

Celebrating diversity can also be achieved by serving drinks that are popular in different countries, eg cooling herbal teas from China, yoghurt mixes from India, sweet syrups from Malaysia etc.

Alcohol and events – some suggestions

- Become familiar with the University's policy on the serving and consumption of alcohol at student events
- Ensure non-alcoholic options are available (and make this clear in any advertising)
- Separate the areas for serving alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages
- In addition to soft drinks such as orange juice and mineral water, consider other alternatives such as herbal teas and yoghurt drinks.

5 Ensuring events are accessible by all students

To accommodate the needs of all students (including those with disabilities) it is important to ensure the venue is accessible and that all students who want to participate are able to do so. Contact the Disability Liaison Unit (#47068) or look at the Disability Liaison Unit website at <<http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/disability/index.html>> to obtain further information on ensuring your event is accessible for students with disabilities.

Suggestions for accessible events

- Check venue for wheelchair access and availability of wheelchair accessible toilets
- If students who are Deaf or hearing-impaired will be attending, check if a sign language interpreter is required and organise, as appropriate
- Ensure that the needs of students with food or other allergies will be met.

Information in these Guidelines was initially developed by Ranmal Samarawickrama (a postgraduate alumni from Malaysia) with input from the Melbourne University Student Union, Equity, Language and Learning Programs and the Intercultural Working Party. The Guidelines have been prepared by Equity, Language and Learning Programs (ELLP) and additional copies are available from ELLP by telephoning #40930, by emailing juliafp@unimelb.edu.au or on the Web at http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/ellp/publications/edp_pubs.html#P3

PART B: Checklist for inclusive events

Advertising

In advertising your event, have you:

- Stressed the importance of attending social events by emphasising the skills to be gained and the opportunities provided?
- Emphasised that non-alcoholic drinks will be provided, appropriate food will be served and that the function is for all students of the department, faculty etc.
- Included student representatives from a variety of different cultural backgrounds in the planning and marketing efforts, to take advantage of their knowledge and network of friends.
- Used multi-lingual posters to ensure that international students understand that they are welcome and their religious beliefs will be respected.

Catering

In catering for your event, have you:

- Ensured that a separate BBQ plate is used for cooking vegan/vegetarian foods?
- Separated pork-free, beef-free and vegetarian dishes from the other dishes?
- Provided separate serving utensils for each dish?
- Labelled food correctly, listing ingredients where possible?
- Used student volunteers to reassure students who may not feel confident that the food served is halal, or otherwise appropriate for them?
- Read the University's policy on serving alcohol at events

Venue

In deciding on a venue, have you:

- Chosen a venue which is likely to be comfortable for all students?
- Ensured that the venue is accessible and that accessible toilet facilities are nearby?

Feedback loop

In organising your event have you:

- Consulted with people from a range of cultural backgrounds and included their advice in the planning and evaluation of your event.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

equity and diversity

The University of Melbourne

Culturally Inclusive Social Events

Guidelines for good practice

A culturally diverse University is one where students and staff aim for culturally inclusive behaviour and activities, where differences are valued and explored, and where students and staff actively seek to learn from other cultures (Cultural Diversity Policy, 1998).

Social events are an integral part of University life, and it is the responsibility of faculties, departments and all those planning events for the University community, to ensure that they are relevant and appropriate for all students. The organisation and management of University events (even small social events) is a highly skilled undertaking and this Guide to inclusive events should be used in conjunction with the Events Guide available from the University's Communication Unit.

The key aims in designing culturally inclusive social events are to:

1. Increase students' awareness of the importance of attending social events (to develop contacts, make friends and enhance communication skills)
2. Make social events accessible and appropriate for all students.

The following principles have been established and should be applied to planning for all events:

- No person or group is inappropriately excluded
- People from culturally diverse backgrounds are treated with equal respect
- Decisions about venue and catering consider the needs of students from culturally diverse groups
- Advertising is culturally sensitive.



PART A: Guidelines for inclusivity

1 Encouraging attendance at social events

Many students are under immense pressure to perform well academically and are hesitant about participating in any activity that they see as unrelated to their academic work. Many international students believe “I just need to get my degree and go home”. Frequently these perceptions are in place even before students arrive in Melbourne – social events are seen as a distraction from study and a ‘frivolous activity’. Students are often unaware of the direct academic and professional advantages of socialising with fellow students.

‘The skills learnt from socialising with Australian and other international students were a key factor in my employment success. These skills include introducing myself, listening, asking questions, maintaining a conversation and discussing contentious topics with someone with a different cultural perspective etc. Another important aspect of socialising is the network of friends and contacts one establishes on a worldwide scale.’

International student

2 Marketing events to appeal to a diverse community

Students often gain a negative impression of social events at orientation or very early in their first year, setting a pattern of non-attendance in later years. It is therefore important to “get it right” from the beginning.

