

Practices for Creating a Culturally Inclusive Classroom

Staff can encourage and model openness to diversity and inclusive, sensitive teaching practices. Tips for displaying these characteristics in the classroom include:

Demonstrate mutual respect by:

- Acknowledging and appreciating the diverse cultural backgrounds and languages of international and domestic students (migrants, indigenous, bilingual, etc.)
- Correctly pronounce the names of international students
- Understand and respect the importance and significance of sacred days or religious holidays to students (for example, during the Holy Month of Ramadan, fasting is undertaken by Muslims between dawn and sunset for a period of 29 or 30 days).

Conduct interactions with students in a respectful and interculturally competent manner:

- Avoid stereotypes and over-generalised descriptions of other nations/cultures
- Practice “appreciative inquiry” in which values and beliefs of all cultures are respected and treated equally
- Practice and foster respect for student diversity in all its forms among the class (e.g., religion, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation)
- Establish ground rules for group discussions and actively discourage student language or behaviour that is ethnocentric, racist or discriminatory;
- Emphasise the value of student diversity in the learning context and how learning from different individual and cultural viewpoints and perspectives can be beneficial;
- Acknowledge and reiterate that all students bring meaningful experience, valid concerns and legitimate questions to the learning and teaching process;
- Speak clearly and calmly (rather than raising your voice), as students may find it difficult to understand your accent, word usage, and meaning;
- Remember that language and humour are highly specific to each culture. Avoid using slang, jargon or verbal jokes.

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Self-Development Checklist

To create a culturally inclusive classroom environment, it is helpful if teaching staff reflect on their own attitudes, assumptions and instructional practices. To what extent do these attitudes, assumptions and practices promote an inclusive learning environment? The following questions can be used as a framework for monitoring your own assumptions, biases, and understandings of cultural diversity in a reflective and potentially productive way. It can also form the basis of a peer-review tool, if required.

10 Questions to Guide Self-Reflection: Creating a Culturally Inclusive Classroom

1. What is my definition of “diversity”?
2. What national, cultural, linguistic or religious group(s) do I belong to? How do my teaching practices reflect this?
3. What do I know about the cultural, linguistic, religious and educational backgrounds of my students and other staff?
4. How could I learn more about the diversity of my students and staff colleagues?
5. What are my perceptions/assumptions of students and staff colleagues from diverse cultural groups? Or with language or dialects different from mine? Or with special needs or requirements?
6. What are the sources of these perceptions (e.g., friends/relatives, media, stereotypes, past experiences)?
7. How do I respond to my students (emotionally, cognitively, and behaviourally), based on these perceptions?
8. What experiences do I have as a result of living, studying or working in culturally and linguistically diverse cultures? How can I capitalise on this experience?
9. How can I adapt my teaching practices to be more responsive to the unique needs of diverse student groups?
10. What other knowledge, skills and resources would help me to teach from a more culturally inclusive perspective?

Websites:

Leeds Metropolitan University HE Academy literature review on internationalisation:

http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/world-widehorizons/index_resource_bank.htm

Oxfam 'Education for Global Citizenship'

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/gc/>

Oxford-Brookes University Internationalisation Resources:

<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocslid/ioc/modules/index.html>

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