5.4 Boot camp day one: Content Summary

Inclusive Leadership

This document has been prepared as a companion to the original workshop materials. It is intended for colleagues who may wish to understand the workshop content and adapt it for future delivery. The summary complements the programme brochure and deliberately does not repeat the workshop aims, timetable or overview already provided in Section 5.4.

Purpose of this summary

The original workshop was delivered using image-rich Canva slides that are not readily convertible into an accessible PDF. This summary captures the educational intent, key discussion points and facilitation methods so that another facilitator can reproduce the learning experience in a format that is accessible, adaptable and appropriate for a university engineering employability context.

The emphasis is on the concepts explored and the learning processes used rather than on the visual design or sequence of individual slides.

Workshop flow

The session followed a progressive structure that moved from personal reflection to collective action. Participants were first introduced to shared ways of working designed to support psychological safety, respectful dialogue and active participation.

The workshop then explored how engineering is often described and who is represented within those narratives. This created a bridge into discussion of cognitive bias, decision-making and leadership behaviours. The middle section focused on the idea that inclusive leadership is expressed through everyday actions ('micro-powers') rather than only through formal authority.

The later stages considered how teams, projects and learning environments can be designed to promote belonging and participation. The workshop concluded with a practice-oriented challenge and structured reflection on how participants could apply the learning within academic, placement and early-career engineering settings.

Key concepts explored

- **Psychological safety:** The workshop emphasised that learners engage more effectively when they feel able to contribute without fear of embarrassment, exclusion or negative judgement.
- **Impact and intent:** Participants were encouraged to distinguish between what a speaker intended and the impact a comment may have on others.
- **Bias in decision-making:** Discussion focused on the fact that bias is a normal feature of human cognition and can affect recruitment, teamwork, project allocation, communication and assessment.

- **Inclusive leadership as behaviour:** Leadership was presented as a set of observable behaviours that can be practised by students as well as by those in formal leadership roles.
- **Belonging by design:** The workshop explored how environments can unintentionally create barriers to participation and how small design choices can increase access and belonging.
- **Engineering identity and narrative:** Participants considered how the stories told about engineering influence who sees themselves as belonging in the profession.

Interactive learning activities

The workshop used short, highly participatory activities rather than extended lecture input. Activities can be adapted for cohorts of different sizes and disciplines.

- **Personal introduction exercise:** Students introduced themselves through prompts linked to identity, experience or aspiration, helping to establish connection across the cohort.
- **Rewriting the engineering story:** Small groups examined common assumptions about engineers and generated alternative descriptions that reflected a wider range of skills, backgrounds and contributions.
- **Bias and leadership scenarios:** Participants discussed realistic team or workplace situations and identified where assumptions, power dynamics or communication patterns might affect outcomes.
- **Micro-power mapping:** Students identified everyday opportunities to influence inclusion, such as inviting quieter voices into discussion, clarifying expectations, giving credit for ideas and challenging exclusionary language.
- **Designing for belonging:** Groups reviewed a learning, project or workplace environment and proposed practical changes that would make participation easier for a broader range of people.
- **Practice challenge:** The final activity asked participants to apply the concepts to a concrete engineering context and articulate actions they could realistically take.

For accessibility, activities should be offered in multiple participation modes (spoken, written and digital) and instructions should be provided both verbally and in writing.

Facilitation approach

The original delivery model was facilitative rather than didactic. The facilitator created a dialogic learning environment in which students were invited to explore ideas, test assumptions and learn from one another's experiences.

- Establishing clear participation agreements at the start of the session.
- Using inclusive language and encouraging participants to speak from personal experience.
- Balancing airtime so that confident contributors do not dominate discussion.

- Normalising uncertainty and curiosity when discussing equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Responding to mistakes as opportunities for learning rather than as grounds for criticism.
- Allowing participants to pass on activities or questions if they choose.
- Building in opportunities for movement, hydration and brief cognitive breaks.

Particular attention was given to emotional safety. Discussions about identity, bias and belonging can evoke strong responses; facilitators should therefore avoid placing students in a position where they are expected to represent a whole group or disclose personal experiences.

Reflection and key takeaways

The workshop closed with individual and collective reflection. Participants were encouraged to move from awareness to action by identifying one or two specific behaviours they could implement immediately.

- Inclusive leadership is relevant to all engineers, not only to those with managerial responsibility.
- Technical excellence and inclusive practice are complementary rather than competing priorities.
- Small, consistent behaviours can have a significant effect on team culture and participation.
- Awareness of bias is a starting point; effective practice requires deliberate behavioural choices.
- Designing for belonging improves collaboration, creativity and problem-solving within engineering teams.

A useful closing prompt for future delivery is: 'What is one action you will take in your next group project, placement or laboratory session that would help another person feel that they belong?'

Resources and suggested adaptations

The following resources are recommended for an accessible HE delivery:

- A short facilitator script for opening participation agreements.
- Printed or digital activity sheets using accessible fonts and sufficient colour contrast.
- Scenario cards based on engineering teamwork, placement or graduate recruitment contexts.
- Sticky notes, collaborative whiteboards or polling tools for anonymous contributions.
- A reflection worksheet that students can retain as part of their employability portfolio.

Suggested adaptations for different delivery modes include:

Context	Adaptation

Large lecture cohort	Use pair discussions, polling tools and table-based tasks to maintain participation.
Small workshop group	Allow more time for dialogue, case study analysis and peer feedback.
Online delivery	Use breakout rooms, collaborative documents and written reflection prompts.
Mixed-discipline cohort	Replace engineering-specific examples with cross-disciplinary project scenarios.
International cohort	Avoid culture-specific idioms, provide key terminology in advance and allow additional processing time.

When adapting the workshop, retain the sequence of: establishing safety, exploring assumptions, practising inclusive behaviours and committing to action.

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