

## Interculturalizing the Curriculum



# Interculturalizing the Curriculum

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# Land Acknowledgement

The KPU Teaching and Learning Commons acknowledges that KPU is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded lands of the Coast Salish Peoples. This includes the territories of the Kwantlen First Nation, who bestowed their name on this university.

We thank all First Nations for sharing their land and resources with us in friendship and in peace.





# Introduction

*Interculturalizing the Curriculum* is the third in a series of educator development resources on interculturality. Developed for the KPU Intercultural Teaching Program, this short book engages educators in two main strands of interculturalizing the curriculum:

1. Revising curriculum to reflect intercultural learning outcomes, and diverse content from multiple perspectives, and
2. Supporting student interculturality development.

In the first chapters of the book, we explore the process of interculturalization. First, the process is placed within its theoretical context(s) with an exploration of the streams of thought that contribute to understandings of how education can support equity and social justice. From there, Leask's (2013, 2015) model of curriculum internationalization informs the process of considering how our curriculum currently reflects diverse knowledge sources and ways of knowing, and envisioning what changes might be desired.

The second part of this resource focuses on student interculturality development. One of the overarching goals of interculturalizing the curriculum is providing a means by which our students understand their identities, learn to engage with multiple perspectives, relate effectively with classmates, and prepare to advocate for social change. These chapters discuss how student interculturality development can be integrated into the curriculum and assessed, as well as how educators can support the complex and challenging classroom conversations that arise from an interculturalized curriculum.

Welcome to the journey of exploring what might be possible in our curriculum and classrooms.



# I. Exploring perspectives and frameworks: Interculturality, decolonization, and anti-racism

In recent years, examinations of how inequity and injustice have negatively impacted many postsecondary students have come to the forefront of discussions about teaching and learning. Inequities affect students' access to institutions, their classroom learning experience, and their persistence and academic success in their chosen fields of study. Awareness of these impacts has focused attention on movements for change, including intercultural teaching, Indigenization and decolonization, and anti-racist education.

An examination of interculturality, Indigenization, and anti-racist education acknowledges that educational processes are deeply contextually embedded; the classroom is not disconnected from the social contexts and systems within and around it. Battiste (2013) highlights the pervasiveness of Eurocentric, colonial education systems, historically and continuing into the present. Dei (2021) states that the broad global social problem of anti-Blackness affects educational power structures, knowledge systems, curriculum, and pedagogy, impacting educational access for Black, Indigenous, and other racialized students. As educators, we acknowledge that our work takes place in social contexts where education has often been embedded within unjust systems and used as a tool for maintaining existing power structures.

Anti-racist education, Indigenization, and intercultural teaching are responses to large and complex social phenomena, as they manifest in our classrooms and educational institutions. As awareness grows about each of these movements, a practical challenge in interculturalizing the curriculum is understanding how each of these important priorities can be incorporated into the classroom, without neglecting or diminishing other streams. How can we think about this challenge?

One possibility is to consider each perspective as one side of a prism (Mertens, 2009), revealing knowledge about addressing injustice and moving towards a more just future. Some considerations in exploring the prism include:

- Avoiding conflating movements and schools of thought together in a way that minimizes the unique foci of each, while
- Avoiding positioning these concerns as being in competition with one another, and
- Acknowledging the common values across these movements and the ways that educators can work together to promote equity and justice.

## Intercultural Teaching

Of the three perspectives discussed in this chapter, intercultural teaching is perhaps the most challenging to define, as the perspectives contained within the literature in the field represent a wide spectrum of thought. Gorski (2009), in an analysis of curricula for educator development in multicultural education, outlined a continuum of five perspectives used within the field. The first approach, which Gorski identifies as the most conservative, focuses on teaching the “Other” by understanding the cultures and lifestyles of cultural groups (in an essentialized fashion) in order to teach them in a way that helps them assimilate into the dominant culture educational system. The second and third more liberal approaches focus on teaching with cultural sensitivity, tolerance, and intercultural competence. These approaches focus on addressing bias and prejudices, as well as adapting pedagogical strategies to meet the needs of students. The fourth and fifth approaches are critical, focusing on teaching as a practice that is anti-oppressive and works to transform existing systems through activism .

Conservative Approach	Liberal Approaches		Critical Approaches	
	Teaching the “Other”	Teaching with cultural sensitivity and tolerance	Teaching with multicultural competence	Teaching in sociopolitical context

Definitions of intercultural teaching are connected to how we define the intercultural dimension. The term multicultural is frequently used in the Canadian context. Multiculturalism, however, often refers simply to the fact of cultural diversity, perhaps with the addition of tolerance and celebration of it (Brosseau and Dewing, 2018). Interculturality shifts the focus towards the relational dimension of interaction between individuals and groups with different ethnicities, languages, experiences, and values. Tubino (2005) writes that while multiculturalism promotes tolerance, interculturality promotes dialogue. Critical interculturality interrogates both multiculturalism and interculturality as practices that continue to promote the status quo of unequal relationships rooted in colonial histories (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). The critical intercultural tradition emerges from the work of historically marginalized Indigenous groups in the South American context, and calls for transformed relationships. Ortiz and Gutiérrez (2020) define critical interculturality as:

an ethical, political project based on the recognition of coloniality, which puts into question the historically constructed differences and inequalities based on class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and race, among others; it works for the construction of a just, plural, and equal society in which all social groups can build new positive and equal relations with each other. (p. 74)

A critical intercultural approach to intercultural teaching, then, does not only focus on technical shifts to classroom practice or increased sensitivity in relating to students from different cultural backgrounds than one’s own. Critical intercultural teaching includes a consideration of the systemic factors that contribute to inequitable student outcomes, and how these are practiced in our disciplinary cultures and normative classroom practices. These practices aim for full inclusion and justice within the classroom, and ultimately work towards the hope of social transformation.

An emerging criticism of frameworks that focus on interculturality or intercultural teaching is that these frameworks can be used to ignore the ongoing reality of racism in favour of less challenging paradigms of ethnicity or culture. When considering literature within the intercultural teaching tradition, it is helpful to critically explore the range of perspectives represented in the field, with its broad spectrum of positions ranging from the conservative to the transformational. A critical intercultural perspective to teaching considers issues of power, equality, and justice in intercultural teaching practice and therefore, while often drawing from different lenses and sources than anti-racist and decolonial approaches to education, includes many compatible and complementary perspectives.

Another contribution of intercultural approaches to teaching is their focus on personal growth and development that results in new perspectives and changed actions. Attending to our own intercultural development provides foundational ways of thinking, being, and relating that enable us to step into anti-racist and decolonial practice (Harewood & Zemsky, 2020 ).

## Anti-Racist Pedagogies

Anti-racist pedagogies are rooted in the framework provided by critical race theory movements. Critical race theory outlines the ways in which racism is an embedded, systemic reality; only the most overt and blatant forms of discrimination are addressed within this system, making racism difficult to uproot. This structural racism also serves to provide benefits to the dominant social group. Critical race theory also highlights the socially-constructed nature of race, and considers the ways in which groups are racialized within society, with shifting categorizations that are designed to maintain the power and control of the dominant group in society (Douglas et al., 2017).

Intersectionality is a key concept informing how racial identities and other social identities impact experiences of

oppression in a racialized society. Crenshaw (1991) developed the concept of intersectionality to highlight the ways in which multiple identities intersect in an individual's experience of marginalization. Crenshaw (1991) outlined the ways in which neither understandings of feminism or racism adequately addressed black women's experience of sexual violence. An intersectional perspective highlights that people will experience discrimination differently based on the intersection of their identities; for example, an Asian woman will experience the world differently from both an Asian man and a white woman. An additional component to understanding intersectionality is the idea that everyone has an overlapping set of distinct identities, not all of which are visible (Douglas et al., 2017). These identities include racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender, and sexual identities.

Critical race theory seeks to understand the ways in which the social construct of race and racialization perpetuate discrimination and inequality. It provides a lens for understanding economic inequality, overrepresentation of racialized groups in prison populations, and inequitable educational outcomes. Patton (2016) applies critical race theory to an understanding of postsecondary education systems, highlighting the ways in which disciplines have centred and maintained white Eurocentric perspectives within the core of disciplinary knowledge.

