

Inclusive Workplace Culture: Workshop Content Summary

Engineering Inclusive Workplace Culture and Practices

Purpose of this Summary

This workshop was originally delivered using a Canva presentation that is not available in an accessible document format. This summary has therefore been developed to provide an overview of the workshop content, learning activities and facilitation approach to support colleagues in higher education who wish to adapt or deliver a similar session.

Rather than describing individual presentation slides, this document outlines the key concepts explored, the structure of the workshop and the interactive learning activities that formed the session. It is intended to complement the programme handbook and should be read alongside Section 6.7 of the main brochure.

Workshop Overview

This workshop encourages learners to think beyond individual behaviours and consider how workplace systems influence inclusion, belonging and organisational culture. Using examples from engineering and related professional environments, participants examine how bias can unintentionally become embedded within organisational processes and explore practical ways to design more equitable workplaces.

A central message throughout the session is that inclusive organisations do not emerge by chance. They are intentionally designed through policies, behaviours, leadership decisions and everyday workplace practices that enable everyone to contribute and succeed.

The workshop adopts a systems-thinking approach, encouraging learners to view inclusion as an organisational design challenge rather than solely an issue of individual attitudes. Participants are introduced to practical frameworks that help them recognise where barriers may exist across the employee lifecycle and consider how these barriers can be reduced through thoughtful redesign.

Workshop Flow

The session begins by introducing the concept of organisational culture and explores how workplace experiences are shaped by formal systems, informal practices and leadership behaviours. Participants consider how organisational values are translated into everyday experiences for employees and reflect on examples of inclusive and non-inclusive workplace cultures.

Facilitators then introduce the concept of unconscious bias, highlighting how cognitive shortcuts and assumptions can influence decision-making, particularly during recruitment, progression and performance management. The discussion emphasises that bias is a normal feature of human decision-making but that organisations can develop systems which reduce its impact.

The workshop progresses to an exploration of the employee lifecycle, encouraging learners to examine inclusion from the perspective of an employee's entire journey through an organisation. Rather than focusing solely on recruitment, participants consider each stage of employment and identify where structural barriers may arise.

Attention is then given to practical strategies for designing more inclusive systems. Learners work collaboratively to identify improvements that promote fairness, transparency and belonging while balancing organisational and operational requirements.

The session concludes with group presentations and reflection, enabling participants to share ideas and compare different approaches before identifying actions they can apply during future placements and graduate employment.

Key Concepts Explored

Inclusive Workplace Culture

Participants explore the characteristics of workplaces where individuals feel valued, respected and able to contribute fully. Discussion considers how organisational culture develops over time through leadership behaviours, communication practices, shared expectations and everyday interactions.

The workshop highlights that belonging is influenced not only by interpersonal relationships but also by organisational systems, policies and decision-making processes.

The Employee Lifecycle

Learners examine inclusion across the complete employee journey, including:

- attraction and recruitment
- selection and interviewing
- induction and onboarding
- training and professional development

- performance review
- promotion and progression
- wellbeing and retention
- leaving the organisation.

Viewing organisations through this lifecycle encourages participants to recognise that inclusion requires continuous attention rather than isolated initiatives.

Bias Within Organisational Systems

The workshop introduces examples of how unconscious bias may unintentionally influence organisational processes.

Examples discussed include:

- recruitment advertising and job descriptions
- interview practices
- networking opportunities
- access to development
- allocation of projects
- promotion criteria
- performance assessment
- workplace communication.

Participants are encouraged to distinguish between intentional discrimination and structural barriers that develop through long-established practices.

Neuroscience and Decision-Making

The session introduces basic principles of neuroscience to explain why people rely on mental shortcuts when making decisions.

Discussion focuses on:

- pattern recognition
- cognitive bias
- familiarity bias

- confirmation bias
- decision fatigue
- assumptions based on previous experiences.

Rather than encouraging participants to eliminate bias completely, the workshop promotes strategies that slow decision-making and introduce greater objectivity into organisational processes.

Designing for Inclusion

A recurring theme is that engineers routinely design systems to improve efficiency, safety and performance. Participants are encouraged to apply the same design mindset to workplace culture.

The workshop demonstrates how relatively small changes to organisational processes can improve fairness, participation and employee experience without requiring significant organisational restructuring.

Interactive Learning Activities

Mapping the Employee Journey

Working in small groups, learners map each stage of the employee lifecycle and identify where bias or exclusion may occur.

Typical discussion questions include:

- Who might experience barriers at this stage?
- Which groups may benefit or be disadvantaged?
- What assumptions influence decision-making?
- How could the process become more transparent?
- What evidence would demonstrate that the process is fair?

This activity encourages learners to move beyond individual examples and consider inclusion from a whole-system perspective.

Recruitment Redesign Activity

Participants analyse recruitment practices using realistic workplace scenarios drawn from engineering and technical organisations.

Groups consider aspects such as:

- wording of job advertisements
- interview panel composition
- assessment methods
- accessibility
- candidate communication
- selection criteria.

Learners then redesign the recruitment process using inclusive design principles before sharing their recommendations with the wider group.

Developing an Inclusive Company Blueprint

The principal collaborative activity involves creating an "Inclusive Company Blueprint."

Each group designs an organisation that intentionally embeds inclusion throughout its policies and practices.

Areas considered typically include:

- organisational values
- leadership behaviours
- communication
- recruitment
- learning and development
- wellbeing
- employee voice
- progression opportunities
- recognition
- accountability.

Groups present their blueprints to one another, explaining the reasoning behind their proposed systems and discussing the likely impact on employee experience.

Reflection Activity

The workshop concludes with an individual reflection exercise.

Participants identify practical actions they could take during placements or graduate employment to contribute to inclusive workplaces, regardless of their formal level of authority.

Reflection questions may include:

- Which idea challenged your thinking most?
- What examples of inclusive practice have you observed?
- Which organisational process would you redesign first?
- What practical action could you take within your own team?

Learners are encouraged to view inclusion as an ongoing professional responsibility rather than a one-off initiative.

Facilitation Approach

The workshop combines short presentations with collaborative activities, encouraging participants to learn through discussion, analysis and problem-solving.

Facilitators should create an environment in which learners feel comfortable sharing differing perspectives while recognising that discussions around equality, diversity and inclusion can involve sensitive topics. Ground rules that promote respectful dialogue and curiosity are beneficial at the start of the session.

Rather than positioning inclusion as compliance or policy, facilitators should emphasise its relationship with innovation, collaboration, engineering design and organisational effectiveness. Using authentic workplace examples helps learners connect theoretical concepts with professional practice.

Group discussions should focus on practical improvements rather than identifying blame. Encouraging participants to adopt a systems-thinking perspective helps shift conversations from individual behaviours towards organisational design.

Key Learning Messages

By the end of the workshop, learners should recognise that:

- Inclusive workplaces are intentionally designed through organisational systems as well as individual behaviours.

- Bias can emerge at every stage of the employee lifecycle and should be anticipated within organisational design.
- Inclusive leadership involves creating structures that enable equitable participation and opportunity.
- Engineering approaches to systems thinking provide valuable tools for improving workplace inclusion.
- Small, evidence-informed changes to organisational practices can have a significant impact on belonging, engagement and performance.
- Every employee can contribute to creating more inclusive workplace cultures, regardless of their role or seniority.

External consultant: • Georgina Brown – BARDO Inclusive – Inclusion and Organisational Development Consultants www.bardoinclusive.com