

SLT and Society

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Action

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Why Equity and Inclusion Matter in SLT

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are central to effective speech and language therapy (SLT) practice. The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists and the Health and Care Professions Council emphasise the importance of recognising culture, equality and diversity, and practising in ways that are non discriminatory. It is therefore important that SLT students develop their skills and values in inclusive practice.

As part of the recent curriculum review in the BSc SLT programme at City St George's, University of London, we have introduced a new module, entitled SLT and Society, to support student learning in this area. The module aims to develop understanding of how societal factors impact SLT, including access to care, health behaviours and engagement with services. It promotes critical self-reflection on cultural and professional identity to support the development of cultural humility. The module also encourages students to consider how the profession can adopt more inclusive approaches to meet the diverse needs of service users more effectively.

Exploring Inclusion in Practice

Key Themes

- Identity and professional self awareness
- Protected characteristics and legal frameworks
- Intersectionality in lived experience
- Language and linguistic diversity
- Power and clinical responsibility
- Cultural humility in everyday practice



Understanding Society to Improve Communication Access

SLT and Society explores how wider social factors influence speech and language therapy. Students develop understanding of protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, including race, disability, sex, gender, religion and sexual orientation, alongside intersectionality and professional identity.

The module highlights speech and language therapy in contexts such as homelessness, youth justice services, refugee support, mental health settings and work with looked after children. Students also explore health promotion, behaviour change, co designed services and the development of inclusive resources.

Sociolinguistics, sociophonetics and language variation are also covered and support the understanding of linguistic diversity and its relevance to equitable practice.

Learning and assessment are practical. Students critique an SLT resource from an inclusivity perspective, then design or adapt their own, applying inclusive principles they can carry into placement and future practice.

Becoming Reflective, Inclusive Practitioners

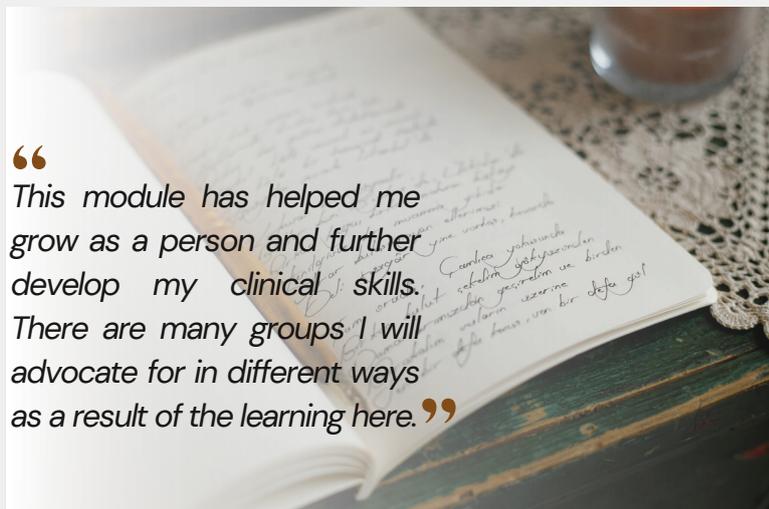
Reflecting on Identity, Power and Practice

Reflection is embedded throughout the SLT and Society module. After each session, students are encouraged to write briefly about what they have learned and how it will influence their future practice. This process encourages them to move beyond theory and consider how identity, inequality, language and power shape real clinical encounters. Through regular reflection, the aim is for students to begin to recognise their own assumptions, develop cultural humility and think more critically about inclusive decision making.

The quotations below are drawn directly from students' written reflections. In their own words, they describe gaining a broader understanding of the profession, noting that the module "really put into perspective how broad our services as SLTs are" and that "our clients come from all walks of life". Many reflect on the need to "cater and change our ways as SLTs to meet the clients, not have them fit a certain model".

Advocacy and equity are recurring themes. Students emphasise that "every individual deserves an equal chance to live without discriminatory behaviour and not rejected by society", linking this directly to their professional role. They engage with how "labels attributed to groups of individuals" and categorisation within "the very fabric of British society" influence opportunity and access.

Reflections also show growing awareness of identity and power. Students remind themselves not to "view clients and colleagues through a single lens" and acknowledge "the privilege I may hold and the power imbalances that may occur in the workplace". Language is recognised as central to inclusive care, with one student stating that "language use is massively important". While it can be "challenging for a new SLT to question existing well established ways of doing things", students see value in building this confidence and recognise that "sometimes the small gains can have a big impact".



In Their Own Words

Student feedback highlights the module's relevance and practical value. Students appreciate hearing "perspectives from different areas of the profession" and reflecting on how these influence service delivery and multidisciplinary working. They describe the module as "focused on practical skills and challenging our current perceptions of speech and language therapy from a range of viewpoints".

Many comment on personal and professional growth. One student writes, "This module has helped me grow as a person and further develop my clinical skills", adding that there are "many groups I will advocate for in different ways as a result of the learning here". Another describes it as an "excellent experience", with recommended reading leaving "a profound impact on my thinking and world view".