Additionally, diversity initiatives within education that fail to emphasize transformation can reinforce, rather than challenge, dominant culture perspectives. Anti-racist pedagogies emphasize that, because of the systemic nature of racism, it is not sufficient simply to avoid active acts of discrimination; actively challenging racism and the systems that support it is required. Singh (2019) writes that anti-racist practice involves different processes for white people and people of colour. For white people, this work involves acknowledging participation in a racist system, having internalized it as "normal" through the lens of the dominant culture. This work also includes acknowledging power and privilege, interrogating the dominant culture system, and taking active steps to learn the full history of other racial groups. Anti-racist work for people of colour may include challenging internalized racism and stereotypes, and developing a broader knowledge of the history of struggle other ethnic groups have under white supremacy.

Anti-racism also seeks to identify and interrupt microaggressions often perpetuated against people of colour. Microaggressions are subtle verbal or non-verbal assaults that may be frequent and commonplace. They include insult, invalidation and assault. Microaggressions, though they involve a clear perpetrator and victim, they may occur outside of the conscious awareness of the perpetrator (Sue & Spanierman, 2020). Microaggressions are a symptom of broader patterns of systemic racism. They can be easily perpetuated by well-intentioned dominant culture members because of their blindness to the ways in which the dominant culture ways of being are assumed to be normative.

Anti-racist teaching practices require both a commitment to personal growth, learning, and internal change, as well as an active commitment to shift teaching practices and ways of relating to students. Personal practices include learning about one's own positionality and privilege, assessing the impact of white supremacy on both the body of knowledge taught and the ways of teaching in one's discipline, and learning about the impacts of racism and racial trauma on people of colour. Action steps that inform pedagogical practice include considering how expectations of an "ideal" student may be racially biased, assessing course content, and considering how assessment practices may reinforce racism (Wheaton College Massachusetts, 2021).

Developing an anti-racist teaching practice includes action in five domains:

- Course content
- Pedagogy
- Assessment
- Classroom climate
- Power relationships (Georgetown University Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship, 2021).

An anti-racist exploration of these five domains has much in common with culturally inclusive practice. Anti-racist practice, however, challenges the idea that culture is a neutral construct, and that it is possible to talk about difference without also addressing racial injustice and how constructions of cultural groups are used to maintain white supremacy (Holliday, 2010). Anti-racist pedagogy requires attention to the ways in which our teaching practice is rooted in broader

systemic structures, and the ways that these systems might perpetuate racism in the classroom, on campus, and in the broader society.

## Indigenization and Decolonization

Calls for Indigenization and decolonization within postsecondary education arise from recognition of the ways in which education has caused harm to Indigenous peoples through the erasure of their cultures and languages in the residential school system, and the ongoing practices that minimize and suppress Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing. Battiste (2013), highlighting the largely negative impacts of mainstream Canadian education on Indigenous youth, writes that the path forward requires fostering learning environments that value Indigenous languages, cultures, and ways of knowing, allowing Indigenous learners to embrace and celebrate their identities and cultures. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), makes several calls for action requiring a response from educators and educational systems. These include:

- “We call on the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians”. (Call 7)
- We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:
  - i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
  - ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
  - iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
  - iv. Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education. (Call 62)

The calls arising from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provide initial steps to move towards a different educational future, recognizing the impacts of colonialism and moving towards decolonization. Wilson (2018) defines decolonization as “the ‘undoing’ of colonization and a process by which Indigenous Peoples are regaining their rightful place in Canada and are thriving” (Section 3: Decolonization). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999/2012), a Maori scholar, writes that decolonization “is about centring our [Indigenous] concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (p. 39, as cited in Battiste, 2013, p. 185). Walsh (2014) views decoloniality as an act of pedagogical praxis, emerging from the margins, that challenges colonial power structures with new “practices of being, action, existence, creation, and thought” (n.p.).

Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) write that postsecondary education systems, to meet the needs of their Indigenous learners, must ensure that they are spaces that offer respect for Indigenous cultures and ways of being, demonstrate relevance to the needs and goals of Indigenous learners, foster reciprocity where “give and take” relationships between faculty, non-Indigenous students, and Indigenous learners support learning, and facilitate responsible Indigenous participation in the governance of universities, as well as self-governance. At the postsecondary level, decolonization also involves questioning and de-centring the dominance of Eurocentric ways of knowing, making space for the full integration of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing. This both creates space for Indigenous students to bring their own cultures and ways of being fully into their learning, and enriches the university learning environment for all participants (Battiste, 2013).

The aspects of decolonization often referred to as Indigenization involve weaving Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing throughout the curriculum and learning experience, allowing all students to benefit from wisdom about learning that arises from Indigenous cultures. These emphases include an understanding that learning is holistic, lifelong, experiential, rooted in nature, communal, and spiritual (Battiste, 2013). LaFever (2016) presents an example of Indigenization in postsecondary curriculum design. Moving away from the Western and cognitively-focused perspectives of Bloom's taxonomy, LaFever proposes a four-domain framework for the design of learning outcomes: physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. The spiritual domain encompasses learning that extends beyond self-interest, and involves connectedness, relationality, empowerment, and self-actualization.

While settler educators are invited to grow in our understanding of Indigenous communities, their histories, and knowledges in the context of reciprocal relationships, Indigenous control and leadership in the process of Indigenization should be upheld. Tuhiwai Smith et al. (2016) identify the problematic trend of settlers extracting Indigenous knowledges for their own benefit, reinforcing, rather than dismantling colonial relationships. Kovach (2010) emphasizes that research with Indigenous communities should incorporate protocols that ensure that research or learning activities are carried out in a way consistent with community teachings. As Kovach notes, this includes reciprocity and following appropriate gifting protocols when community knowledge is shared. In a research context, Kovach notes that key guidelines include ensuring mutuality and reciprocity, seeking appropriate permissions, and ensuring that work done is neither exploitative nor extractive. When considering our use of Indigenous knowledges as educators, good practice includes ensuring that we have used knowledges with permission, and that our work reflects appreciation, rather than appropriation of these knowledges. It is also important to remember that some Indigenous knowledges are held within the community, not to be shared with those to whom they do not belong.

Decolonization is a necessary shift in addressing past wrongs and for ensuring that Indigenous students have the opportunity to achieve their educational goals in a space of cultural flourishing. The gifts offered by Indigenous ways of knowing also offer opportunities to shift to new educational paradigms that support the learning of all students. The use of the word *decolonization*, however, has been problematized, particularly if its use becomes overextended beyond its core meaning. Tuck and Yang (2012) caution against using decolonization as a blanket term to refer to all social justice and human-rights oriented educational movements. According to Tuck and Yang, metaphorical uses of decolonization de-link the movement from its focus on Indigenous sovereignty and the return of stolen lands to Indigenous control. From this perspective, the aims of decolonization are distinct from other critical or emancipatory educational movements.

Attention to the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the need to ensure that Indigenous learners participate in education that offers respect, reciprocity, relationship, and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001) requires pedagogical shifts. These shifts also invite us to consider how we might learn alongside our Indigenous colleagues and students, finding ways to appreciate and apply our learnings without appropriation. While we seek to consider new ways of teaching that respond to the needs of all equity-deserving groups, the caution not to conflate these efforts under the decolonization label recognizes the distinct harms caused by settler colonialism, and the ways in which repair differs from other forms of justice-seeking pedagogy.

## Summary

Intercultural teaching practice is informed by multiple streams of thought, each with their key emphases and contributions; while these streams should not be conflated, they offer a prism that can expand the possibilities for pedagogical practice. This chapter outlined the emphases and contributions of three key discourses: intercultural teaching, anti-racist pedagogy, and decolonial thought. As these discourses continue to increasingly inform pedagogical practice, a deeper understanding of intercultural teaching as a transformative practice that contests racism and other forms of discrimination can continue to develop.

