TOOL: CREATING A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Office of Equity and Inclusive Communities and Teaching & Learning Commons

Overview

The physical, emotional, and social safety of all learners requires a supportive classroom environment. In planning for your classes from an anti-racist perspective, consider how you can create opportunities where learners are able to actively participate in their own learning; including an exploration of the lived experiences of other learners.

Reflective Pause

Reflect on your current experiences as it relates to this topic.

Consider what you are looking forward to learning more of, or hope to be able to do more of, as you work towards developing anti-racist practices.

Goals

1. Create a safe and supportive classroom environment for all learners.
2. Establish a learning environment where students and instructors feel valued, comfortable, and empowered to be themselves and achieve their potential.

How-to Guide

Safe Spaces

It is important for an instructor to provide opportunities to safely explore different racial and cultural backgrounds thereby contextualizing historical perspectives.

- Engage your learners in a discussion around **classroom expectations**. Be explicit about the **intolerance of racism and microaggression** in your physical classroom or online (both from a KPU policy and professional conduct perspective)

- Consider your course content: are **different populations represented respectfully** in images, scenarios, and examples? Have you included diverse viewpoints and opinions?

- When possible, offer **participation and engagement choices** for learners (e.g., internet, video, phone, chat)

- Set **guidelines around respect for privacy and resharing of information** so that learners feel comfortable to participate in discussions and learning activities

- Integrate **diverse delivery strategies and tools** to create a space where learners' voices are recognized and valued. Consider using videos, written, and verbal methods, or incorporating images, infographics, or arts to deliver the learning objectives

- Create **intentional opportunities for self-reflections and knowledge sharing**, modelling respect for diverse backgrounds and lived experiences

- Create **cross-cultural interactions that foster independent learning and empowerment** between students through incorporation of group work and team projects

Develop Group Guidelines	• Engage your learners in a discussion around **classroom expectations**. Be explicit about the **intolerance of racism and microaggression** in your physical classroom or online (both from a KPU policy and professional conduct perspective) • Consider your course content: are **different populations represented respectfully** in images, scenarios, and examples? Have you included diverse viewpoints and opinions?
Participation Choices	• When possible, offer **participation and engagement choices** for learners (e.g., internet, video, phone, chat)
Respect for Privacy	• Set **guidelines around respect for privacy and resharing of information** so that learners feel comfortable to participate in discussions and learning activities
Diverse Delivery Strategies and Tools	• Integrate **diverse delivery strategies and tools** to create a space where learners' voices are recognized and valued. Consider using videos, written, and verbal methods, or incorporating images, infographics, or arts to deliver the learning objectives
Co-Creation of Learning Opportunities	• Create **intentional opportunities for self-reflections and knowledge sharing,** modelling respect for diverse backgrounds and lived experiences
Cross-Cultural Interactions	• Create **cross-cultural interactions that foster independent learning and empowerment** between students through incorporation of group work and team projects

Supportive Classroom Environment

Tips for creating a supportive classroom environment:

- Acknowledge the **power** and **privilege** you hold as an instructor

- Ensure that all learners feel comfortable enough to voice their concerns regarding **discrimination** in the classroom. This could be done by providing tools for anonymous feedback

- Know the different **resources** and **support** areas at KPU to support learners who believe they were discriminated against

- Offer a variety of ways (in-person, virtually, with other persons) that learners can **share experiences** of discrimination

- Be open to learner expressions of discrimination in accessing teaching and learning in the classroom

- Invite learners to suggest ways to make the classroom more **inclusive**

- Ask learners how they want to be identified in the classroom (e.g., pronouns)

CHECKLIST

- I have addressed my own implicit bias through reading, education and self-reflection
- I have addressed implicit bias in the classroom through presentations and encouraging discussions around the impact of unconscious bias, why it important to manage it and how we can manage it
- I consider the background of the learners in each classroom and strive to use that understanding in my style of delivery and other teaching practices
- I intentionally consider various delivery strategies and teaching techniques that will best accommodate students from different ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds
- I encourage learners to develop a community agreement describing the basic expectations in the classroom with me, including what they think a safe and supportive classroom should look like and factor these expectations into my teaching
- I explain all course-related policies and procedures in detail, including what they mean for instructor and student conduct
- I ensure that all teaching resources reflect the multi-racial Canadian context, use anti-racist and anti-oppressive language, and acknowledge different cultures and peoples in respectful ways
- I ensure that the curriculum content uses bias-free language, and creates opportunities for lived experiences of learners to be included as part of the teaching and learning process
- I ensure that class discussions are organized in such a way that is open to different learner expressions and uncomfortable conversation are managed respectfully
- I consider individual and group activities and assignments by encouraging learners to use their voice against any forms of discrimination, including the regular use of anonymous feedback
- I consider ways to address the power dynamics in the Canadian and classroom environment, and try to help learners identify and/or claim their own power and privilege for themselves

Reflective Action Point

What is one new technique you can use to manage conversations from an anti-racist approach?

Instructor Resources

TOOL: Resources on Campus
  TOOL: Student Activity: Social Identity Wheel

TOOL: Implicit Bias

Guidance: Sheridan College's Inclusive Language Guide "Tip Sheet" on Indigenous peoples, provides a wealth of guidance and information on appropriate and inclusive language and terminology related to Indigenous peoples.

Guidance: Sheridan College's Inclusive Language Guide "Tip Sheet" on gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation and sex characteristics, provides a wealth of guidance and information on appropriate and inclusive language and terminology related to gender and sexual identity.

Guidance: Sheridan College's Inclusive Language Guide "Tip Sheet" on race and ethnicity, provides a wealth of guidance and information on appropriate and inclusive language and terminology related to race and ethnicity.

Blog: Open Pedagogy and the Inclusion of Marginalized Students

Blog: Trauma-Informed Teaching

Webinar: Centre for Race and Culture – Systemic and Institutional Racism in Canada

Pressbook: Inclusive Pedagogies

Asynchronous Course: Foundations in Teaching Excellence: Inclusive Teaching Practices

Website: Resilience BC – End Racism and Hate

KPU Bylaws: Policies, and Procedures

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