# Inclusive recognition: a tool for teaching innovation and improvement

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**Abstract.** The Inclusive Recognition is an instrument created by the Inclusion Office (Dirección de Inclusión) and the Teachers' Development Centre (Centro de Desarrollo Docente) at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Its aim is to identify the key elements to promote equity and diversity within courses offered at the institution.

For design purposes, literature and institutional documentation were reviewed, main dimensions were defined, a validation was carried out by experts and subdimensions with their definitions were outlined. The document is arranged as a self-assessment rubric and its results allow advisors from the aforementioned offices provide orientations and support for improvement. Advance in subdimensions achievement results in the Recognition award.

During its first implementation in the second semester 2022, eight teachers have been awarded with this recognition since they implemented actions to encourage inclusion within their classes.

**Keywords:** higher education, social inclusion, teaching, information access, student participation.

## 1    Introduction

The incorporation of diversified and acessible methodologies have had a progressive development in the institution, with existing courses still requiring support to achieve this goal.

This initiative begins as a strategy to encourage and recognise teaching teams at Universidad Católica who offer inclusive teaching spaces within their classes. This document will present the construction and use of an instrument which boosts accesibility and diversity management in classes at Pontificia Universidad Católica. Dirección de Inclusión and Centro de Desarrollo Docente are in charge of this initiative, funded by a ministry project to promote the development of an inclusive culture, alligned with the Inclusion Policy.

## 2      Theoretical Framework

According to Ainscow (2003) inclusion is a permanent transformation process which responds to diversity. When managed, majorities participate in creating opportunities for those with fewer participation spaces (Brannon, 2018), enriching the interaction among people with different characteristics (Schachner et al., 2019).

In higher education, methodological applications made by teaching teams become referents for students. When these are focused on diversification of teaching strategies, collaborative interactions or they are designed for specific groups, certain messages about how to understand inclusion and equity are conveyed (García, González & Muñoz, 2021).

Evidence shows the practices emerged from the principles of the Universal Learning Design, and from curricular adaptations for specific needs, set up a reference framework which is useful for the support of learning in diverse environments (Morningstar et al., 2015).

These three referents set the foundations for the construction of a proposal -or framework- for the identification of characteristics of an inclusive course, as well as becoming the base of the assessment rubric which will be described.

## 3      Methods

A rubric was built to observe attributes which favour accesibility and inclusion within courses. Teaching teams can use it as a way for (a) self-assessment, or (b) taking part in an accompaniment process which, additional to self-assessment, would result in bieng awarded recognition.

In order to elaborate this rubric, reviewing documents and bibliography allowed to stablish the definition of an inclusive course at Universidad Católica. Three dimensions were determined: (1) Accessibility, (2) Adaptations and (3) Inclusive Classroom Environment, which were all presented to and vaildated by key actors and experts. During the pilot, the subdimensions were consolidated and, after these iterations, four levels of accomplishment were stablished for each of them.

Finally, it was defined that recognition would be awarded to those teachers who advance in their achievements, regardless of their global scores.

## 4      Results

The final rubric was applied during the second semester 2022, at the beginning and the end of the process, in order to observe variations in the levels of achievement. Eight teachers improved their weakest early results, therefore they were awarded the Recognition.

Additionally, it was observed that these teachers took part in more training and advisory sessions in the topic of inclusion, compared with those offered the same participation opportunities

Furthermore, the principles used in the rubric allowed to strengthen the spaces of teaching advisory.

## 5    Discussion

The initial objective of this proposal was to provide of a tool for assessing how inclusive and accesible courses at Universidad Católica are. Once available, it has been possible to offer teacher support and accompaniment for improving the traits which may hinder equal participation of students within class.

During its implementation, a reflexive process was established. It allowed to value, highlight and provide guidelines for teaching strategies towards inclusive education, setting up a wider perspective about how to address diversity, over the sole modification of actions in a class.

## 6    Conclusions

This work permitted the development of a new way to promote full participation of students through a mechanism which enables: (a) the promotion of teachers' reflection around the design of inclusive courses, (b) the establishment of concrete actions for improvement. In its first application, eight teachers obtained the recognition in some of their courses, placing them as referents among their peers.

Improvement is noticed in the participation and commitment with training spaces, as well as in the implementation of strategies which enrich the curriculum, favouring an inclusive culture alligned with the Inclusion Policy at Universidad Católica.

## 7    Limitations and Future Research

The demands faced by the teaching staff tend to interfere with their participation in these endeavours. Moreover, voluntary participation means that the partaking teams are those who are highly and early involved with inclusion, and extending the reach of advisory to other groups becomes necessary. Finally, there is an observation of how results obtained from the teaching team may invisibilise the involvement of other key actors.

In the future, it is expected to increase the number of accompanied courses as well as involve students into the assessment process. The collected data is expected to generate a statistical analysis to provide further clues in order to identify those critical areas needing to be enhanced by formative spaces for university teaching.

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