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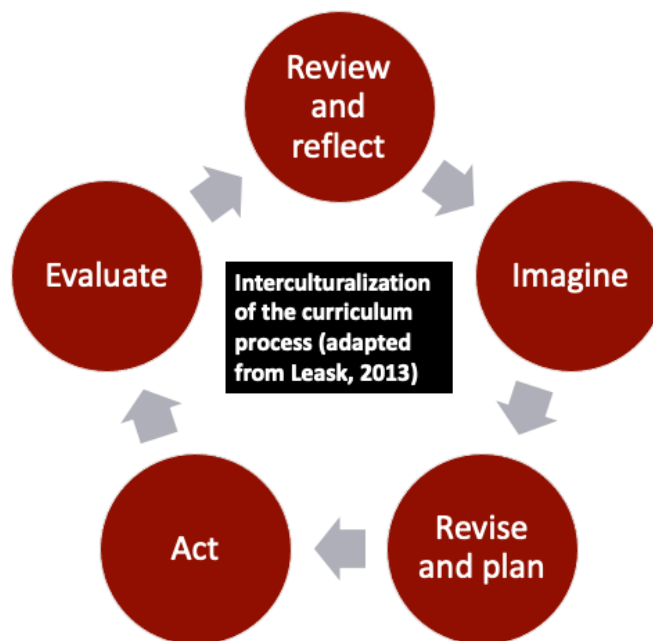
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## 2. Developing a process for curriculum interculturalization

Interculturalizing the curriculum is an iterative process that involves consideration of course objectives, course content, learning activities, and ways of assessment. Interculturalization can happen at the level of individual courses, but may be more effective when conducted as a team or department. Shared interculturalization initiatives can support student intercultural development throughout their learning journey in a program.

Leask (2013, 2015) designed a model for interculturalizing the curriculum. The model includes five steps, which are cyclical, and allow for continual negotiation and refinement as the process continues.



*Interculturalization of the Curriculum. Image by Christina Page (adapted from Leask, 2013)*

### Review and Reflect

The *review and reflect* stage of the interculturalization process involves an assessment of the current curriculum. This can include identifying the rationale for interculturalizing the curriculum. What has motivated you to come to this point? What are the benefits of interculturalization for students? What intercultural learning outcomes are already present?

Tangney (2017) provides a reflective tool for faculty and other stakeholders to use for reflection on the present realities of internationalization in their context. The ten questions in Tangney's tool are:

1. Does the programme promote a global perspective by, for example, international case studies or comparative studies, articles or texts?

2. Does the delivery and content of the programme acknowledge the existence and validity of a range of international perspectives, values and ontologies?
3. Does the programme content include critical reflection on students' own cultural values, the cultural values of others, and the cultural values underlying the discipline discourse?
4. Does the programme content avoid inappropriate ethnocentric language and cultural assumptions?
5. Is intercultural student interaction encouraged, for example, through sensitively but explicitly directed collaborative learning opportunities?
6. Does the programme offer opportunities for face-to-face interaction with people from different cultures, for example, through guest presenters, use of internet technology or international placements/projects?
7. Do the programme descriptions and publicity clearly explicate the nature and extent of the international context?
8. Does the programme learning environment foster the development of intercultural competence of all students?
9. Are intercultural skills explicitly developed in Personal Development Planning (PDP) activities?
10. Are staff teaching on the programme encouraged to develop their own intercultural awareness and skills, for example, through international exchanges? (pp. 642-643)

Tangney's (2017) framework depicts interculturalization of the curriculum as a process that involves more than just course content. While interculturalization requires investigating the cultural and epistemic perspectives present in the texts, articles, and assignments offered in a course, the process also includes the development of interculturality in students and faculty.

Other areas for review at this stage in the process might be:

- An assessment of how interculturalization develops throughout the course of students' movement through each year of the program. What intercultural skills are taught in each course? How do these build and combine towards greater complexity as students progress?
- An assessment of international and domestic student experiences in the program, identifying areas of discrepancy in student experiences.
- An assessment of stakeholder views on interculturalization (for example, what intercultural skills are valuable to employers in local and global contexts where graduates may work in the future) (Leask, 2015).

Another possible framework for review is to consider "blockers" and "enablers" to more fully interculturalizing the curriculum (Leask, 2013). For example, a "blocker" may be local or national professional licensing guidelines that do not yet consider the intercultural dimension. An "enabler" may be institutional or Faculty student learning outcomes that promote intercultural learning.

While the review process will likely identify areas for ongoing growth and development, the process will also likely identify areas of strength that are unique to your context. Consider these strengths as the foundation for ongoing building and development.

## Imagine

Leask (2015) emphasizes that the *imagine* stage of of the cycle is one that is often not found in many curriculum transformation processes. The *imagine* stage supports interculturalization by creating space to reconsider what is often taken for granted within a particular field or course of study. The norms that are taken for granted likely reflect the dominant culture. The key question at this stage of the process is "what other ways of thinking and doing are possible?"

(Leask, 2013, p. 108). To answer this question, critical reflection on the nature of one's discipline, and the ways of knowing that are accepted and centred is necessary.

The *imagine* step includes questions like:

1. Whose knowledge is currently reflected in the curriculum?
2. Which knowledge perspectives and traditions present in the local/national context are not included?
3. Which global perspectives and traditions are not reflected in the curriculum?
4. What options and possibilities can be added to the course or program?

Like the *review and reflect* process, the *imagine* stage is often done in a small group of like-minded colleagues. The questions asked at this stage are designed to move thinking from “what is” to “what is possible”.

## Revise and Plan

At this stage in the process, the interculturalization team works to make changes to existing curricular structures. As the name suggests, this stage may involve revision to learning outcomes and content at both the course and program levels. Leask (2015) suggests that activities at this stage may include:

- Setting program-level learning objectives for interculturalization of the curriculum.
- Mapping out how program-level intercultural learning objectives are achieved throughout students' learning journey.
- Identifying subject matter experts who can facilitate and support curriculum revisions.
- Creating a plan of action for the proposed revisions, including identifying those responsible for specific tasks.
- Developing an evaluation strategy to assess the impact of the proposed changes.

Dimitrov and Haque (2016) suggest five primary competencies for faculty to develop that enable interculturalization of the curriculum. The first competency is the ability to identify and include global learning outcomes at the course and program levels. The second competency is incorporating content and learning resources that include a diverse range of perspectives and approaches to learning within a discipline. As Dimitrov and Haque note, this content can include Indigenous perspectives and approaches. Thirdly, curriculum redesign competency requires considering the design of assignments and other assessments, ensuring that students with a variety of strengths, ways of knowing, and ways of communicating are able to successfully demonstrate their learning in a course.

Dimitrov and Haque's final two competencies focus on student intercultural development. Their fourth competency suggests incorporating learning activities that allow students to reflect on differences and to practice perspective taking. The final curricular competency in the framework involves facilitating students' exploration of their own identities. These include personal, cultural, and disciplinary identities.

### **Formal, informal, and hidden curriculum**

The internationalization of the curriculum cycle invites restructuring of formal academic curricula. In addition, Leask (2015) emphasizes that curriculum does not only exist on the formal level; the informal and hidden curricula in a course or program also shape the learning experience. The hidden curriculum reflects the ways in which the structure of the educational experience socializes students into certain norms, expectations, ways of working, and ways of being with others (Thornton, 2014). Therefore, the revision and planning stage of the interculturalization process should extend beyond revision of the formal curriculum. It is important for educators to consider the ways in which students are socialized into their discipline and how these conventions may uphold the dominant culture and/or create barriers for students.

## Act

Leask (2013) suggests that the key question at this stage is “how will we know if we have achieved our [interculturalization] goals?” (p. 110). This stage requires the implementation of the previously developed plans, which might include:

- Professional development workshops for faculty (including those not involved in the initial stages of the interculturalization planning process).
- Introducing intercultural development workshops for students (e.g., a workshop on working in diverse teams offered before students embark on a group assignment).
- Adding new content to existing courses.
- Adding new courses (core or elective) to a program.
- Collecting evidence that can support evaluation (e.g., assessments of student intercultural growth, intercultural learning portfolios) (Leask 2015).

## Evaluate

As the interculturalization plan is implemented, the next step in the cycle is to evaluate the impact of the process. This can include analyzing evidence, reflection, and more formal scholarship of teaching and learning. As the cyclical model indicates, the process does not reach an end point, but rather, the evaluation at this stage serves to inform the next level of review and reflection as the process continues.

Leask (2015) offers five suggestions to support the effectiveness of the process:

1. Interculturalization occurs within disciplinary communities of practice.
2. The process involves careful reflection on dominant and non-dominant ways of knowing and doing within a discipline.
3. The interculturalization process considers the program as a whole, rather than as separate, discrete course units.
4. The process generates interdisciplinary conversations and scholarly reflection in a supportive community.
5. The interculturalization process is afforded a long-term commitment with multiple cycles of action and reflection.

