



This guide provides advice on how to create an inclusive learning environment. By following this guide you can be confident in knowing that you are supporting women at a crucial stage of their education and helping them towards a successful career in SECT.

How to Guide: Inclusive Learning Environment



Make the Learning Process more Relevant to Women

SECT education is traditionally target and outcome driven, with very little value placed on the role of feelings in the learning experience, or on the importance of varied learning styles:

If a learner feels isolated, excluded or uncomfortable in the learning situation, their motivation is affected, and learning is made more difficult. Be aware that a lone woman on your course could very easily experience these feelings.

Do you value the diversity of your student group, and recognise that women can bring many life-skills to the learning situation such as negotiation, co-operation and communication skills?

Do you ensure your course is 'student centred' – that the needs of each individual student are known and met?

Are you aware that women are more likely to want to understand the why, as well as the how?

Do you place the learning in context, so the relevance of what you are doing is explicit?

Do you make sure the learning is as hands-on and practical as possible, with theoretical back up? (Women in non-traditional areas may lack confidence in their own skills and knowledge – and may not have had the same level of tools experience as the male students)

Do you encourage learners to ask when they don't understand?

Do you make the learning interesting and fun? Do you vary your presentation methods?

Do you provide clear progression routes and make clear the goals students have to reach?

Are your students involved in feedback and assessment sessions?

Do you encourage students to manage their own learning?

Do you challenge what is meant by 'men's work' and 'women's work' and the myths and stereotypes that women can't do certain work because the work is too heavy or dirty?

Do you arrange preparation for work sessions, workshadow/work experience, site visits, and hold a register of women-friendly employers?



JIVE Partners

JIVE Partners is an ESF funded partnership made up of 13 organisations, including Sector Skills Councils, Further and Higher Education Providers, the Equal Opportunities Commission and Women's Training Centres.

Our aim is to work together to increase the number of women in Science, Engineering, Construction and Technology (SECT) by bringing about cultural change. Most of our staff come from these backgrounds and have a wealth of experience in equality issues.

JIVE Partners can give free advice on recruitment and marketing.

Contact details:

JIVE Partners

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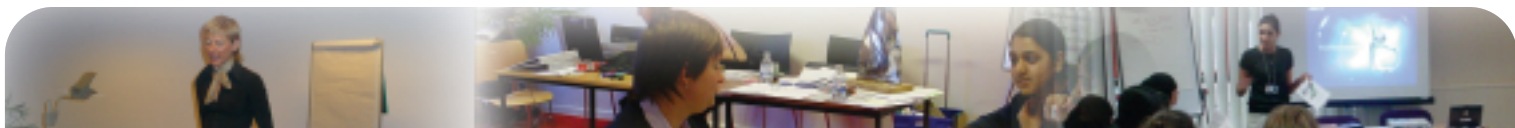
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Equal





JIVE Partners have been raising awareness through their innovative staff development training since 1998. Their experience draws on many years of research in how best to support and increase the numbers of women entering and staying in male dominated SECT education. An inclusive learning environment for women in SECT is *critical* if we are to see any positive change in these areas.

The learning environment we create today directly influences the culture and performance of these sectors tomorrow.

You can assess your own organisation's training environment against the checklist below. This looks at four fundamental areas important in the creation of an inclusive learning environment for women.

Why we should ensure women are included in the learning process:

An inclusive learning environment for women is a more inclusive environment for all, where all – men, women, and the future of British Industry will benefit.

The very fact that SECT subjects are defined as non-traditional to women describes a cultural understanding that this is not something that women can or should do! It is essential therefore that this is counteracted by the lecturer/trainer and that the message conveyed in the teaching process is in every way confidence building.

Women tell us that the lecturer or trainer can make all the difference. All lecturers and trainers, support staff and management are 'front-line' and have the power and responsibility to facilitate a learning environment that is positive for all.

Because the playing field within SECT is still nowhere near level between males and females, it is essential to:

Address the barriers women face

This is vital if you are going to be successful in recruiting and keeping women trainees.

Have you run an audit of the barriers that exist in your own institution and created strategies to overcome or remove them?

Do crèche facilities exist? Or are child care costs provided?

Are the training timetable hours family and school-hour friendly?

Are personal development programmes integrated into the curriculum?

Has a hostile, male environment been dealt with, and will women be actively encouraged and supported by all staff?

