. Illustrate how it can elevate their teaching effectiveness and enhance student learning outcomes. Additionally, establish a sense of shared ownership and responsibility by involving them in the decision-making process. As they become co-creators, their engagement naturally deepens, fostering a sense of accountability and investment.

C. Offering training and support -- training the trainer: Nurturing expertise

Just as a seasoned chef imparts culinary techniques to junior chefs, nurturing expertise is critical to your engagement framework. For instance, assemble a subset of fellow learning designers and provide them with comprehensive training on the nuances of your inclusive learning module. This 'train the trainer' approach empowers them to become advocates and ambassadors (Brown & Green, 2016). Armed with knowledge, they can effectively disseminate information, train their peers and provide ongoing support. This strategy not only cultivates a knowledge-sharing culture, it also fosters a collaborative atmosphere where expertise is nurtured collectively.

D. Dividing and conquering: Collaboration with precision

In a bustling kitchen, culinary creations come to life through precise coordination and delegation. Similar precision is needed when engaging professional staff. As you implement your inclusive learning module, break down the journey into

manageable and actionable steps. Assign different tasks to various team members based on their strengths and expertise. Encourage collaboration, allowing each individual to contribute in ways that resonate with their skills. This collective effort not only expedites the implementation process but also fosters a dynamic environment where diverse perspectives enrich the overall outcome.

As you apply these steps within the proposed framework, envision yourself orchestrating a culinary symphony, each note harmonising to produce a delightful experience. By the time you've engaged professional staff, the groundwork for the successful integration of your inclusive learning module will be firmly in place. In the forthcoming section, we'll turn our attention to academic staff, exploring how to tailor your approach to garner their enthusiastic participation in creating an inclusive learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of their students. Just as a perfectly executed dish delights the senses, your strategic engagement with staff will create a harmonious and impactful learning experience.

Engaging academic staff: A tailored approach

Navigating the landscape of engaging academic staff requires finesse and customisation, much like crafting an intricate dish to suit varying palates. Just as a skilled chef tailors flavours to different diners, you'll tailor your approach to academic staff by following these proposed steps:

- a. Raising awareness and showcasing relevance
- b. Offering small, practical solutions
- c. Assisting integration into routine
- d. Providing avenues and tools for independence

a. Raising awareness and showcasing relevance: An educational palette

Imagine presenting a sumptuous dish to a connoisseur – your goal is to help them appreciate the nuanced flavours and unique combinations. Similarly, when engaging academic staff, begin by raising awareness about the vital role of inclusive learning design within academic environments (Brown & Green, 2016). Present how your learning module seamlessly aligns with their teaching objectives, enriching the overall learning experience (Brown & Green, 2016). Much like presenting a dish's ingredients, showcase the elements that resonate with their expertise and teaching philosophy. In your approach, bridge the gap between their existing practices and the potential of your inclusive learning module, emphasising how their needs and expectations would be met through the implementation of the designed experience.

b. Offering small, practical solutions: Culinary touches of inclusion

Just as a master chef adds subtle seasonings to elevate a dish,

introduce academic staff to small yet impactful solutions that enrich their teaching methods. These solutions are like the delicate seasonings that bring out the best in the main ingredients. Introduce user-friendly tools that seamlessly integrate into their existing routines (Brown & Green, 2016). Or, in our case, introduce ideas of how the designed online module already incorporates some elements which would usually be designed separately, such as formative and summative assessments. These minor adjustments, analogous to culinary garnishes, hold the potential to significantly enhance the learning experience. By aligning these solutions with the academic staff's current practices and pedagogical styles, you're creating an environment where inclusive practices naturally integrate, much like flavours melding in a well-cooked dish.

c. Assisting integration into routine: Guiding the cooking process

Academic staff benefit from support as they integrate inclusive design principles and learning experiences into their teaching routines, much like an apprentice chef benefits from guidance to master complex techniques. Offer workshops, resources and 1:1 opportunities to ease the transition and implementation (Brown & Green, 2016). This process is akin to guiding them through a complex recipe, ensuring every step is executed with precision (Brown & Green, 2016). In your approach, scaffold academic staff's integration of inclusive practices, helping them grow into effective facilitators of inclusive learning experiences.

d. Provide avenues and tools for independence: The art of culinary exploration

Just as a chef equips an aspiring cook with essential tools, empower academic staff to independently implement inclusive strategies and learning experiences such as your online module and to even contemplate creating their own. Provide resources, guidelines and tools that cater to their needs and scaffold their learning process just like you would scaffold student learning (Brown & Green, 2016). This stage is reminiscent of a budding chef taking the skills they've acquired to embark on their culinary explorations. Similarly, provide academics with the avenues and tools to experiment and adapt their practice, ensuring they are confident in their own abilities and know when, how and who to ask for help. As you traverse these steps, remember that just as a perfectly executed dish delights diners' senses, your tailored engagement with academic staff cultivates an inclusive learning environment, fostering growth and enriching not only these relationships but also the overall educational experience of their students.

Conclusion

In this comprehensive chapter, we have embarked on a journey guided by the delightful analogy of baking a cake to explore the intricacies of inclusive learning design. Like baking a cake, creating inclusive learning experiences requires careful planning, thoughtful ingredient selection (considering accessibility, pedagogy and technology), meticulous prototyping and strategic engagement with staff. Through this culinary lens, we've unveiled key strategies and practices for designing, refining and serving inclusive learning modules to

academic and professional staff. As we reflect on this journey, several key takeaways emerge.

We have learned that inclusive learning design is a holistic process that goes beyond creating content. It requires active engagement with students and stakeholders alike, ongoing refinement and a commitment to ensuring that the designed modules truly meet the needs of all learners drawing from **UDL** and digital accessibility principles. Most importantly, we have discussed and demonstrated the importance of considering **accessibility** and inclusive design from the beginning, not as an afterthought. Just as the quality of ingredients affects the taste of a cake, the inclusivity and accessibility of your learning design projects profoundly impact the learning experience. By prioritising inclusion and accessibility in your practice, you ensure you create experiences that are not only pedagogically sound, robust and engaging but that are also welcoming and inclusive of student diversity, regardless of their abilities.

If you are a new learning designer embarking on your inclusive journey, consider these questions: How can you actively involve students and stakeholders throughout the design process to ensure their needs are met? How will you integrate accessibility principles and inclusive design from the very beginning? And how can you continually refine and improve your practice to create truly inclusive learning experiences? Remember, like a well-baked cake, the journey of inclusive learning design is both a science and an art, and with dedication and thoughtful practice, you can create educational experiences that embrace diversity and enrich the educational experiences of all learners.

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