## Other Strategies for Curriculum Interculturalization

The process outlined above is likely to be most successful when undertaken with a team of faculty within the same program or department. What other strategies for interculturalizing the curriculum might be possible for faculty when working individually or in a more multidisciplinary community of practice?

One possibility for moving forward in the journey of interculturalization is to participate in a faculty learning community devoted to this purpose (Lee et al., 2018). A faculty learning community can create a supportive environment for individuals from different disciplines and with different experiences of interculturalization to come together and support intercultural teaching at the course level. Activities in an intercultural teaching community of practice can include discussion of inclusive pedagogies, a workshop space to create and provide feedback on revised assignments and learning activities, or an opportunity to provide supportive peer feedback on teaching. Such a learning community

may be the best path toward interculturalization when the process has not yet been firmly established at the program level, creating a supportive space to implement Leask's (2013, 2015) process at the course level.

## Examples of Interculturalization Processes

**Interculturalization of an Accounting Program:** Leask (2015) describes a departmental process of internationalizing the accounting program at an Australian university. Often, programs such as accounting, with their connections to local regulating bodies, may appear to be more challenging candidates for internationalization. While the local context plays a significant role in shaping the curriculum, an interculturalized curriculum can also be grounded in graduate attributes related to global perspectives and the interpersonal competencies needed to work in culturally diverse local and global workplaces. In this case study, knowledge domains of the curriculum were augmented to include application of principles learned within both local and international contexts. Communication outcomes included a focus on communicating across linguistic and cultural difference, and social responsibility outcomes included considering the impact of business decisions on different local or global populations.

The accounting case study demonstrates that even when accountability to local professional standards shapes much of the content of a program's curriculum, space for interculturalization can be found in the interpersonal and social professional competencies that graduates require in preparation for their future practice.

**Interculturalization in Criminology:** Howes (2019) describes a process of interculturalization in a Criminology program by incorporating non-dominant perspectives (labelled "southern" perspectives). Curricular shifts included presenting content from global contexts in course lectures, adding supplemental reasons to a primary text to expand the national contexts from which course content is based. An analytical written assignment was also adapted to ask students to address the personal and contextual factors that shape the viewpoints and analytical frames used. This case study demonstrates the integration of international content perspectives and student intercultural awareness in the interculturalization process.

## Summary

Interculturalizing the curriculum can be understood as a cyclical process that begins with assessment of "what is", imagination of what might be when global, Indigenous, and non-dominant cultural perspectives are incorporated into the curriculum, practical implementation of revised curricula, and ongoing evaluation. While this process can be particularly effective when undertaken at the program level, communities of practice can provide space for faculty to develop their own interculturalization practice. Interculturalization processes unfold differently depending on disciplinary contexts, particularly in disciplines that require attention to local/national professional standards; however, case studies demonstrate that interculturalization has been effectively practiced in a wide variety of disciplinary contexts.

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### 3. Creating learning outcomes for intercultural and global awareness

#### An overview of high-level intercultural learning outcomes

One of the tasks within the larger project of developing student interculturality is creating specific learning outcomes that foster intercultural and global awareness. Learning outcomes articulate knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students are expected to demonstrate upon successfully completing a course or program of study. In addition to preparing students for their personal and professional lives in intercultural spaces, these learning outcomes also serve to prepare students to contribute to global sustainable futures through understanding global issues, responding thoughtfully to multiple perspectives, relating effectively across similarity and difference, and choosing appropriate action to contribute to the well-being of the world and its people (Schleicher, 2017).

The PISA (2018) global competence framework provides four outcome areas that address knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes:



PISA 2018



Schleicher (2017) unpacks each of these four high-level intercultural learning outcomes.

- Examining local, global, and intercultural issues includes the capacity to use disciplinary knowledge and knowledge about the world to critically examine global issues, sifting through complex information to form thoughtful opinions.
- Understanding and appreciating the perspectives and worldviews of others incorporates the capacity to recognize one's own personal and cultural biases, and to seek out and appreciate the perspectives of others that might be different from one's own.
- Engaging in open, appropriate, and effective interactions across cultures includes the capacity to engage in dialogue, to adapt behaviour as appropriate, and to demonstrate cultural sensitivity to the needs, values, and preferences of others.
- Taking action for collective well-being and sustainable development involves the capacity to reflect on global issues, and to take appropriate action to support positive change.

These high-level intercultural skills may be reflected in program or faculty outcomes. These capacities, however, are broad, and likely require a series of more specific and focused outcomes at the course and assignment level that build towards these broader capacities.

## Incorporating intercultural learning outcomes into programs and courses

Incorporating specific intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes into course and assignment learning outcomes makes intercultural learning more explicit for students, and provides connections for students between their intercultural learning and their broader academic, personal, and professional growth.

Sources for interculturally-focused learning outcomes may be:

- Faculty or program level student learning outcomes.
- Standards from relevant professional organizations.
- Modifications and additions to current course outcomes that incorporate the intercultural into current learning.

Intercultural learning outcomes can encompass different aspects of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that contribute to intercultural understanding, development, and practice. Examples of such outcomes include:

- Articulate awareness of one's own cultural identity (Attitudes).
- Recognize the impacts of inequality on individuals, groups, and social structures (Values).
- Name the impacts of climate change on human flourishing in two different geographic locations (Knowledge).
- Work effectively in diverse teams (Skills).
- Respond to a case study or simulation using the principles of cultural humility (Skills).
- Compare two Indigenous perspectives on environmental sustainability (Knowledge).
- Develop a marketing plan for product x that includes strategies for a Canadian context, and one other non-North American national context (Knowledge/Skills).
- Reflect on the qualities needed for successful communication in a diverse team (after completing the Group Human Resources Case Study Assignment) (Skills/Values).
- Compare and contrast pedagogical approaches to teaching a basic arithmetic concept in two different national contexts (Knowledge/Skills).

Deardorff (2016) suggests that intercultural learning outcomes should (1) be specific and measurable, and (2) should

be realistic given the timeframe of the course or learning opportunity. This means that while at the program level students will work towards broad and high-level intercultural knowledge, skills, and abilities, at the course level, specific intercultural learning components should be specific, and where relevant, measurable.

## Helping students understand intercultural learning outcomes

Many students lack overall awareness of the significance of learning outcomes to their academic, personal, and professional development. Making students aware of intercultural learning outcomes is a part of a larger process of reflection on learning. Strategies for supporting students' understanding of intercultural learning outcomes include:

- Include an initial review of course learning objectives early in the course. Connect the course objectives to overall program objectives. Include an opportunity for students to reflect on their skills in relation to learning objectives at the beginning of the course, and to set goals for growth. At the end of the course, provide another opportunity for students to reflect on their progress towards achieving course learning objectives.
- Include reflection on intercultural skills in ePortfolio development.
- Create opportunities for students to consider how they would apply the skills and concepts learned in the course in other cultural contexts (whether internationally, or working with individuals from other cultural backgrounds in their home context) (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016).
- Consider how experiential learning can occur within intercultural contexts, even locally.
- Many intercultural competencies related outcomes are not easily evaluated on product-based assignments. In order to make these learning outcomes explicit and achievable, incorporating graded process activities, such as peer feedback in multicultural groups, or reflective journals is helpful.

## Evaluating intercultural learning outcomes

Simpson and Dervin (2019) critique aspects of the PISA/OECD frameworks, noting that their orientation tends toward Western values on interculturality. They suggest that learning frameworks around intercultural competence require careful consideration of the underlying values they represent. Key questions for evaluating intercultural learning outcomes include:

- Does this learning outcome avoid focus on “learning about other cultures” in a way that can lead to cultural essentialism and stereotyping?
- Whose understanding of interculturality is reflected in the learning outcome?
- Does this learning outcome take into account the relational nature of interculturality, including the fact that effective interculturality cannot be determined by self-assessment alone?

In summary, when developing intercultural learning outcomes, it can be important to consider them thoughtfully in light of the overall perspectives they may communicate about interculturality and relationships between people with different backgrounds and values. Like other aspects of an interculturalized curriculum, attention to diverse perspectives, and the avoidance of essentialism and an overemphasis on difference can be important to framing how students learn to express intercultural knowledge.

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## 4. Using content and learning resources that represent diverse perspectives, paradigms, or disciplinary approaches

An interculturalized curriculum provides students with opportunities to explore their course and discipline through multiple lenses. Interculturalized curriculum content can include readings, case studies and simulations that explore different cultural perspectives. Content can also include experiential learning in intercultural contexts, and guests presentations from individuals that can offer their own cultural perspective on course content.