Do you have peer monitoring of your own classes, with an assessment of whether you treat females and males differently?

Are all students aware of equal opportunities and harassment policies, and when, why and how they will be implemented?

Do you use gender neutral language, such as 'staffed' instead of 'manned'?

Do you have regular staff development training in gender and diversity issues?

Employ Positive Recruitment Strategies

Occupational stereotyping is so pervasive that unless SECT material is specifically targeted at women and girls, research shows they are more likely to ignore it.

Are women and girls from diverse groups and age ranges actively encouraged onto courses with targeted publicity and outreach work?

Do you use understanding staff with a positive approach to women in SECT and with knowledge of the barriers women face? (Contact www.jivepartners.org.uk for details of staff development training)

Do you use positive female role models in non-traditional jobs (preferably existing or former students) in your publicity material?

Do you run promotional events? (see How to Guide in this series – How to Inspire future women in SECT)

Do you employ suitable accreditation for the courses?

Do you offer additional learning support and sessions that may be appropriate for women/ women returners, such as assertion/confidence building; integrated key skills; information technology; problem solving and personal development programmes?

Be Supportive and Encouraging

Research tells us that positive support and encouragement in the learning environment is the most important factor in retaining women on SECT courses.

Do you create a safe learning environment where everyone is treated equally by you and by each other?

Do you encourage co-operation rather than competition between students?

Do you encourage all women to fully participate?

Do you have an awareness of the support that women may need to continue in their studying?

Are you able to support and encourage women without giving them preferential treatment?

Are you able to support and encourage women without being patronising, (organising and protecting them) or using 'gentlemanly behaviour', which disempowers women?

Are you positive about good work done by women?

Do you use and introduce female role models from industry to talk about their careers and work?

Have you linked into, and do you offer access to the JIVE mentoring programme (See How to Guide in this series, 'Mentoring').

Top Tip

Introduce women-friendly Incentives:

- Childcare and transport costs reimbursed
- Free personal protective equipment
- Training allowance
- Free tool kits, overalls, work boots or driving lessons
- Individual support workers, personal tutors, mentors

Did you know?

Using JIVE staff development training can help you achieve your equal opportunities goals for Ofsted. The trainers can also help raise awareness for staff in how to create an inclusive learning environment for women in SECT

Top Tip

Keep up-to-date registers of:

- women-friendly employers in your area
 - Skills – of women in SECT occupations in your area
 - Positive role models
 - Useful resources and organisations
- Ask JIVE to assist you in compiling these registers. www.jivepartners.org.uk

Top Tip

Participate with external initiatives. Eg. Adult learners week, local international Women's Day events, WISE activities, community initiatives and with local employers.

Top Tip

Put up promotional materials in the training area, with positive role models of women in non-traditional jobs. These are available from WISE www.wisecampaign.org.uk JIVE www.jivepartners.org.uk and WISET email: wiset@shu.ac.uk

Did you know?

Bridge the gap into SECT education with short courses, taster courses, women-only courses or access courses. Make links with employers. Ask www.jivepartners.org.uk for further details on running courses for girls and women, or for information on training in marketing, publicity and positive recruitment strategies.

Top Tip

Increase your profile in relation to your institution's practice in women friendly courses. Develop a reputation of excellence. You may aim for and achieve national award status.

Did you know?

The Department of Trade & Industry, Women and Equality Unit produce a booklet called 'Does Sex Make a Difference?' which has top tips and exercises for students to explore occupational and gender stereotyping. www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk

Top Tip

For inspirational ideas towards creating an inclusive learning environment for all, read: Habeshaw & Gibbs - '53 Interesting Things to do in Your Tutorials'; and '53 Interesting ways of Helping Your Students to Study'; and '53 Interesting Ways to Assess Your Students' and Lewis and Habeshaw '53 Interesting ways to Promote Equal Opportunities in Education'. Copies available through UKRC www.setwomenresource.org.uk

Did you know?

You can draw on a vast amount of assistance and information from the UKRC website www.setwomenresource.org.uk which includes A Resource Bank with links to downloadable resources; female role model databases in non traditional occupations; women in SET databases; expert advice for organisations, individuals and employers in how to access, set up or improve mentoring and networking schemes to help women get support, develop skills and make contacts.

Top Tip

For help and advice on any of the ideas or information in this or the other guides in this series, contact JIVE. www.jivepartners.org.uk