The marketing strategies for many social activities on campus currently focus on the easy availability of alcohol, food (usually meat) as well as a party atmosphere. Many international students are uncomfortable with this form of entertainment and for some it is strictly against their religious beliefs and therefore ‘not negotiable’. Advertising which focuses on ‘free beer, sausage sizzles and lots of fun’, actively discourages attendance by some groups.

Venues play an important role in attracting students to social events and sometimes social functions or meetings are held in hotels or similar venues. Students from some cultural backgrounds are prohibited from entering such places so on-campus venues are seen as more neutral and therefore a preferable alternative. Venues should also be accessible by all students (those with mobility impairments – older people and those with medical conditions, as well as wheelchair and scooter users may experience difficulty accessing some venues).

Suggestions for inclusive marketing

- State that non-alcoholic drinks will be available
- Ensure culturally appropriate food will be served
- State that vegan/vegetarian food will be served
- For student events, include students from different cultural groups in the planning (they will be able to offer valuable advice as well as use their own social networks to encourage greater participation)
- Consider utilising a number of languages in the advertising (to emphasise to international students they are welcome)
- Opt for on-campus venues where possible
- Ensure caterers are able to provide for special dietary requirements (eg gluten free, non-dairy, vegan or vegetarian)
- Reply slip or telephone contact to include an option for special dietary requirements
- Ensure the venue can be accessed by those with mobility impairments and that there are accessible toilets available.

3 Inclusive catering

Diet is an important aspect of life for all students, but many international students experience difficulties obtaining appropriate food. Despite the University’s commendable efforts to provide halal and vegetarian food, there is still considerable uncertainty on what constitutes a halal meal.

Muslims and Jews do not eat pork and are usually hesitant to eat at functions that serve pork because of the fear that the non-pork dishes may be “tainted”. Halal (kosher) food is not only pork-free but must be served on dishes that have never served pork. However, as this may be difficult to achieve, it is sufficient to have halal food served on a separate table (or just separated from the non-halal/non-kosher dishes) with the provision of separate serving utensils.

Very Important Point: It is not only the ingredients that make a meal halal/kosher, but also the way it is prepared and how it is served.

Muslim and Jewish students are also more likely to be comfortable with vegetarian food (with strict separation of utensils etc) than with pork-free dishes among dishes with pork. Many students from South Asia, South-East and East Asia do not eat beef. Most are very comfortable with vegetarian food although the mixing of utensils is still an issue. In general, when in doubt serve rice.

In addition to addressing the requirements of students from different cultural backgrounds, the needs of students with particular health-related dietary requirements may need to be addressed. Food sensitivities, such as lactose and gluten intolerance, are surprisingly common, while some people are allergic or sensitive to particular foods, such as nuts, shell fish or egg protein. Providing a detailed list of ingredients can allow people to select appropriate food and avoid the unpleasant and potentially dangerous consequences of eating foods containing known allergens.

Vegetarian and Vegan Food

Serving vegetarian and vegan food will cater for people from most religions and cultural backgrounds. Note that people who are vegetarians generally will not eat anything that has to do with the slaughter of animals, including gelatine, animal-based stocks or rennet, while vegans, in addition to these restrictions, do not eat any animal products, including eggs, milk/milk products or honey. Provide varied and interesting vegan/vegetarian food. Simply providing salad, rice or bread is not really acceptable. Useful information (including caterers and recipes) is available on the Vegan Network Victoria website: www.vnv.org.au

Suggestions for inclusive catering

- Ensure separation of halal food and vegetarian food (separate table)
- Use a separate BBQ plate for vegetarian/vegan foods. It is not acceptable to have meat cooking alongside veggie burgers
- Ensure separation of utensils
- Label food – “pork-free”, “beef-free”, “vegetarian”, “vegan” etc.
- Provide a list of ingredients whenever possible
- Recruit international or other appropriate students to ensure the set-up is suitable and if possible, be on hand to advise students who are unsure if the food is halal/vegetarian etc.
- Include dairy-free options
- Serve food such as fresh fruit and vegetables, foods that are low in fat and gluten-free and dairy-free foods. See the excellent publication *Dietary Dilemmas: a handbook for food providers on catering for alternative diets* (Adobe Acrobat), published by the University of South Australia and available on the web at <http://www.unisa.edu.au/eqo/pubs/disindex.htm>.

4 Alcohol and culturally inclusive events

The University has an Interim policy on the serving and consumption of alcohol at student events which provides guidelines if alcohol is to be included at an event. Many international and local students feel uncomfortable with the focus on alcohol at University social functions. Many students have negative preconceptions of student alcohol-consumption habits even before they arrive in Melbourne. Some students make the conscious decision to avoid social activities where alcohol is served.

The physical set up of an event can play a crucial role in its success. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks can be separated, with the main gathering area in the middle. Many groups of students are concerned that should the alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks be served together, they may be accused of drinking alcohol. This fear of being accused by others of engaging in irreligious activities is quite common in many cultures.