The process involves the following five considerations (adapted from Georgetown University Centre for New Designs and Scholarship)

- Choosing course materials that offer a wide range of perspectives, created by individuals with a range of backgrounds and experiences.
- Analyzing dominant perspectives within a discipline, placing them within their historical context.
- Intentionally giving voice to a range of perspectives in class.
- Ensuring that course materials are easily available to students.

### Why Offer Diverse Perspectives?

Offering culturally diverse curriculum provides several benefits to students: (1) providing an environment of welcome and inclusion to students through representation; (2) broadening students' knowledge base to support global engagement; and (3) supporting students' development in integrating multiple perspectives.

Curricula that centre dominant culture perspectives, even when this is unintentional, can communicate messages of unbelonging. Sue and Spanierman (2020) refer to environmental macroaggressions, which take place when a minority group is misrepresented in ways that do not honour their culture, or when their cultures are not visibly present in the university environment. Conversely, when individuals see their cultural identities present and positively represented, they are more likely to experience cultural safety (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008).

In addition, part of the task of the intercultural classroom is providing space for students to learn to engage with diverse perspectives; this requires on going efforts to “engage multiple perspectives and ways of seeing” (Lee et al., 2017, p. 102). This not only develops students' intercultural skills, but helps them to develop the perspective-taking skills necessary to be able to respectfully interact with different points of view.

### Choosing Course Materials

A key step to interculturalizing course content is to assess current representation in the course reading list and learning activities. Whose voices are currently present in the materials students access? Whose voices are missing? Where might it be possible to replace or augment current content with voices from different national contexts, and add contributions that represent different social identities?

In some disciplines, a barrier to interculturalization is the assumption that the course content is largely universal in

scope, with little space for intercultural variation; this can be particularly true in scientific disciplines (Leask, 2015). In such disciplines, the *imagine* phase in Leask's (2015) internationalization process may require more careful attention and thought to identify what might be possible. Consider the following examples:

- Meffe (2003), observing a lack of international representation in published conversation biology papers, observes that national borders are irrelevant when considering the significant environmental crises of our time, and therefore, consideration of the global context should be considered central to the field.
- Clifford (2009) suggests that faculty in science disciplines, when pursuing internationalization, should consider not only the theoretical concepts in the field, but the challenges that students will encounter when they use their scientific knowledge in a global world. This expands the knowledge base to include ethical practice in different cultural contexts.
- Chamany et al., (2008) propose integrating biological concepts with social issues. Their examples include a capstone course on “Math and Science in Context” that supports integrating scientific knowledge with global applications.

In summary, in some disciplines, particularly Arts and Humanities, interculturalizing the curriculum may be easily accomplished by modifying existing readings or learning activities to include a broader breadth of voices. In other disciplines, the interculturalization process may involve consideration of how content knowledge that is often more consistent across contexts may have ethical or social implications as it is applied in a variety of real-world situations.

## Analyzing Dominant Perspectives

Analysis of course content includes assessment of dominant disciplinary perspectives, including historical analysis of how knowledge comes to be constructed within a discipline. This includes consideration of threshold concepts in a discipline. Threshold concepts are foundational understandings, ways of thinking, and worldviews within a discipline, without which a learner cannot progress deeper into the field (Meyer & Land, 2006). Often, threshold concepts become “taken for granted” within a field, and are frequently unquestioned. Additionally, for experienced academics and practitioners with a discipline, these threshold concepts may become implicit to the point where awareness of their contextual specificity is lost (Middendorf & Shopkow, 2018).

For example, Chamany et al., (2008) identify evolutionary theory as a threshold concept in biology, noting its consistent inclusion as a foundational concept in a variety of courses. To explore the concept historically, contextually, and socially, they propose a unit teaching that history of evolutionary theory as a way of critically exploring its development and current dominant status as a key idea within biology.

Once the threshold concepts and other disciplinary norms have been identified, it becomes possible to critically analyze the development of these ideas and their rise to dominance. From there, it may become easier to identify which voices are missing, and which alternative or complementary perspectives may be added to enrich students' learning.

Dominant disciplinary perspectives also arise through the ways in which disciplines are “siloeed” from one another in many university contexts. Interdisciplinary thinking can foster additional opportunities to include diverse perspectives in the classroom. De la Garza (2021) proposes that interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to curriculum design are sites for integrating intercultural knowledge. This, as de la Garza highlights, can include Indigenous knowledges, which, because of their more holistic and integrated epistemologies, provide space to bring traditionally separate disciplines together for meaningful inquiry. Interdisciplinary work can be another tool in creating curricula that genuinely reflect multiple ways of seeing, knowing, and learning, giving genuine expression to the fact that a single topic can be explored through multiple lenses.

## Giving Voice and Modelling

Clancy and Bauer (2018) highlight that students may feel hesitant to express a perspective they perceive as different from that of their peers; students also may lack the skills needed to challenge harmful perspectives about other cultures or social groups expressed in class. Making our own work as instructors transparent by modelling our own efforts to seek out diverse perspectives and grow interculturally supports our students in developing this capacity (Lee et al., 2017). In addition to integrating content from different perspectives, taking the time to give voice to different streams of knowledge and viewpoints, particularly those that are not dominant cultures, is important to helping students develop this same capacity.

Other strategies for giving voice to diverse perspectives in a course include:

- Intentionally seeking your own opportunities to learn from those who give voice to underrepresented perspectives in your field (for example, through webinars and at professional conferences).
- Integrating guest speakers (either live or through the use of well-selected videos) into class sessions.
- “Filling in the gaps” where a particular cultural perspective may not be represented among your students. (Georgetown University Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship, 2021)

## Making Course Materials Accessible

A final consideration in selecting course content and learning resources is the availability of the resources to the students. In a study by Jhangiani and Jhangiani (2017), less than 20% of British Columbia students reported being unaffected by the cost of their course materials, while 54% reported declining to purchase at least one required textbook. The high cost of many commercial textbooks hinders students from accessing these materials, pushing them towards alternative strategies such as downloading internet copies, sharing textbooks, and relying on library copies. Possible outcomes of textbook inaccessibility include taking fewer courses, dropping a course, or receiving a poor grade; these negative outcomes are more likely to affect visible minority students and students who report working more hours to finance their education. Conversely, students who are assigned open textbooks perform as well or better on exams as students assigned commercial textbooks (Jhangiani et al., 2018).

In addition to their role in ensuring students have equitable access to course materials, the use of open textbooks provides a platform to incorporate diverse voices into students’ learning materials. Open textbooks with Creative Commons licenses can be adapted and modified to meet the needs of a particular course; this offers the opportunity to expand typical foundational or dominant culture content with other perspectives. By integrating multiple perspectives within a core textbook, students experience a visible demonstration that understanding through multiple lenses is both normal and valuable.

In addition to core texts, course materials can be offered to students through the provisions of fair dealing (for example, a journal article or single book chapter can be provided to students for academic purposes in the learning management system). This can provide additional space for integrating additional perspectives in ways that are accessible to all learners.

### Summary

Traditional course materials may reflect a single dominant perspective, and may leave out many voices that offer a richer perspective within the discipline. Interculturalizing the curriculum strengthens engagement of underrepresented students through improved representation, and improves the ability of all students to recognize and learn from multiple perspectives. Interculturalized content can be achieved through a number of strategies, including selecting readings,

videos, and presenters that give voice to non-dominant perspectives, modelling ways of learning from multiple voices, and using open educational strategies to make content accessible to students.

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## 5. Facilitating student intercultural development

A key component of interculturalizing the curriculum is guiding students through the process of their own intercultural development.

King and Baxter Magolda (2005) assert that supporting student intercultural development strategies requires a holistic approach that considers students' development. This is particularly significant for young adult students, whose growth in cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains may impact their level of ability in some key intercultural tasks. For example, students whose cognitive development is rooted in dualistic thinking, as is common for younger students at the beginning of their postsecondary studies, may struggle more than more mature adults to display traits such as ambiguity tolerance and exploring multiple perspectives. This is one reason why considering an integrated and progressive approach to student interculturality development across a full program of study may be useful.

