

The 2006 DVC (Academic) Summit >

Encouraging Inclusive Practice in Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The strategies below are targeted at supporting students from different countries and cultures but are of benefit to all students whose learning may be influenced by the diversity of experience highlighted in the Cultural Diversity Policy - including rurality, disability, gender, age and values. (www.unimelb.edu.au/diversity/policy.html)

Other useful resources include the Disability Action Plan, the Indigenous Education Strategy and the Access and Equity Committee Diversity Audit.

Design: Course Materials

When designing course materials do you:

- Consider the diversity of student backgrounds? (eg. culture, disability and gender)
- Include opportunities for a positive engagement with other cultures and practices?
- Include text and materials that reflect diversity of perspective and experience?
- Endeavor to have your materials available before the commencement of classes?
- Plan to communicate your subject content using a variety of complementary media? (ie text, audio, web resources and video)

Do your materials:

- Acknowledge and value the diversity of knowledge and experience of the students?
- Encourage students to recognize different ways of learning/knowing?
- Examine the implications of diversity as part of the theory or practice being studied?
- Ensure "assumed knowledge" is made explicit in the stated pre-requisites of the course?
- Include culturally diverse and inclusive visual images? (if relevant)

Delivery: In the Classroom

Have you:

- Provided equitable opportunities for all students to communicate in the classroom?
- Modeled inclusive approaches as to how you communicate with students in classroom?

Do you:

- Use plain English? Avoid jargon, slang and culturally specific jokes and anecdotes?

- Avoid cultural stereotyping and use intercultural examples/case studies where possible?
- Use inclusive communication practices? (eg. repeating questions made by students to the rest of the class, speaking only when facing the class and verbalising textual information)
- Provide paraphrases and glossaries for essential technical terms?
- Encourage students to use their backgrounds as a learning tool? How do you build on student diversity as an educational resource?
- Actively discourage racist, sexist and cultural inappropriate discourse and language?
- Provide adequate warning/practice time if you want students to present in the class?
- Talk about everybody's difference when discussing diversity?

Assessment

Do you:

- Explicitly communicate the subject's academic requirements in a timely, consistent way and provide models of good and bad assessment?
- Make clear the subject content under assessment, the criteria by which students can demonstrate the subject objectives and how it will be assessed? (eg. previewing new topics in the context of other parts of the subject or summarizing the topic's main points)
- Communicate your willingness to provide flexibility in assessment for reasons such as illness or religious commitments and outline the process students need to follow?
- Decode assignments early and provide explicit guidance about expected format?
- Ensure exam materials are in plain English and are free of culturally biased examples?
- Ensure that the range of teaching and assessment methods employed actually cater for the diversity of learning styles among students in the cohort?
- Communicate the relative marks that grammar and vocabulary will have in an assignment compared to the content and structure of the argument?
- Incrementalise tasks and provide reflective feedback so students can develop a foundation on which to build skills and knowledge?

Ideas to enhance good practice

- Use appropriate information/tools to gather information about the cultural composition of your class? (eg. prior learning, languages spoken, preferred learning styles)
- Use icebreakers such as small-group activities to help students get to know you and each other.
- Create an environment which facilitates student interaction (eg. a quiz or re-arrange furniture)
- Use random rather than self selection techniques for group work to ensure that students work across cultural boundaries and are not isolated.
- Communicate a process for students to address any problems arising in group work activity.
- Communicate the process by which students can seek advice, support or guidance for any language or other difficulties arising through the course of their studies.

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