### What do We Want Students to Achieve?

Building curricular structures that support the development and assessment of interculturality requires a return to the question of “what is interculturality”? Intercultural development is not simply the acquisition of information about other contexts or groups, but rather the development of a set of attitudinal dispositions, ways of thinking about similarity and difference, and ways of relating. Breidenbach & Nyíri (2009) highlight that interculturality includes both sensitivity to local contexts, beliefs, and ways of being, and a critical awareness that can question claims made about other cultures and that can analyze the power dynamics at play in intercultural situations. While the traditional curricular categories of knowledge, skills, and attitudes can support the creation of outcomes for intercultural development, relational and social outcomes acknowledge that interculturality can only be expressed in the presence of others, and requires an ability to identify and challenge the ways cultural difference is used to justify unjust and inequitable practices.

This chapter defines five intercultural development domains:

1. Affective (attitudes and emotions that support interculturality)
2. Cognitive (ways of thinking interculturally)
3. Intrapersonal (internal reflective intercultural development)
4. Relational (intercultural development expressed in relationship to others), and
5. Social (intercultural understanding that supports equity and justice).

### Creating Space for Intercultural Development

#### **In-Class Intercultural Development**

The existence of a multicultural classroom space does not guarantee that students will develop interculturally during the course. Without structured and supported learning opportunities, many students will move through the course interacting only with those who are most like themselves (Arkoudis et al., 2013). A first step to fostering intercultural development in class is creating structures that support frequent, purposeful, and increasingly rich interactions between students. These can begin with lower stakes activities that allow students to get to know one another, before moving towards more complex assignments that require more focused effort and skill in intercultural communication. Classroom practices can include:



- Including icebreaker activities in the first class. For example, students can converse with a classmate for five minutes, seeking to discover three interesting facts to share with the whole class.
- Incorporating at least one short peer learning activity in each class. For example, at the start of class, students may be asked to work together to solve a problem type introduced in the previous week, or to create quiz questions based on the pre-class reading.
- Regularly asking students to sit with or work with a student they have not yet worked with in class.
- Intentionally forming diverse peer learning groups for in-class active learning activities (Arkoudis et al., 2010)

Arkoudis et al. (2010) identify four primary in-class environments for intercultural learning:

- Project-based learning that embeds interaction within the curriculum.
- Project-based learning where intercultural content is in focus (e.g., developing a marketing strategy in a country other than the students' own, and interviewing students from that country as a part of the project requirements).
- Laboratory work where students are specifically assigned to intercultural teams.
- Teamwork in diverse teams, which may combine in-class team learning with larger projects.

The *Interaction for Learning Framework* (Arkoudis et al., 2010, 2013) outlines a model for supporting intercultural learning through peer interactions in classroom contexts. The framework suggests that intercultural peer learning is best supported with intentional, structured steps.

1. **Planning for interaction:** Which of the course learning outcomes can be achieved through learning alongside peers?
2. **Creating environments for interaction:** How can the class environment support students' interaction with each other? How can the classroom community form in a way that promotes safety and fosters students' willingness to move out of their usual "comfort zone" in building relationships?
3. **Supporting interaction:** What do students need to know about interculturality to successfully engage with one another? How can knowledge, skills and attitudes about intercultural communication be explicitly built within the course?
4. **Engaging with subject knowledge:** How can students' lived experience from their own contexts be included in the process of engaging with the course content?
5. **Developing reflexive processes:** What opportunities do students have to reflect on their intercultural experiences within the course? How are students encouraged to build reflection into their ongoing growth and development?
6. **Fostering communities of learners:** How do students move beyond the initial scaffolds and structures provided in the course to continue their intercultural engagement?

Reid and Garson (2017) suggest that group assignments that already exist within a course can be reframed as sources of deep intercultural learning. This process involves strategically organizing students into teams that reflect both individual strengths and cultural diversity. The team process is supported with added class content that discusses characteristics of successful diverse teams, and that raises awareness of differences in values, communication styles, and work styles that can influence teamwork. Additionally, intercultural team projects can be augmented with reflection activities that allow students to consider how their intercultural skills developed through the experience of working in a diverse team. Peer evaluations provide an additional source of information about students' contributions to the team that the students themselves could use to reflect on their present strengths and weaknesses.

### **Experiential Learning**

Intercultural learning can be incorporated into many forms of experiential learning. While study abroad and exchange programs remain a valuable part of an internationalized learning experience for many students, many more students will have opportunities to engage in intercultural learning within the context of other experiential or work-integrated learning opportunities. These include field schools, co-op placements, and service learning. While such opportunities

offer students a rich opportunity to engage with a context different from their own and to practice relating interculturally, experiential learning best supports student intercultural development when it is contextualized, supportive, and offers opportunities for reflection. Without grounding in an approach that encourages students to critically examine how intercultural relationships are shaped by factors like bias, racism, or broader power structures, students can maintain an uncritical understanding of interculturality that can maintain an “us–them” way of thinking. For this reason, experiential intercultural learning is best supported with structured course content and learning opportunities that help students to engage critically with interculturality (Bernardes et al., 2019). Reflective practice is also important for ensuring that students’ intercultural experiences result in ongoing growth and development.

### **Reflecting on the Intercultural**

Breidenbach & Nyíri (2009) formulate a series of key questions for considering the intercultural. These questions are useful for helping students develop a critical and reflexive stance as they process intercultural course content and experiences. Their questions include:

- What explicit and implicit statements about identity markers are involved, about which groups? What are the fault lines along which groups are defined and differentiated?
- Are you overlooking important differences within (or across) these groups?
- How free are members of the group to change or decline norms?
- Do they open up or shut down options of dissent (or exit) within the group?
- Who is making the statements? Why might they be making them?
- On whose behalf are they speaking, explicitly or implicitly? What lends them authority to do so? Why are they able to voice their opinions?
- Whose voices are not heard?
- Are the statements being made empowering or oppressing the groups or individuals involved (which ones)? (pp. 343–345)

## **Assessing Student Interculturality**

Over 100 frameworks for assessing intercultural development exist, yet the process of assessing developing in interculturality is much more complex than administering an assessment tool. A critical question to consider is “intercultural competence, according to whom, and based on what cultural context?” (Deardorff, 2016, “Defining Intercultural Competence”). While some common threads include a focus on intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes, reflected in internal development and effective situational behaviour, chosen markers of interculturality within a particular framework also reflect underlying values. For example, less critical approaches to interculturality may place greater emphasis on effectiveness, while critical frameworks may offer more focus on considering positionality, power relationships, and equity as aspects of interculturality. Some critical questions when considering student assessment is “what are the key ways of knowing, being, and relating that demonstrate interculturality?” and “what norms, perspectives, and values have shaped this definition of interculturality?”. When measuring student interculturality, it is important for programs, departments, and institutions to consider their own definitions and frameworks (Deardorff, 2006).

Deardorff (2005) offers a set of questions to consider when developing assessments of student interculturality:

1. From whose perspective is intercultural competence being assessed? What are the biases of the assessor?
2. Who is the locus of the evaluation?
3. What is the context of the intercultural competence assessment?
4. What is the purpose of the intercultural competence assessment?
5. How will the assessment results be used? Who will benefit from the assessment?
6. What is the time frame of the assessment (one time, ongoing, etc.)? In other words, is the assessment formative and not summative?
7. What is the level of abstraction, or in other words, will the assessment be more general or will it assess more specific components of intercultural competence?
8. Do the assessment methods match the working definition and stated objectives of intercultural competence?
9. Have specific indicators been developed for the intercultural assessment?
10. Is more than one method being used to assess intercultural competence? Do the methods involve more than one evaluator's perspective?
11. Are the degrees of intercultural competence being assessed? What is being done with those not meeting the minimal level of intercultural competence?
12. Does the assessment account for multiple competencies and multiple cultural identities?
13. Has the impact of situational, social, and historical contexts been analyzed in the assessment of intercultural competence?
14. How do the assessment methods impact the measurement outcomes? Have the limits of the measurements/outcomes been accounted for?
15. Have student/participant goals been accounted for when assessing intercultural competence? (p. 31)

Once the underlying framework for interculturality is clear, the next stage is to consider the assessment methods that would assist in measuring student development in interculturality. It is important to note that because of the complexity of intercultural development, a single assessment method is insufficient to gain a robust picture of students' progress in this area. Possible assessment methods include: learning plans, portfolios, critical reflection, inventories, and direct observation (Deardorff, 2016).

**ePortfolios:** Portfolios are a powerful tool for assessing intercultural development, as they offer the flexibility to combine a number of reflective practices into a single flexible space where students can showcase evidence of their growth and development over time. ePortfolios can be an ideal tool for assessing intercultural development, particularly when integrated across the lifespan of a student's study within a program, allowing students to integrate curricular and co-curricular learning. To support ePortfolio development, consider:

- Outlining key expectations and providing some structure for the portfolio, while maintaining space for flexibility and creativity. Allowing students to analyze examples of successful portfolios can help students who are new to the process grasp the task and criteria for success.
- Teaching students how to reflect by providing some structured reflection templates, particularly near the beginning of the process.
- Conferencing with students about their portfolios throughout the process, providing formative feedback and suggestions for ongoing development (Fenwick & Parsons, 2009).

ePortfolios also provide space to integrate evidence of intercultural development with reflection. A strong portfolio framework is likely to integrate several of the assessment strategies described below.

**Learning contracts/plans:** Deardorff (2016) suggests creating space for students to develop their own intercultural learning goals and activities. This can help to facilitate a process that is relevant to the learner's needs, context, and current stage of development. A learning plan includes a description of what is to be learned, a list of learning activities (e.g., reading, workshops, service, collaborative work), a timeline, and evidence that learning has occurred (an activity/learning log can be useful). When a learning contract is used, learners should decide how their learning should be assessed, and regular check-ins established to ensure that learners are on-track with their learning activities (Fenwick & Parsons, 2009).

**Direct observation:** Direct observation provides students with feedback on their ways of relating and intercultural effectiveness as observed in an experiential learning context. This can include observation in work-integrated learning, service learning, classroom assignments (e.g., group projects), and simulations/case studies. Direct observations can help to overcome the persistent difficulty of measuring interculturality via self-report, with its focus on self-perception, rather than the impact of the encounter on all parties (Dervin & Hahl, 2015). Direct observation can also have its challenges, including observer bias (Fenwick and Parsons, 2009). This observer bias can include implicit cultural bias, where students with one set of culturally-valued behaviours may be assessed as more effective than others. Fenwick and Parsons (2009) suggest that the criteria for direct observation should be made clear to students before the assessment, and that direct observation is best used for repeated formative assessment, rather than a high-stakes summative assessment.

**Critical reflection:** One of the challenges of intercultural learning is that time in an intercultural setting, by itself, is insufficient for learning to occur (Bennett, 1986). Without careful thought to processing intercultural experiences with a specific focus on ongoing growth, intercultural development may remain stagnant. Therefore, structured critical reflection is a vital part of intercultural development, and a key component of assessment.

Many students initially struggle with reflective thinking and writing processes, tending to focus on reporting experiences, or conversely, only on their thoughts and feelings. Students can benefit from structured questions that prompt reflection on past practice, and identification of steps for future growth.

A reflection based on Gibbs' (1988) reflective learning cycle might include the following questions:

1. Think of an intercultural interaction that you participated in. Describe what happened.
2. What feelings and perceptions did you have during the experience? How would you explain these to someone else?
3. What does this experience mean in the context of your intercultural development?
4. What knowledge about cultures and interculturality can you apply to your understanding of this situation?
5. What might the other participants in this interaction interpret what happened?
6. How will this experience impact your present and future actions?

**Inventories:** Inventories (such as the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), or the *Student Intercultural Development Self-Reflection Guide*) below can provide an additional source of information on intercultural development. When considering an inventory, it is important to consider whether it has been validated interculturally (the IDI is an example of a validated inventory), and whether the inventory is susceptible to social desirability bias, where respondents are able to identify and therefore choose the answer that they perceive is wanted, regardless of actual feelings. It is common for individuals to self-assess their intercultural abilities at a level higher than their actual performance (Hammer, 2020).

Inventories may be useful as a part of a pre/post-test learning design. The advantages of such a design is that it establishes a baseline, and that progress over time can be made visible. However, a pre/post design should not be viewed as an unquestionably objective measure, as other factors can affect both learning and test performance (Fenwick & Parsons, 2009).

When an inventory is more transparent, and perhaps subject to social desirability bias, it is best used as a tool for self-reflection, rather than as an objective measure of development or performance. As a self-reflection tool, an inventory

can broaden students' awareness of the varied aspects of interculturality, and provide a stimulus for self-identifying current strengths and desired areas for development. This type of process is well-paired with additional questions for journaling or critical reflection.

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### **Student Intercultural Development Self-Reflection Guide**

Intercultural development is a lifelong journey that shapes ways of thinking, emotional responses, ways of relating to others, and ways of advocating for change in the world. Intercultural growth occurs through participating in intercultural life experiences, reflecting on how these experiences shape us, and identifying steps for ongoing development.

This self-assessment includes reflection questions in five intercultural domains. Honestly reflect on your current level of development. This process will help you to identify strengths that support you in effective cross-cultural relationships and to set intentions for ongoing development.

#### **Affective (attitudes and emotions that support interculturality)**

- I am curious about other people, other contexts, and other ways of seeing the world.
- I am open-minded when I explore new situations.
- I can withhold judgement when I encounter a situation I do not fully understand.

#### **Cognitive (ways of thinking interculturality)**

- I am a lifelong intercultural learner.
- I can avoid stereotypes when describing the cultural identities and values of others.
- I can identify multiple culturally-influenced points of view on an issue.
- I can tolerate an ambiguous situation where the right action/ answer is not immediately clear.

#### **Intrapersonal (internal intercultural development)**

- I can identify the factors that contribute to my identity(ies).
- I can identify my strengths, abilities, and limitations.
- I engage in regular self-reflection to support my ongoing journey of growth, change, and development.
- I can recover from setbacks and mistakes in intercultural relationships, continuing to actively engage with others.

#### **Relational (intercultural development expressed in relating)**

- I can develop relationships with others from a different cultural background than my own.
- I can adjust my communication style when interacting across a linguistic difference.
- I can adjust my way of relating to demonstrate sensitivity for someone else's cultural preferences.
- I can express empathy in an intercultural situation.
- I can relate to others from a place of equality, working to eliminate any power imbalances in the relationship.

#### **Social (intercultural understanding that supports equity and justice)**

- I am aware of how my identities influence relationships in my own and in other cultures.
- I am able to challenge discriminatory ideas.
- I am able to identify actions to take when I observe a social injustice.
- I am able to support other communities' efforts towards equity.

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**Informed by: King and Baxter Magdola (2005), Deardorff (2006), Dervin (2016) and Foronda et al., (2016).**

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All assessment of intercultural learning should acknowledge the lifelong nature of intercultural development (Deardorff 2016; Tervalon and Murray-Garcia, 1998), and therefore, by its very nature, intercultural assessment is formative, rather than summative. Because of the complexity of the task, assessments of intercultural development should be authentic, reflective, relevant to the learner's context and goals, and varied in content and format.

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## 6. Engaging in difficult classroom conversations

Part of the process of supporting student intercultural development is creating space for students to engage in difficult conversations, where they must wrestle with multiple perspectives. This requires supporting students in navigating complexity, maintaining a clear sense of self-identity while respectfully engaging with others. Clancy and Bauer (2018) highlight that students may hesitate to share “risky” information in class, expressing discomfort rather than action when they observe.

Supporting difficult conversations requires a complex set of interrelated skills. These include:

- Creating a classroom climate that supports relationship and respectful interaction.
- Sequencing challenging dialogues from simpler to more complex.
- Modelling tolerance for ambiguity.
- Supporting students who have experienced trauma, and
- Recognizing and managing the emotional work involved in the process.

### Creating a classroom climate that supports productive discomfort

Lee et al., (2017) describe the process of helping students through challenging and complex intercultural conversations as *facilitating productive discomfort*. Following Mezirow (1997), they highlight that the type of transformative learning that can create shifts in frames of reference and worldview requires passing through a stage of discomfort, wrestling through new information that does not fit the old frames of reference. In this stage of discomfort, with thoughtful reflection and application, new understandings can develop, resulting in shifted frames of reference and new possibilities for understanding and behaviour. Key goals of classroom dialogue through productive discomfort are supporting students in identifying inequities, recognizing their position and privilege within systems, and advocating for change (Clancey and Bauer, 2018).

When working through learning that requires productive discomfort, it is helpful to consider processes that scaffold and support students as they grow into greater cognitive complexity and emotional demands. Setting the stage for productive discomfort includes creating a classroom community that fosters healthy discussion and thoughtfully sequencing difficult conversations in a progression from lower risk to higher risk.

Steps to create a classroom climate that supports productive discomfort include:

- Providing opportunities for students to consider and re-consider over time how personal lived experiences shape perspectives on complex topics (Lee et al., 2014).
- Providing low-stakes opportunities for students to interact across cultures consistently throughout the course.
- Giving opportunities for students to reflect on what they understand to be important in respecting others and feeling respected.
- Allowing time for students to co-create guidelines for classroom interaction.
- Making space for individual reflection on challenging topics before moving into discussion.
- Remaining open for students to continue to engage with topics at a different time as needed (Lee et al., 2017).
- Creating prompts that draw students into active listening and engaged dialogue (e.g., how are you inviting others to participate? How are you making space for others to speak?) (Clancey & Bauer, 2018).

## Sequencing challenging dialogues

In addition to providing an environment that supports difficult conversations, attention to sequencing these interactions according to the level of complexity and difficulty can help students build up the cognitive and affective skills needed for productive engagement. Adams et al. (1997) suggest sequencing difficult conversations along four key dimensions:

1. From low risk to a higher risk: Throughout the course, students move from low-stakes interactions (icebreakers and “getting to know you conversations”) towards conversations that may require them to disclose information about identities, emotions, or personal beliefs. Another dimension of the low risk/high risk continuum is considering group size. Conversations with one peer or a small group will be lower risk than large group discussions on complex topics.
2. From concrete to abstract: This dimension moves from personal experience towards broader social implications. At the concrete end of the dimension, students may focus on their own experiences of challenge, inequity, and oppression. As conversations become more complex, students may engage with large systemic issues and processes.
3. From difference to justice: This dimension begins with a basic understanding of respect for difference. As the conversations deepen, they begin to shift from a less politicized understanding of difference, towards an understanding of the way that differences have been used to create unequal systems. These deeper conversations include discussions of power dynamics, privilege, and structures that maintain inequity.
4. What? So What? Now What?: In this dimension, conversations begin with students’ existing knowledge. The next step includes deeper understanding of the potential implications of their current knowledge, deepening existing perspectives. Finally, the conversation shifts towards implications for action — now that we know, what will we do?

Similarly, Clancey and Bauer (2018) suggest empathic scaffolding classroom dialogue, particularly for students with limited experience engaging with intercultural and social justice issues. Empathic scaffolding begins by focusing on students’ own lived experiences and perspectives, drawing them systematically outward into recognizing social implications and demonstrating greater concern for others.

## Modelling tolerance for ambiguity

Managing situations that have unknowns and unclear solutions is a part of intercultural development, one that can cause both cognitive and emotional uncertainty for students. Ambiguity tolerance is the ability to move ahead without full certainty or clarity about all aspects of a situation. Ambiguity tolerance falls on a spectrum, and people range from low to high in their tolerance of ambiguity. Individuals with low ambiguity tolerance typically prefer clear direction when moving ahead, and may find it more difficult to function without rules or guidelines. Those with higher ambiguity tolerance move ahead more easily without seeing the full picture.

Chickering’s theory of student development proposes *developing integrity* as a dimension of student growth during their undergraduate education. Chickering proposes that students move from a position of black and white thinking to more flexible understanding of multiple perspectives; this developmental phase is generally not fully completed until the later years of undergraduate studies. Similarly, Kohlberg’s theory of moral development states that many young adults possess dualistic moral systems, before moving towards a greater recognition that situations can be ambiguous (Long, 2012). Developing the ambiguity tolerance that supports intercultural fluency is part of a greater process of development as students’ ability to respond to complexity increases. Instructors can support this process by including problems without single clear solutions to class activities.



The ways in which people manage ambiguity also display variation according to value dimensions that form based on different lived experiences. Those with a higher ambiguity tolerance tend to be comfortable working in situations where some aspects are flexible, unclear, or unknown. Those with lower ambiguity tolerance may have a higher focus on staying within established rules and social systems (Hoefstede, 2001). Facilitating productive discomfort includes supporting students in recognizing their current orientation towards ambiguity, as well as providing learning opportunities that extend their ambiguity tolerance threshold. Learning opportunities that extend ambiguity tolerance include case studies with multiple possible solutions, and experiential learning activities that involve adaptation to new types of social interactions (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016).

## Incorporating trauma-informed perspectives

While recognizing that intercultural development requires students to risk discomfort, this is balanced by the need to ensure that classroom environments are supportive for students who have experienced trauma. Trauma exposure affects a significant number of university students. A US study found that 66% of incoming students reported exposure to a significant traumatic event, while 9% met the criteria for PTSD. Trauma exposure was higher among students from minority cultures (Read et al., 2011). Past trauma history impacts responses to present stressful events, including the stresses involved in adapting to complex postsecondary learning environments. It is likely that every classroom includes students grappling with the effects of past traumatic events.

### What is a trauma-informed classroom?

A trauma informed classroom creates a space that seeks to prevent re-exposure to trauma, without forgoing discussion of challenging academic topics. Trauma informed classrooms have the following characteristics:

Core Values	Questions to guide the development of trauma-informed practices
Safety (physical and emotional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are signs and other visual materials welcoming, clear, and legible?</li> <li>• Are first contacts or introductions welcoming, respectful, and engaging?</li> </ul>
Trustworthiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do students receive clear explanations and information about tasks and procedures?</li> <li>• Are specific goals and objectives made clear?</li> <li>• How does the program handle challenges between role clarity and personal/professional boundaries?</li> </ul>
Choice and control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is each student informed about the available choices and options?</li> <li>• Do students get a clear and appropriate message about their rights and responsibilities? Are there negative consequences for making particular choices? Are these necessary or arbitrary consequences?</li> <li>• Do students have choices about attending various meetings?</li> <li>• Do students choose how contact is made (e.g., by phone or mail to their home or other address)?</li> </ul>
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do educators identify tasks on which they and students can work simultaneously (e.g., information gathering and committees)?</li> </ul>
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are each student's strengths and skills recognized?</li> <li>• Do educators communicate a sense of realistic optimism about students' capacity to achieve their goals?</li> <li>• How can each class be focused on skill development or enhancement?</li> </ul>

Adapted from: Falot, R., & Harris, M. (2019). *Creating Cultures of Trauma-Informed Care (CCTIC): A Self-Assessment and Planning Protocol Community Connections*; Washington, D.C.

# Managing emotional labour

The work of guiding students through productive discomfort calls for significant emotional work from educators. Cutri & Whiting (2015) highlight four key aspects of this work for educators to consider. First, educators should prepare for the task of managing our own personal emotional reactions to our students' learning process. For many educators, because of additional years of experience confronting and working through challenging issues regarding our own complicity with social injustices, we can forget the impact of discomfort and difficulty in our earlier learning. Personal reactions of frustration and impatience can block our ability to guide students through their learning process, unless we are able to maintain our own emotional awareness and process our own emotions. Second, emotional reactions based on our own lived experiences can arise in classroom discussions, and managing these emotions in the midst of the classroom situation can create tensions with guiding the learning process of students. Third, engaging in productive discomfort with students asks for the emotional work of remaining both open and vulnerable with students, resisting the temptation to retreat into the position of power that content expertise can provide.

Cutri and Whiting acknowledge the demands of this emotional work on educators who commit to facilitating productive discomfort, particularly in intercultural learning spaces. They suggest that while acknowledging this challenge, a key step forward involves engaging in reflection and critique in order to allow the emotional work to create productive growth in ourselves as educators.

## Summary

Supporting students' intercultural development in the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains includes incorporating learning activities that challenge students to engage with discomfort, recognizing the nature of inequality and oppression in societal systems and the ways in which these realities interact with their personal identities and experiences. Opportunities to participate in dialogue in a scaffolded and supported classroom context is a key part of students' intercultural learning that enables them to contribute to positive social change during and after their educational experience.

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**Additional Resources**

- Trauma Informed Practices for Post-Secondary Education: A Guide
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# About the Author



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Her work at KPU includes the role of Learning Strategist, where she supports students in developing learning strategies and future skills throughout their postsecondary careers. Additionally, in the role of Educational Consultant, she facilitates programs in inclusive and intercultural teaching for faculty.